

Decoding Hebrew Deities I: the Tree of Life

Stuart Harris, August 2012

It began with a visit to Havurah Shir Hadash in Ashland, Oregon. On the east wall, the morning sun lit a magnificent stained glass window, covered with writing in a language forgotten for hundreds of years (Fig. 1) Who could possibly have designed this? I copied the inscription, went home and translated the central figure, a rebus in the form of the triple goddess in her guise as a serpent. “Live long chanting Akka,” she intoned. Akka! The Old Woman of stone-age Europe!

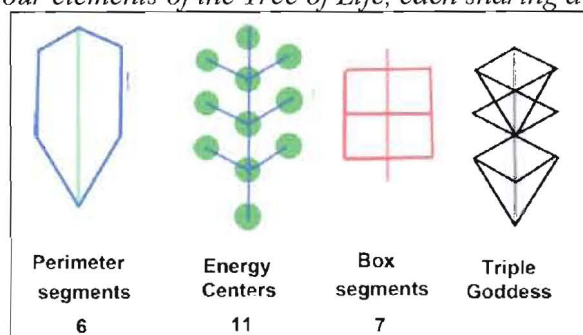
Figure 1: Tree of Life stained glass window on the east wall of Havurah Shir Hadash.



“What does your stained glass window mean?” I emailed Rabbi David. “Hello Stu,” he replied. “In Judaism, this is the Tree of Life and the energy centers (sefirot) of the Kabbalah. Blessings. Shalom, Rabbi David”

I am clearly no expert in Judaism, but I am very good at reading Old European, the world’s oldest script. The Tree of Life shares its vertical axis among four inscriptions, all pertinent to her philosophies, which the assembly had reviewed in their singing (Fig. 2). The image is ancient, designed by someone of exceptional ability.

Figure 2: Four elements of the Tree of Life, each sharing a vertical axis.



After translating the Tree of Life, I wondered if other Hebrew deities lacked an etymology. Shockingly, no one knew what any of the old names meant, not just deities but founders such as Adam, or places such as Heaven, Earth and Hell. Their origin lies veiled in the mists of time, derived from a lost language. So I've written a two-part series that translates images and names from Genesis into the original language, then into English. Part I translates the Tree of Life, while Part II translates sacred names.

In 5500 BC, long before Egyptians built the pyramids or Sumerians irrigated Iraq, most Europeans spoke a language called Old European, documented by Marija Gimbutas in Language of the Goddess¹. She found inscriptions in Old European everywhere she looked: on pottery, figurines, tools, jewelry, spinning whorls and cave walls. For example, nearly all non-repeated decoration on pottery was writing, a skill that modern artists have lost. But for all her remarkable linguistic skills, she found no bilinguals nor could translate the writing.

Yet within the Baltic Sea region, Old European writing continued in use until the 19th century, called Owner's Marks. Accompanying an Owner's Mark on a legal document such as a deed or will was the name of the owner spelled in Latin letters, thus providing true bilinguals. On the internet, collectors posted hundreds of these bilinguals, whose sheer quantity provided enough material to decode the script. Their shapes and sound values appear in the table below (Table 1). It is a consonant-vowel syllabary that uses different letters for each consonant-vowel combination. This syllabary is exceedingly old, perhaps as old as Homo sapiens itself, so that the date of an inscription cannot be determined by letter shape alone.

The language is Finnish, read with a Finnish dictionary, unchanged in millenia. To avoid modern words, I look for occurrence in Kalevala (18,000 words), or usage before 1700 AD.

Scribes often combined Old European letters in fanciful ways to make a rebus. This is particularly evident among petroglyphs in the American West that form animals and humans, none of whom resemble the drawings. For example, Kokopelli², the Humpbacked Blue Flute Player, led the Hopi Flute Clan on their arduous migrations around North America (Fig. 3). If the flute player lay his back, it meant that the Flute Clan settled there for a long time, and this is exactly what the rebus says.

Old Eur: ME SO Ä SA SE SE.

Finnish: Meiän soan äijä sai sen seis.

¹ Marija Gimbutas, 1989, The Language of the Goddess, Harper and Row, San Francisco.

² Kokopelli comes from Kokko pilli meaning 'Eagle Pipe', possibly referring to the use of an eagle wing bone to make a flute. The oldest flute in Europe was made from the wing bone of a crane.

English: Our long battle made him stop.

Figure 3: Image and transcription of Hopi Humpbacked Flute Player.

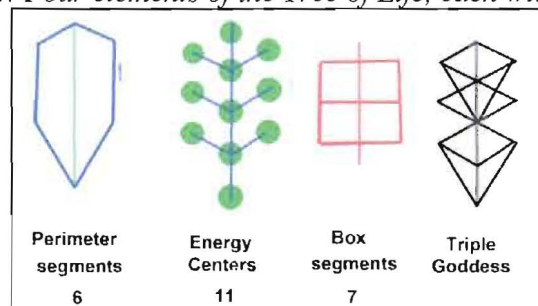


Rules to write were simple: go left to right, top to bottom; compress double letters and diphthongs into the first letter; ignore a consonant at the end of a syllable; ignore H or J within a word; allow terminal vowels to begin the next word (very important among Hebrew deities).

Similar to the Humpbacked Flute Player, the Hebrew Tree of Life combines letters to make a rebus. This complex image resolves into four components that share a vertical axis (Fig. 4):

- 6 sides of a perimeter. Six represents connection; the first letter *vav* of the sixth word of the Torah 'and' connects Heavens and (*vav*) Earth. It also represents the six directions of the physical world, created in six days.
- 11 energy centers (sefirot) of the Kabbalah, represented by discs at each node.
- 7 sides of a central box, seven being the number sacred to the goddess; 6 times 7 makes 42, a sacred number, such as the number of stops after the Exodus from Egypt.
- What's left is a rebus of the goddess.

Figure 4: Four elements of the Tree of Life, each with an axis.



The goddess has the shape of the triple goddess: a body of three diamonds stacked above triangular-shaped legs, with a triangular-shaped forehead. Her unusual head shape alludes to her guise as a serpent, which sloughs its skin in a yearly cycle of renewal like plants (Fig. 5). She accompanied *Homo sapiens* into Europe. Two of the three goddesses never have a face, but the oldest goddess does, and to me, she looks like *Homo helmei*, the predecessor of our species, who survived in Africa until about 13,000 years ago.

Figure 5: Triple goddess in her guise as a serpent, from Vadastra, lower Danube, Rumania. Relief design includes snake coils in front and meanders in back. Source: Gimbutas.³



In Germany, at the lowest occupation level of Hohle Fells Cave, archaeologist Nicholas Conard recovered a buxom goddess carved in ivory (Fig. 6). As the oldest image of a goddess yet discovered, she dates to 34,300 ±300 BC, the same period as the finest cave paintings in France and Spain, which are being redated⁴. Her body carries an inscription in Old European, whose decipherment can be found at www.migration-diffusion.info. A solitary hunter, not the carver of the delicate figurine, incised rough letters on her arms, back and stomach that associate the goddess with food:

Rehu mua tein, lihoa peuran uinehen. [...] tao terä. Niin loin yksi.

Food for me I made, meat from a wild reindeer who had been swimming. [missing text on left arm ...] forge a blade. So then I created one.

Figure 6: Venus of Hohle Fells, dated 34,300 BC.



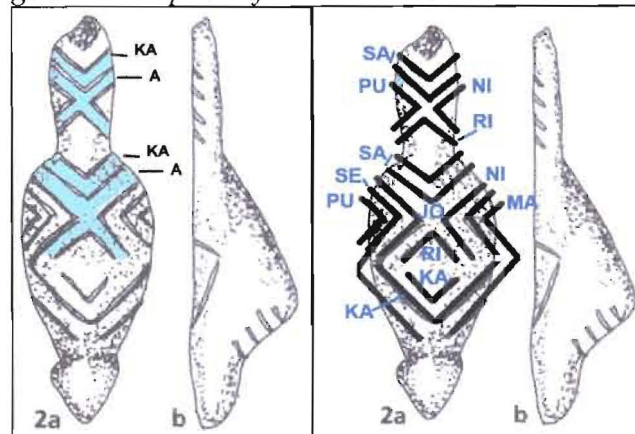
One popular name of the goddess was **Akka** meaning ‘Old Woman’⁵. For example, Akka occurs on the head of an ivory Bird Goddess figurine from the Ukraine carved at the end of the Wurm ice age between 15,000 and 18,000 BC (Fig. 7). In this case, Akka appears in the spaces between letters, a subtle bit of artistry that names the goddess without naming her.

³ Marija Gimbutas, 1974, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe, 7000 to 3500 BC*, U California Press.

⁴ Instead of measuring the age of carbon used to touch up the paintings, archaeologists now measure the age of flowstone that covers the metallic oxides of the paintings.

⁵ “There was an Old Woman who lived in a shoe” has been mistranslated. The Finnish word *suon* means ‘in a clan-home’.

Figure 7: Image and inscription of Bird Goddess. Source Gimbutas Fig. 2, p.5⁶.



Decoding this inscription illustrates how scribes would combine letters to form a pleasing design (Fig. 8). We still don't know what Akka represents, but notice that the inscription associates chanting with Akka.

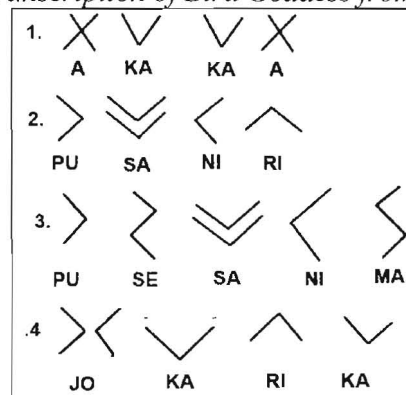
Finnish:

Akka käy aiain
puhas saanin riian.
Puhe'et saani maahan.
Jo käyn, riian käyn

English:

Old Woman go chant
of a handsome sleigh to marry.
Through the trees a sleigh along the ground.
Then I will go, I will go to marry.

Figure 8: Transcription of Bird Goddess from the Ukraine.

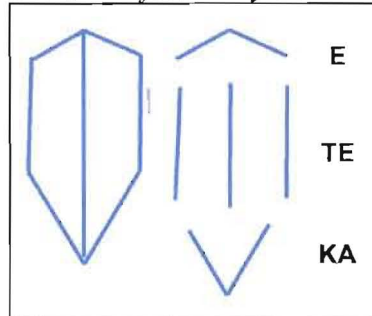


The rebus of the six-sided perimeter of the Tree of Life comprises three letters, E TA KA, which spell *Eheys teen kauas* meaning 'Eheys I will make far and wide'(Fig. 9). *Eheys* is a mystical word meaning 'Harmony, integrity, perfection, unity, one'. It appears on the face of the ceramic Venus of Dolni Vestonice, dated 27,000 BC, and was the mantra of Minoan Crete. To initiate a meditation state appropriate to Eheys, spiral letters on a gold ring from Crete say: "Under the stream of the Sacred Spirit playing, you will get deep calmness. These will rapidly grow flux and produce warm thoughts."⁷

⁶ Maria Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989.

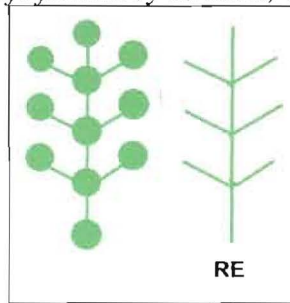
⁷ Stuart Harris, 2011, *Linear A Texts Part I*, KN Zf 13 Gold Ring, www.migration-diffusion.info/.

Figure 9: Perimeter formed by 6 sides and 1 axis.



According to Rabbi David of Havurah Shir Hadash, the rebus of eleven discs supported by branches represent the energy centers (sefirot) of the Kabbalah (Fig. 10). Most scholars associate these energy centers with Near Eastern religions, but these came later and identify fewer energy centers. In this instance, the disks form an apple tree with seven branches and ten apples. Ten is a magic number, the basis of counting, while seven is the number of candles radiating light on most menorahs. As an inscription, the tree forms the letter RE that spells *rehu* meaning 'food'. Thus two meanings of the Tree of Life are: tangible food like apples, air and water; and intangible food like candlelight, mathematics and knowledge.

Figure 10: Tree of Life formed by 11 disks, 7 branches and 1 axis.

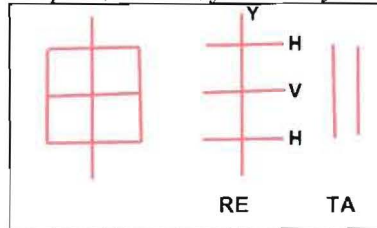


The rebus of the seven-sided box requires the vertical axis (Fig. 11). Pulling away the sides of the box reveals letters RE-TA that spell *Rehutar* meaning 'Food Spirit', another name of the goddess, where food is defined by the apple tree rebus. In addition, the vertical axis that pierces three horizontal planes represents the **Tetragammon** YHVH. This sacred name can be decoded by recognizing that letter V could also represent U, thus spelling YHUUH. Briefly,

- Y = Yggdrasil, the axis tree of Earth;
- H = Heaven, home of the Aesir at Asgard;
- U = Urð (Earth), home of mortals like Ask and Embla at Midgard;
- H = Hella, home of Freya's maidens at Helgard.

This element dates the Tree of Life to about 5500 BC, when all three palisaded cities were viable, to the time of the Norse Eddas. Its pronunciation combines parts of all four words.

Figure 11: Food Spirit, YHVH, formed by 7 sides and 1 axis.



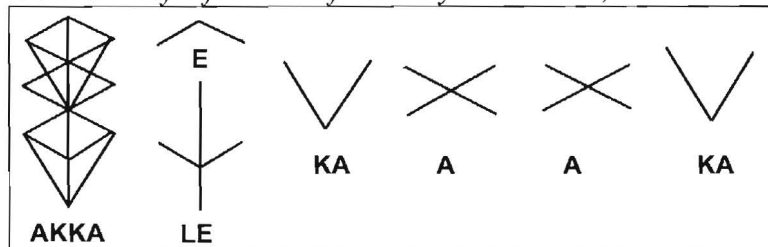
The rebus of the woman (Fig. 12) has six letters that encourage the viewer to live long by chanting her name 'Akka'. She wears a mask that imitates a snake, thus implying that she is the goddess of wisdom, who gave Eve the apple of wisdom from the Tree of Life.

Old Eur: E-LE KA A A-KA.

Finnish: Eleä kauann aioin Akka

English: Live long chanting Akka.

Figure 12: Tree of Life woman formed by 3 diamonds, 2 vees and 1 axis.



With all this in mind, consider Max Dashu's research about the Tree of Life.⁸

Thou art a Wisdom. Thou are a Knowing. Thou art Truth. Because of Thee, there is life. Life is from Thee. Because of Thee, there is mind. (The Three Steles of Seth, an Egyptian Gnostic scripture)

The ancient Hebrew name for Wisdom is **Khokhmah**, a feminine noun. In Jewish scripture, it was Khokhmah who personified the female Divine. She is understood as an emanation of God, yet she resonates with the Hebrew Goddess who is otherwise assailed in the Bible, especially Asherah, she of the sacred Tree. Proverbs 3:18 calls up an image of Khokhmah that originates in the oldest core of Jewish culture: "She is a Tree of Life to all who lay hold of her." In the same book, Khokhmah sings, "The one who finds me, finds life."

A Greek-Coptic text named Origin of the World reworks Genesis to show the Goddess taking part in creation, and restores Eve to her primordial sacred status as the "Mother of All Living", a title that goes back to the earliest Hebrew roots, and even further, to the Sumerian goddess Ninti. In this telling, it is Eve who gives life to Adam. The archons beheld Eve and compared her to Sophia, "the likeness which appeared to us in the light." They plotted to rape and "pollute" Eve, and to cast Adam into a sleep, teaching him that she came into being from his rib "so that the

⁸ Max Dashu, Khokhmah and Sophia, chapter III of Streams of Wisdom; 2000, Oakland CA: The Suppressed Histories Archives, 2000. An early serialized version appeared in Goddessing Regenerated, a journal edited by Willow LaMonte, Malta, 1998.

woman will serve and he will rule over her.” But Life/Eve laughed at their scheming, darkened their eyes and left her likeness beside Adam. “She entered the tree of knowledge, and remained there. She revealed to them that she had entered the tree and become tree.”









































































































































A Nag Hammadi scroll called the Testimony of Truth deifies the wise Serpent who counsels Eve to eat the fruit of knowledge: “On the day when you eat from the tree which is in the midst of Paradise, the eyes of your mind will be opened.”

Next, in Part II of this series, I assume that much of Genesis was composed in Finnish, and translate the names of old deities back into Finnish. Of all these names, YHVH and Elohim are the most complicated and instructive. They lead to a small, circular island called Earth in southwest Finland, whose inhabitants once dominated the Baltic Sea, led by people whose names survive as days of the week.

For further information on Old European and other ancient scripts, look under Authors - Stuart Harris at www.migration-diffusion.info, an Austrian web site run by Christine Pellech.

You are invited to contact Stuart Harris about this or any other archeological topics at PO Box 60281, Palo Alto, CA, 94306; [Stuart.Harris -at- sbcglobal.net](mailto:Stuart.Harris-at-sbcglobal.net); 650-888-1859

Table 1: Old European syllabary derived from Owners Marks dated 1500-1900 AD⁹.
Around the perimeter occur the same letters arranged by design to aid decipherment.

	A	Ä	E	I	O	U	Y	
	1	10	50	100				      
Vowels	a	ä	e	i	o	u	y	      
H	ha	hä	he	hi	ho	hu	hy	 
J	ja	jä	je		jo	ju	jy	  
K	ka	kä	ke	ki	ko	ku	ky	      
L	la	lä	le	li	lo	lu	ly	    
M	ma	mä	me	mi	mo	mu	my	     
N	na	nä	ne	ni	no	nu	ny	    
P	pa	pä	pe	pi	po	pu	py	      
R	ra	rä	re	ri	ro	ru	ry	    
S	sa	sä	se	si	so	su	sy	      
T	ta	tä	te	ti	to	tu	ty	      
V	va	vä	ve	vi	vo	vu	vy	   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   
								   

⁹ Stuart Harris, 2011, Bilingual Owner's Marks from the Baltic, www.migration-diffusion.info/