



Door with Winged Figure of the Goddess
ARAS Archives 2Ak.700

Welcome

to this living treasure, a rich gathering of archetypal symbols. These living presences touch the imagination and relate to the creativity in the depths of all human beings as the basic substance of life. Beyond the threshold, what awaits you moves as a rich web of images and symbols with surprising and sometimes astonishing interconnections. Venturing into this realm, one comes upon unfolding layers of meaning. Exploring these layers involves a certain kind of fluid movement and play that can bring with it elements of humor and wonder.

Inviting Wonder

The journey into the Archive often begins with a dream image, an inspiration, an interest in a motif, a wondering. A beginning image can serve, like Ariadne's thread, as a line to follow through the myriad entries in the Archive. Many individuals naturally enter the collection from a visual perspective and find the images lead deeper and deeper into meanings and understandings. These images are archetypal and do not necessarily relate to things concrete so much as things perceived indirectly. There is a kind of play involved in tracing the archetypal image and its symbolic facets that point beyond the thing itself. There is a play, too, involved in not holding too tightly to a word or image, yet, at the same time, staying with the image and its meanings without identifying oneself with it.

Beginning the Journey

If you are looking for a source of inspiration, try selecting [Search](#) and then select [Discover](#). This will bring up a montage. You may then click an image as it floats across the screen to see the image's record details. Once you have clicked an image, selecting [Discover](#) a second time on the drop-down menu will take you to a new motif. (Keys such as this are interspersed throughout the tutorial.)

For the purpose of this tutorial, we will work with a particular image. Imagine that the image of a fish appears in a dream and reappears over the course of a week in various forms—maybe on the radio as the name of a band or on the license plate of the car in front of you. Maybe fish shows itself on the cover of a magazine or in a painting with swirling koi in a gallery window. However it shows up, you feel that somehow something is trying to catch your attention by revisiting you. By giving the image your attention, not necessarily to figure it out, but to tend the deeper mysteries it may reveal, you can loosen formulated, fixed ideas and allow greater insight to emerge. A woman shares a dream:

I am walking behind my female friend along a narrow walkway of stones next to a rolling river. Because it is stormy, the river is rushing and the air is brisk. The mist engulfing us is a light rain. We are next to the shoreline and the water is clear enough that I can see three large salmon swimming with the current. Every ten feet or so, we decide whether or not to dip our feet into holes in the pathway. It is a ritual or a cleansing process. I follow my friend's lead and we are completely immersed in the exercise. Our walk is rhythmical and fluid, like a graceful dance. We are both wearing long, white, flowing dresses that blow in the wind as we dip, swirl. Water is all around us, at our feet and in the misty air. The sound of moving water is deafening. I am not sure whether it is dawn or dusk and the light is spectacular--a golden glow. We are part and particle of nature, part of the earth around us, part of everything.

The dreamer feels the dream fish calls to her as a particularly charged image. A first step in engaging the image might be to find a basic photograph or to draw a picture actively re-imagining or recalling the qualities of the dream fish. Using the Archive, one may relate with fish by exploring the various record summaries that have associations to fish. The collection contains a wide scope of motifs gathered from a multitude of cultures in many forms including: artistic, mythological, ritualistic, spiritual, philosophical, and religious. Fish touch into each of these realms as they are found in images of art and story across the history of human beings. Existing in the cave paintings of Lascaux, the art of Paul Klee, and the flying imagery of Chagall, fish also fill Neptune's watery realms out of which Aphrodite is born.

How to start a basic search

This basic search begins with the general topic of *fish* to discover if a specific record draws you to view it. Upon typing *fish* in the **Search the Archive** box, a drop-down menu appears with a list of options for various categories referencing *fish*.



In moving the cursor over the drop-down list, the different keywords are highlighted. If a selection is made inadvertently, one may choose to follow the lead or use the left arrow or back button at the top of the screen to return to the previous drop-down menu. Additionally, if you would like to change the text size, go to the *View* menu at the top of the page and select *Zoom In* or *Zoom Out*.

At the top and bottom of the search Results Page, click on "See as animation," to see a flowing procession of the images found in that particular grouping. If you would like to follow an image, put the cursor over it and click.

In listening with the imagination and holding the image gently, you may find, as the dreamer did, that when scrolling over the options for fish, "fish Goddess or Woman," feels right or sounds interesting or recalls something of the quality of the dream. When this selection is highlighted, click or double-click "fish Goddess or Woman." Select the first image on this page 2Bh.801 "Fountain as a goddess with a vase."

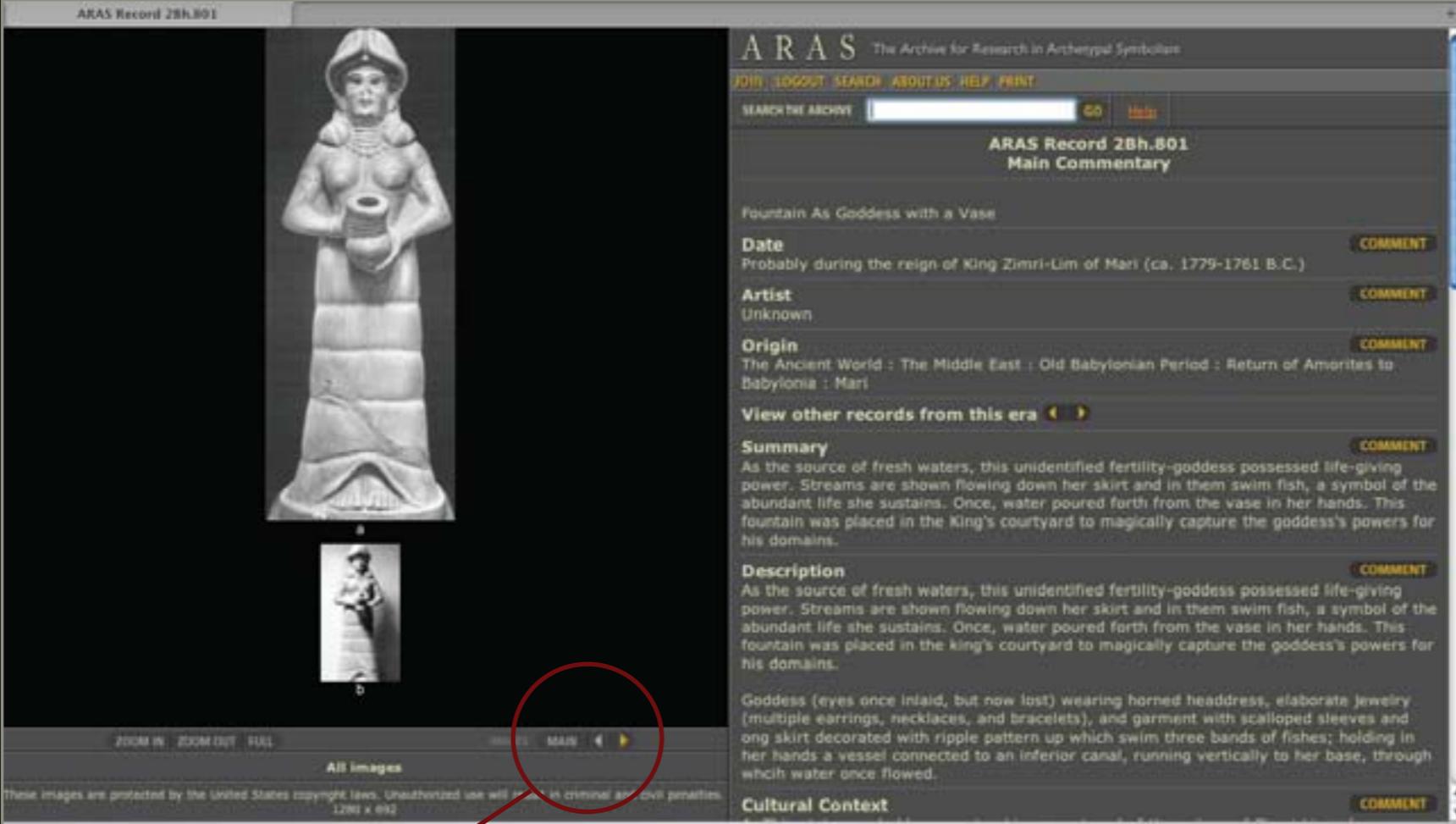


2Bh.801
 Fountain As Goddess with a Vase. ... 2Bh.801 Fountain As Goddess with a Vase Probably during the reign ... waters, this unidentified fertility-goddess possessed life-giving power. Streams ...

ARAS Search result example

To enter the record, place the cursor over the record number. This will change the underlined number to a bright yellow. Click on this yellow number or either one of the photographs to enter the detailed record.

Selecting the record locator number will show both photos in the image display screen on the left of the Main Commentary page. Alternately, if one or the other photograph is chosen, only one will display at a time.



ARAS Record 2Bh.801

ARAS The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism

JOIN | LOGOUT | SEARCH | ABOUT US | HELP | PRINT

SEARCH THE ARCHIVE GO [Help](#)

ARAS Record 2Bh.801
Main Commentary

Fountain As Goddess with a Vase

Date [COMMENT](#)
Probably during the reign of King Zimri-Lim of Mari (ca. 1779-1761 B.C.)

Artist [COMMENT](#)
Unknown

Origin [COMMENT](#)
The Ancient World : The Middle East : Old Babylonian Period : Return of Amorites to Babylonia : Mari

View other records from this era ◀ ▶

Summary [COMMENT](#)
As the source of fresh waters, this unidentified fertility-goddess possessed life-giving power. Streams are shown flowing down her skirt and in them swim fish, a symbol of the abundant life she sustains. Once, water poured forth from the vase in her hands. This fountain was placed in the King's courtyard to magically capture the goddess's powers for his domains.

Description [COMMENT](#)
As the source of fresh waters, this unidentified fertility-goddess possessed life-giving power. Streams are shown flowing down her skirt and in them swim fish, a symbol of the abundant life she sustains. Once, water poured forth from the vase in her hands. This fountain was placed in the king's courtyard to magically capture the goddess's powers for his domains.

Goddess (eyes once inlaid, but now lost) wearing horned headdress, elaborate jewelry (multiple earrings, necklaces, and bracelets), and garment with scalloped sleeves and long skirt decorated with ripple pattern up which swim three bands of fishes; holding in her hands a vessel connected to an inferior canal, running vertically to her base, through which water once flowed.

Cultural Context [COMMENT](#)

These images are protected by the United States copyright laws. Unauthorized use will result in criminal and civil penalties.
1280 X 812

ARAS Record example

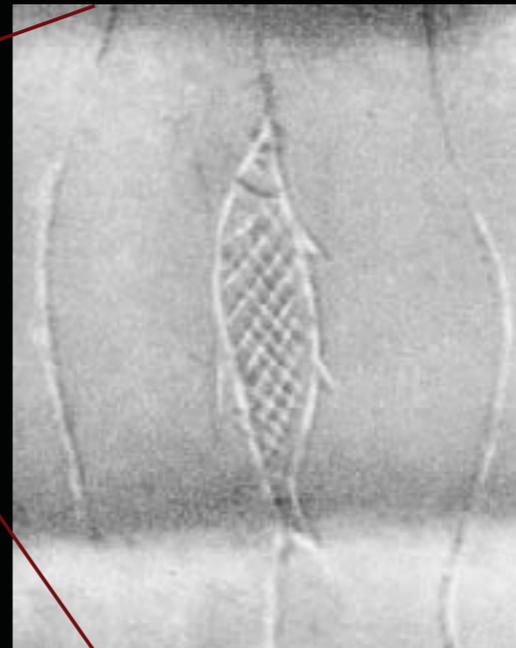
Visit each photograph within a record with more than one image by clicking the left and right arrows beneath the image screen. The "Main" button will bring you back to a view of all images in the record.



Upon first sight of the record, the dreamer responds to the feminine figure, to the fish, flowing water, and flowing garments that relate to her dream. While reading the Main Commentary Description, the dreamer also finds things that touch her, hold meaning for her, in relation to her dream. These items are shown in bold italics in the paragraph:

As the source of ***fresh waters***, this unidentified fertility goddess possessed life-giving power. ***Streams*** are shown ***flowing down her skirt and in them swim fish***, a symbol of the abundant life she sustains. Once, water poured forth from the vase in her hands. [...]

Goddess [...] wearing horned headdress, elaborate jewelry (multiple earrings, necklaces, and bracelets), and ***garment*** with scalloped sleeves and ***long skirt decorated with ripple pattern up which swim three bands of fishes***; holding in her hands a ***vessel*** connected to an inferior canal, running vertically to her base, through which ***water*** once ***flowed***.



detail of fish in folds of dress

Select the "Zoom In" tab beneath the images and click on the center of the area you would like to zoom in to see. By zooming in on the garment, new detail reveals itself. When enlarging an image, the screen will often show a pixelated image or one that appears blurry. Allow a moment and the image will become clearer.

To reduce the image size click the "Zoom Out" button.

Fish are part of the fabric of the garment and they originate from the Goddess and from the vessel in her hands. The dreamer has, for some time, also had a strong interest in vessels and their symbolic meaning. In her further exploration, she will find how the books in the Jung Institute Library and the images of the Archive complement one another. Biffie Johnson, in her book, *Lady of the Beasts*, describes how the "vessel of the fish," or *vesica piscis* from Latin, points to the vessel as feminine, as a womb, and to fish as symbolic of generation and rebirth (224). The finned, gilled creatures appear in ceremonies and writings, in the signs of stars as astrological Pisces, and in the outline of the mandorla, which means "almond" in Italian.

The Mandorla

In the collection mandorlas appear in a variety of ways:



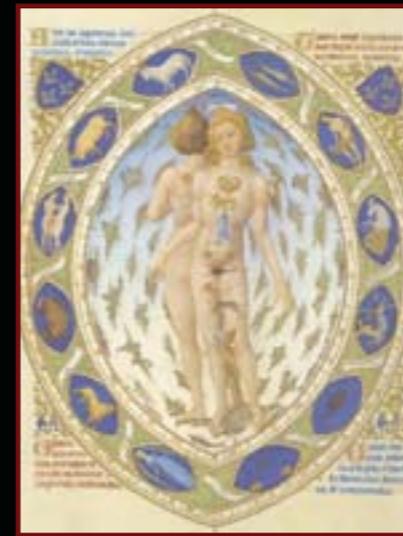
Venus standing in
mandorla above
fruited tree
ARAS: 5Fb.015



Object with the outer shape
of a mandorla
ARAS: 5Eo.510



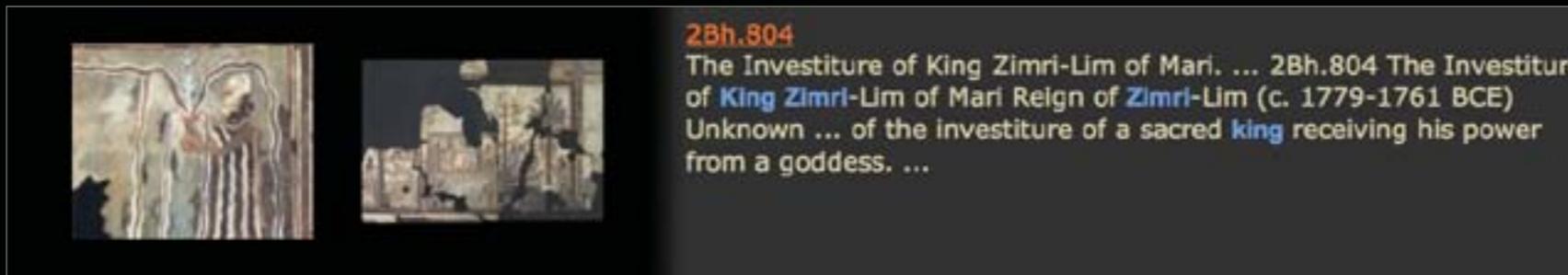
Shakyamuni
ARAS: 7Lf.002



Zodiac Man within mandorla
ARAS: 5Fk.042

Almond-shaped fish adorn the garments of the Goddess and the section titled "Cultural Context" includes a description of the vessel she holds as a source; "an ancient and potent Mesopotamian symbol of life-giving fresh waters, on which the fecundity of plant and animal life depends."

The search may lead one from the creativity of the Goddess and source of the waters of life and into an interest in more images relating to this statue, this fountain contained within the walls of the king's courtyard. Paragraph C within Cultural Context indicates another record from the same geographical location and time period, 2Bh.804, a wall painting. This painting reveals that the statue is a three-dimensional portrayal of an image in the painting. This record reveals another source of fish and water:



To print the images or commentary, go to the Print menu below the ARAS page heading and use the drop-down list to highlight and select image, commentary or order slides.

For instructions on how to save images for PowerPoint presentations, go to the Help menu and select *PowerPoint*.

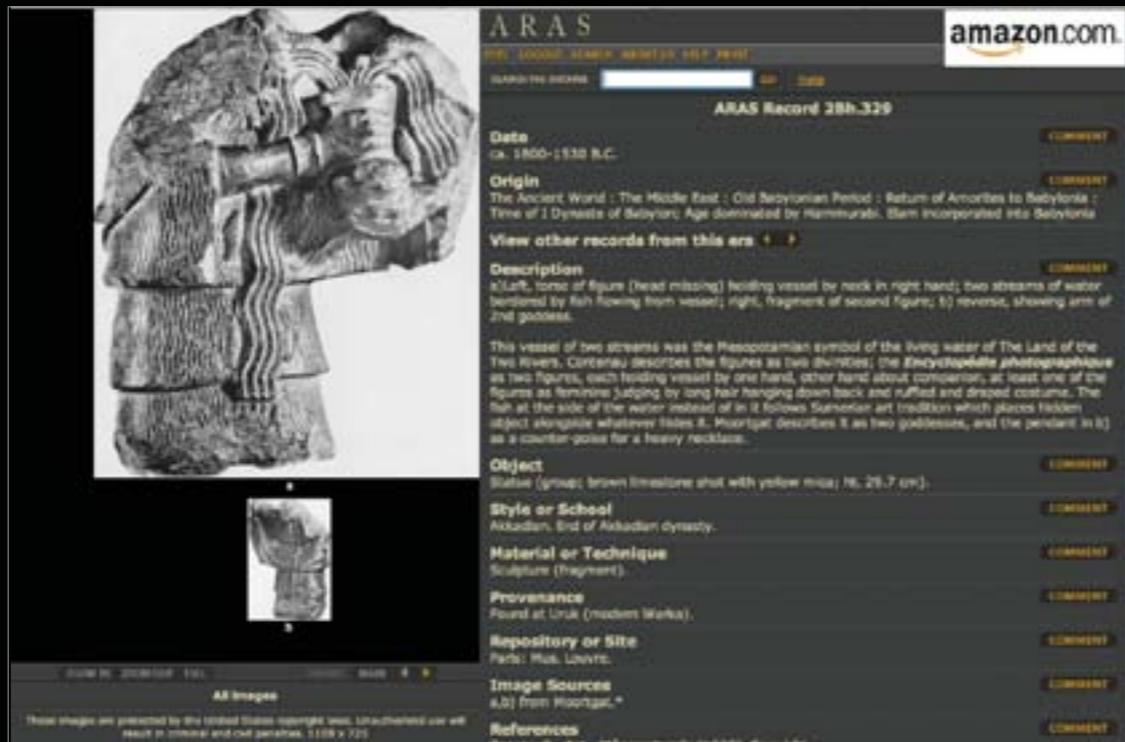
Investiture of King Zimri-Lim of Mari
2Bh.804 detail of vessel sprouting plants
and streams with fish



The Description for 2Bh.804 states:

Lower register: Two goddesses wearing horned crowns hold vessels from which plants sprout and streams full of fishes flow.

An alternate way to explore images is to select “View other records from this era.” Select the arrow pointing to the left and click through four records using the “View other records from this era” tool until you see the torso of a figure wearing flowing garments holding a vase pouring forth water (2Bh.329). The water and fabric echo one another in pattern and movement. In zooming in, more fish are found swimming in the “living water.” As in the previous image, the fish swim in both directions, to and from the source.



Try the Zoom In tool to see the detail of the fish swimming in both directions.



When zoomed in, move the image to see other areas by placing the arrow of the mouse over a part of the image, the center for example, and clicking and holding the mouse button down. While continuing to hold the mouse button down, drag the mouse on the mousepad up and down or left and right or diagonally. If you get to an edge and cannot move further release the button and select another place on the image. If you need to exit this mode and begin again, select Full on the menu beneath the image and the image will return to the size at which it originally appeared.

The dreamer feels a connection to this image. She connects more deeply with it when she reads the Description. The text reflects words and images that hold a charge for her:

This vessel of two streams was the Mesopotamian symbol of the living water of The Land of the Two Rivers. Contenau describes the figures as two divinities; the Encyclopédie photographique as two figures, each holding vessel by one hand, other hand about companion, at least one of the figures as feminine judging by long hair hanging down back and ruffled and draped costume. The fish at the side of the water instead of in it follows Sumerian art tradition, which places hidden object alongside whatever hides it. Moortgat describes it as two goddesses, and the pendant in b) as a counter-poise for a heavy necklace.

Try selecting the (b) image, then return to the main screen of two images by selecting "Main".

The dreamer finds possibilities to follow from these records as each contains the quality of fluidity with commentary about vessels from which water flows resulting in continuous renewal for the land and waterways abundant with fish. She finds a resonance with the garments or robes and with the feminine, which lead her to explore Archetypes in this image at the bottom of the Main Commentary page.



This initial search might yield a new sense of the Goddess, the vessel of the feminine held in a sacred manner that honors the fluidity of life. The dreamer is touched at her core by a sense of the importance of water and how it means life for human beings. She feels acutely aware of the current situation in the world and the necessity for all beings to have access to clean water. There is an element of concern and a return to the image and the abundance, the overflowing naturalness of life. The water seems to flow both out from and into the vessel while the fish swim back toward the source. She relates to the water as faith and the vessel as containing the life-giving force, the creative spirit that continually comes forth.

This understanding might lead to a turn to explore vessels and the feminine. In the Search box type in "vessel" and go to the drop down menu to the listing that says: Vessel, Feminine. On the third page, the image that our dreamer has a resonance with is that of a Goddess, perhaps the Goddess of Love, Aphrodite (3Hd.700).

The image calls to the dreamer inciting the feeling of the motion of dancing in robes in the dream. The record states, "The gesture of exposure, (...) the arm across the body, a sign of gratitude; the offering of a dove. The latter, held against the torso was particularly popular in the Greek islands and the East."



Next, type “dancing” in the Search box following the thread that has a strong impact on the dreamer. The first image of dance and diaphanous dresses (2Ad.090) touches her deeply. In this image, women keep the beat while bare-chested girls perform a dance, possibly of Hathor, goddess of music and dance, love, and joy. The girls illustrate a very human quality and unity in the arching of their backs and reaching out in a scene where everyone participates. The dreamer felt a resonance with the text, firstly, under the Description section in this record and, secondly, from the Cultural Context:

On the left of each register appear two standing women who wear short wigs and white diaphanous dresses, beneath which the outline of their bodies can be seen. (...) The dancers stand on their right legs, with torso tilted and head thrown back as they arch their backs in time to the music. In a pose of exaltation, they fully extend their left legs in a high kick while their arms are raised up in a parallel gesture. The artist has produced a visual pun by associating the tassels of the dancers with the hieroglyph for “placenta” (also shown as a white circle). (...)

On her (Hathor’s) feast day, dancers may have begun their procession at the goddess’s temple, the “home of intoxication, the place of enjoyment,” and danced through the streets, distributing Hathor’s blessings by means of chants and ritualized movements.



The image speaks as another expression of feminine creativity with the symbol of the placenta and the presence of the goddess recalling the *vesica piscis*, the mandorla, and womb. “Compositions of this type were intended to perpetuate the funeral festivities for eternity, magically protecting, nourishing, and entertaining the deceased” (2Ad.090). The lyrical collaboration and fluidity of dancers connect the dreamer to the feminine where the moisture and richness of creative joy belongs as a necessary part of life and its cyclical nature of death and rebirth, of the exchange and interchange that conceals, reveals and transforms. Another portion of the record reveals:

Hathor was perhaps the most many-sided of all the deities of the Egyptian pantheon. Especially as goddess of love -- and lust as well -- she represented powerful forces in the human psyche. She “personified effervescent divine life and passion” and thus represented urges that had to be calmed or appeased (Bleeker, 57).

Within the Archetypal Significance the record reads:

(...) With the hieroglyph for the placenta in a funerary context, this scene suggests rebirth in the next world as well as invoking fertility for the continuing of life in this world. The association of Hathor with the life of women establishes her as protectress of female experiences and activities.

The funerary festivities and dances celebrate life's joy and bring consciousness to one's individual source and associations to one's social connections and cultural heritage. The dreamer's response to the funerary rites connects her to the recent loss of someone close to her. The dancing and creativity relate to her personal creativity. In the commentary of the image, the dancers' skirts are referred to as kilts, which the dreamer also responds to due to her Celtic heritage. An individual's particular background roots them in mythological material and spiritual traditions that can be valuable places of reference.

In conjunction with her Celtic background, a return to the fish of the dream and the number three reveals an intertwined symbol of the tripartate Goddess predating the Christian meaning of the masculine trinity ascribed to it. The triangular image of the *triquetra* is made of three interwoven *vesica piscis*. Celtic tradition recognized the fish as a feminine symbol of return and renewal and water as a symbol for the flow of the divine feminine principle. The triquetra unites three aspects of the goddess: maiden, mother, and crone. The three parts of the whole are about birth, giving birth, and death and the continuous interplay of the web of life. Fish with their perpetually open eyes invite new perspectives and the three fish together in this image are associated with rebirth and renewal through the water of life.

Fish are considered sacred in many religious traditions. In mythology and fairytales, fish play various roles. In life, salmon born in fresh water return to the saltwater sea of their ancestors and swim upstream, revisiting their freshwater birthplace to spawn new generations. In places around the world, salmon, with their silvery skin and pinkish-red flesh, are prized as a delicious and nourishing food. In relation to the dreamer's Celtic background, the ancient Celtic symbol of salmon has associations with inspiration and prophecy, with knowledge and wisdom. Celtic mythology reveals that salmon gained wisdom by consuming the sacred hazel nuts from the well of Segais. The stories tell how one could then gain the wisdom of the well by eating this salmon.

The dreamer feels a resonance with the fluid strength of the water, with the dance, the fish in the folds of the gowns, with the triquetra, and the Celtic tale as she enters the third phase of her life for she feels the dream carries an initiatory experience traversing the maiden and mother phases and her movement into her wisdom years. She wears a necklace with a medallion over her heart containing a picture of her grandmother, her ancestress, and feels the need to grow into her nature as a wisdom keeper. By consciously holding a space for and lovingly tending these images, the dreamer has experienced a transformation within herself and touched us in her sharing.

Reference: Johnson, Buffie. *Lady of the Beasts: Ancient Images of the Goddess and Her Sacred Animals*. San Francisco: Harper and Rowe, 1988.

In gratitude to all those who helped in the creation of this tutorial and to those whose participation in it and exploration of it adds to its depths and wonder...

Among those, I would like to expressly thank: Richard Hassen and To the Point Design Studio, Patricia Sohl, Ami Ronnberg, Allison Langerak, Kathleen Russ, Deborah Wesley, Tom Singer, and Baruch Gould.

