The rise of Yahwism:

role of marginalised groups

by

MARLENE ELIZABETH MONDRIAAN

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I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Justus van Wyk, who, in love and loyalty, unconditionally supported me all the years of graduate and post-graduate studies. I thank Justus from the bottom of my heart for his encouragement and interest in my studies through all the years of research; for all the days and nights he spent in front of the computer to type my – often-illegible – handwritten notes; for his patience to re-type the text, as and when I decided on alternative or additional discussions. I also appreciate his invaluable suggestions – where applicable – particularly concerning alternative words or sentence constructions. Justus, thank you for never complaining when you had to go without a proper meal.

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Marlene E Mondriaan
## CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION  
1.1 Motivation for research  
1.2 Research problem  
1.3 Hypothesis  
1.4 Purpose of research  
1.5 Methodology  
1.6 Abbreviations  
1.7 Archaeological periods in Palestine BC

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS  
2.1 Introduction  
2.2 Radiocarbon dating, palynology and remote sensing  
2.3 Ebla archives  
2.4 Mari documents  
2.5 Amarna Letters and the ḫabiru  
2.6 Egyptian records  
2.7 Merenptah's inscriptions and reliefs  
2.8 Ras Shamra tablets: Ugarit  
2.9 Kuntillet 'Ajrud  
2.10 Khirbet 'el-Qom  
2.11 Khirbet Beit Lei  
2.12 Ketef Hinnom  
2.13 Relevant archaeological artefacts  
2.14 Cult sites  
2.14.1 Introduction  
2.14.2 Tel Arad  
2.14.3 Tel Beer-sheba  
2.14.4 Tel Dan  
2.14.5 Papyri from and a Jewish temple at Elephantine  
2.14.6 Solomonic Temple: a comparison  
2.15 Résumé and conclusion

3 MYTHOLOGY, ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PANTHEONS AND THE ISRAELITE RELIGION  
3.1 Introduction  
3.2 Asherah / Athirat and synonymous female deities  
3.2.1 Occurrence in Ancient Near Eastern religions  
3.2.2 Occurrence in the Masoretic Text and Israelite religion  
3.2.3 Queen mother and the cult of Asherah  
3.2.4 Synopsis and conclusion: Asherah and synonymous female deities  
3.3 Relevant female deities  
3.4 Queen of Heaven  
3.5 Storm gods and warrior gods  
3.6 Astral deities  
3.7 Canaanite El  

Excursus 1: Israelite religion and syncretism  
Excursus 2: Israelite women and religion
### 3.8 Divine attributes in the Masoretic Text
- **3.8.1** Summary of attributes ascribed to *Yahweh* 185
- **3.8.2** Summary of attributes ascribed to *El/Elohim* 187
- **3.8.3** Inference from summaries of attributes; some other characteristics 189

### 3.9 Influence of myths and legends on the Masoretic Text 196

### 3.10 Résumé and conclusion 207

### 4 NAME YHWH AND RELATED FORMS 227
- **4.1** Introduction 227
- **4.2** Name YHWH: origin, analysis and interpretation of the designation YHWH 232
- **4.3** Extra-biblical sources concerning the name YHWH or related forms 251
  - **4.3.1** Introduction 251
  - **4.3.2** Ebla 252
  - **4.3.3** Mari 255
  - **4.3.4** Egyptian records 257
  - **4.3.5** YW: deity name from Ugarit 261
  - **4.3.6** Akkadian text from Ugarit 263
  - **4.3.7** Personal names from Alalakh and Amarna 264
  - **4.3.8** Mesha Stele 267
  - **4.3.9** Kuntillet ’Ajrud 271
  - **4.3.10** Khirbet ’el-Qom 278
  - **4.3.11** Amorite onomastics 280
  - **4.3.12** Yahweh from Hamath 282
  - **4.3.13** Anat-yahu and the Elephantine papyri 284
  - **4.3.14** Résumé, evaluation and conclusion 290
- **4.4** Phenomenon of theophoric names 300
  - **4.4.1** Introduction 300
  - **4.4.2** Theophoric *Ya*-names 303

### 5 THEORIES REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF YAHWISM 307
- **5.1** Introduction 307
- **5.2** Origin and characteristics of the Kenites 312
- **5.3** Kenite hypothesis 331
- **5.4** Moses figure and traditions 353
- **5.5** Evaluation of the Kenite hypothesis 365
- **5.6** Adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh* 371
- **5.7** *Yahweh-El*: an ancestral god 379
- **5.8** Adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh*: an evaluation of hypotheses 383
- **5.9** Résumé and conclusion 384

### 6 RECHABITES AND ANALOGOUS MARGINAL GROUPS 406
- **6.1** Introduction 406
- **6.2** Origin and interrelationships of marginal groups 417
  - **6.2.1** Kenites 417
  - **6.2.2** Rechabites 419
  - **6.2.3** Calebites 428
  - **6.2.4** Kenizzites 431
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2.5</td>
<td>Jerahmeelites</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.6</td>
<td>Levites</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.7</td>
<td>Other related groups</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Occurrence in the Masoretic Text</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Religion, traditions and role in the Israelite cult</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Influence during the Monarchical Period</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Résumé and conclusion</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ORIGIN OF THE ISRAELITE NATION: SYNOPTIC SURVEY</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Phenomenon of interaction among nations</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Influence of co-regional Ancient Near Eastern nations</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Proto-Israelites, exodus and settlement in Palestine</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Masoretic Text narratives</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Israelite Monarchy</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Résumé and conclusion</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ORIGIN OF THE MASORETIC TEXT AND MONOTHEISM: SYNOPTIC SURVEY</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Hypotheses on the Pentateuch</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Deuteronomistic historiography</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Chronic historiography</td>
<td>569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Prophets and prophecy</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Documentation of Israel's traditions during the monarchical era</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Exilic and post-exilic documentation, redactional adaptations and finalisation of the Masoretic Text</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Excursus 3: Scribes</em></td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Monotheism</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.1</td>
<td>Synoptic discussion</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Excursus 4: Akhenaten monotheism</em></td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.2</td>
<td>Marginal groups and their influence on the establishment and maintaining of exilic and post-exilic monotheism</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Minimalistic or revisionistic views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text and an Israelite nation</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>Résumé and conclusion</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OPSOMMING</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Taanach cult stand; front view – excavated in 1968
2. Taanach cult stand; side view – excavated in 1968
3. Three sides of the Taanach cult stand excavated in 1902
4. Kuntillet ’Ajrud: pithos A, cow suckling her calf, Bes-like figures, lyre player and inscription
5. Diagram of possible genealogical links among marginal groups

LIST OF MAPS

1. Occurrence of the name Asherah or related forms
2. Manifestations of the Queen of Heaven / planet Venus
3. Extra-biblical sources: the name Yahweh or related forms

LIST OF TABLES

1. Synopsis of characteristics of, and information on, the Kenites
2. Synopsis of the Kenite hypothesis and relevant aspects
3. Synopsis of characteristics of marginal southern groups
My motivation and purpose of this research particularly evolve around the question on the origin of *Yahweh* and the development of Yahwism, as well as the role of marginal groups in the maintaining of a pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism, and the subsequent conversion by Judahites – who previously practised a syncretistic religion – to a post-exilic *Yahweh* monotheism. In accordance with the Kenite hypothesis, the Yahwist tradition originated in the South amongst the Midianites and Kenites. A Moses-type figure acquired knowledge about *Yahweh* from these tribes who venerated *Yahweh* before the Israelites did. According to the Chronicler’s genealogy, marginal southern groups were all related. The Kenites and Rechabites had the opportunity, due to their nomadic lifestyle and particular trade – as coppersmiths – to spread their religious beliefs. Although the majority of Israelites practised syncretism, these marginal groups – particularly the Rechabites – sustained their Yahwistic faith throughout the Monarchical Period, actively involved in a *Yahweh*-alone movement. Jeremiah set the Rechabites – who followed a puritanical lifestyle – as an example for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

My hypothesis is that the Israelite God *Yahweh* was originally a Midianite/Kenite deity and that marginal groups related to the Kenites, such as the Rechabites, played a significant and dominant role in the preserving of a pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement, as well as in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh* monotheism. My approach to this research was with the premise that the Yahwist tradition originated in the South whence it spread to Judah and the North. According to a recurring biblical tradition, *Yahweh* emanated from the South. Evidence from certain Egyptian documents endorses *Yahweh*’s presence in the South.

It was also my aim to establish the interdependence – or not – of different disciplines relevant to the Hebrew Bible. In my research it became clear that archaeology and biblical scholarship – particularly historiography – cannot operate effectively without the acceptance of their mutual dependence.

**KEY TERMS**
Asherah, Archaeology, Exile/post-exilic, Kenite hypothesis, Kenites, Marginal groups, Monotheism, Rechabites, Yahweh-alone movement, Yahwism.
Hierdie studie behels 'n ondersoek na die herkoms van Jahwe en Jahwisme. Volgens die Keniete hipoteese, was die Keniete en Midianiete die groepe wat Jahwe aanbid het, reeds voordat die Israeliete met Hom kennis gemaak het. Hierdie hipoteese verklaar dat Moses kennis opge- doen het van Jahwe deur die toedoen van sy skoonpa, Jetro, 'n Midianitiese priester. Die roeping van Moses was 'n nuwe openbaring van Jahwe. Die sterkte van die Keniete hipoteese lê in Jahwe se topografiese skakel – volgens Bybelse tekste – met die gebiede in die Suide, dus die omgewing waar die Keniete en Midianiete gewoon het. 'n Verdere aanuiding van 'n verband tussen Jahwe en die Suide kom voor in Egiptiese dokumente. Hierdie betrokke tekste verwys na Yahu in die land van die Shasu-Bedoeïene, asook na 'n plek Seïr. Ander Egiptiese tekste verbind weer die Shasu met Edom – dus weereens die suidelike gebiede van die Keniete.

Die Keniete kon skynbaar hulle herkoms terugplaas na Kain, wie se seuns die leefstyl van die Keniete verteenwoordig het; hulle was naamlik metaalwerkers, musikante, en nomadiese veen- boere. Volgens die geslagslys van Juda in Kronieke 1, word die verskillende randgroepye in die suidelike dele genealogies aan mekaar verbind. Hierdie randgroepye sluit stamme in soos die Regabiete, Kalebiete, Kenassiete en Jeragmeliete. Meeste van hulle het metallurgie beoefen. Uit die aard van hulle beroep en nomadiese leefstyl het hulle rondbeweeg, en het dus die geleentheid gehad om hulle kultiese affiliasies – waarskynlik as Jahwe-aanbidders – na ander gebiede te versprei. Die Regabiete was bekend vir hulle asketiese leefwyse; in Jeremia 35 word spesifiek daarna verwys. Gedurende die tydperk van die monargie in Israel was daar 'n monoteïstiese Jahwe-alleen beweging in Juda. Hierdie beweging was hoofsaaklik saamgestel uit randgroepye. Ten spyte van 'n sinkretistiese godsdiensbeoefening in Juda en Israel, het hierdie beweging standvastig hulle monoteïstiese Jahwisme beoefen. Uit die aard van hulle beroep as smede is hulle waarskynlik saam met die hoëliu na Babilonië weggevoer. Die vraag ontstaan hoedat dit moontlik is dat 'n volk wat vir eeue 'n sinkretistiese godsdiens beoefen het, in 'n kwessie van enkele jare totaal verander om 'n streng, wettiese Jahwe monoteïsme na te volg. Volgens my hipoteese het die randgroepye van die Jahwe-alleen beweging – by name die Regabiete – 'n betekenisvolle rol gespeel tydens die ballingskap om die Jode te oortuig dat 'n Jahwe monoteïsme die antwoord op die katastrofe van die ballingskap is.

Naas die ondersoek na die Keniete, Regabiete en ander groepye, asook die Jahwe-alleen beweging sluit dié navorings 'n studie in ten opsigte van relevante argeologiese artefakte en
epigrafiese materiaal. Hieruit is bepaal dat verskillende dissiplines rakende bybelse navorsing, onderling van mekaar afhanklik is en dus nie in isolasie nagevors moet word nie. 'n Onderzoek na die fenomeen dat antieke gode met verwante name in verskillende panteons gevind word, dui daarop dat dié verskynsel van bepaalde Ya-name – wat oor 'n groot gebied in epigrafiese materiaal gevind is - moontlik verband kan hou met vroeëre tipe Jahwe-aanbidding elders as in Israel.

**SLEUTELTERMÉ**

Argeologie, Ballingskap, Jahwe, Jahwe-enleen beweging, Keniete, Keniete hipotese, Monoteïsme, Randgroep, Regabiete, Sinkretisme.