

Ashima

Aramaean god, →DDD. A. is attested in the OT (2 Kgs 17:30; Amos 8:14 is open to debate) and twice in the inscriptions from Taima (cf. BEYER/LIVINGSTONE 1987: 286-288; CALVET/ROBIN 1997: 261-263). An iconographical identification in Israel/Palestine or Syria is not possible. However, a visual representation of A. is found on a stela from Taima (→**Şalmu 1***), discovered in 1979 and dated to c. 450. In its upper part the stela shows three celestial bodies (→sun, →moon [ANE], →star [ANE]) and mentions in its inscription →Şalmu, Sengallu, and A., the divine triad of Taima. The winged disc is attributed to Şalmu and understood as a deified idol (BEAULIEU 1989: 177; CALVET/ROBIN 1997: 263), or Şalmu is considered a name of the sun god (DALLEY 1985; DALLEY 1986). The disc with the crescent represents Sengallu, who is perhaps related to →Sin (cf. LEMAIRE 1995: 69 no. 52; BAWDEN/EDENS/MILLER 1980: 84; BEAULIEU 1989: 174-178), and the disc with the eight-pointed star, i.e., the morning star, signifies A. Thus the triad of Taima stands for the day (Şalmu), the evening (Sengallu), and the morning (A.).

A cube was found together with this stela (→**Şalmu 2***). On its two carved sides offering scenes are depicted, accompanied by the same divine symbols as on the stela but without inscription (DALLEY 1986: 85-87 with fig. 2; BAWDEN/EDENS/MILLER 1980: 83f and pl. 69). They may also be identified with Şalmu, Sengallu, and A.

The iconography of the gods of Taima can be attributed to Babylonian cultural influence during the time of Nabonid (555-539; DALLEY 1985; 1986; BAWDEN/EDENS/MILLER 1980: 83f; BEAULIEU 1989: 174-178). This becomes obvious when one adduces a stela showing King Nabonid standing before the three divine symbols: the winged disc, the crescent, and the eight-pointed star (ORTHMANN 1985: 326f no. 251). On the other hand, one should not neglect astral cults in Arabian religions (HENNINGER 1976; 1981) as further possible influential factors on the iconography of Taima.

Selected Bibliography

BAWDEN/EDENS/MILLER 1980: 83f • LIVINGSTONE et al. 1983: 108-111, pl. 96 • DALLEY 1986: 86f • BEYER/LIVINGSTONE 1987: 286-288

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