

in connection with the installation of the cultic object suggests it was something erected (similar to JPFs and stelai), and the use of the roots *krt* (“to cut”) and *šrp* (“to burn”) in connection with their destruction (2 Kgs 18:4; 23:4) suggests the *’ašerah* was made of wood. A number of Israelite and Phoenician seals depicting sacred trees—in isolation or flanked by hybrid or other creatures, as in the Taanach cult stand and the illustration on Pithos A from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Beck 2012, 143–56)—have been marshalled as evidence the *’ašerah* was a special tree or wooden pole of some kind (Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 233–46; cf. Hestrin 1987; Lewis 2020, 236–43).

Judahite inscriptions dating to the eighth century BCE from Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet ‘Ajrud bless others by, and attribute blessings to, YHWH and *l’šrth*, “to Asherah” (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2008; Carmi and Segal 2012). In line 3 from the Khirbet el-Qôm inscription, Uriyahu writes, “Now from his enemies, to Asherah, deliver him” (*wmsryh . l’šrth . hwš’lh*). Asherah is mentioned in multiple inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 87–100, 105–7):

Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, Inscription 4.1.1

1. *y]’rk. ymm. wysb’w[...] ytnw.l[y]hwh[...] tymn. wl’šrth[*
2. *] hytb. yhwh. hty[mn. .]y. hytb. ym[m*

1. he will] lengthen their days and they will be filled [...] they will give to
[Y]HWH[]of Teman and to Asherah[
2.] do good, YHWH of Te[man ...]make [their] days good

Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, Inscription 3.9

- 1... *] lyhwh . htmn wl’šrth. [...]* to YHWH of Teman and to Asherah

Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, Inscription 3.6

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 5. <i>brktk.ly</i> | I have blessed you to Y- |
| 6. <i>hwh tmn</i> | HWH of Teman |
| 7. <i>wl’šrth. yb</i> | and to Asherah. May he bl- ⁴² |
| 8. <i>rk wysmrk</i> | ess you and protect you |

⁴² The verb here is singular, which is a datum that is sometimes marshalled in support of the interpretation of *’šrth* as a cultic object, but it may indicate nothing other than YHWH’s priority (Lewis 2020, 240–43). Asherah may still be understood as a vehicle for YHWH’s agency without being rendered a cultic object (cf. the discussion of the messenger of YHWH in chapter 5).