**ANIMA RISING**

A Slideshow of Goddesses and Matriarchal Symbols

from all over the World

by Marcia Matthews

Photography by Linda Olshesky

Presented courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum in Boston, and the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

1) ANIMA RISING Title Page

2) and 3) Sekhmet, from Thebes, ancient capital of Egypt, 1400 BC.

Sekhmet was the name of a first dynasty queen who lived around 3100 BC. Her tomb is at Sakkara. Her totem was the lion, and this statue commemorates her as a goddess of war, the desert, the hot sun, and death. She holds the anka, the key of life known to us as the woman's symbol.

This is one of 572 statues of Sekhmet sculpted from stone for the Mut temple.

4) and 5) The Hathor Crown: Horns and Solar Disc, from the Valley Temple at Giza, 2500 BC.

Sky Goddess Hathor personified by the queen of King Mycerinus, with her daughter as the Hare Goddess of the province, holding an anka. The inscription reads, "I give you all good things, all offerings and provisions which are in Upper Egypt forever." Hathor is the World Cow, Goddess of Love, Joy and Beauty, Motherhood and Fertility. She is the Mother of Light, and the Goddess of Women.

6) Hathor, Egypt, date unknown.

Hathor looks down from the top of a column, flanked by two cobras as symbols of divine authority. She is the heavenly Cow who jumped over the moon, and she is the Sacred Cow. She rose from the ocean to be the sky, and the four compass points. An Egyptian blessing says, "May the Golden One give life to thy nose and the Mistress of the Stars join herself to thee." Her temple can be visited at Dendera.

7) Anka from King Tuthmosis tomb, 1410 BC.

The emblem of the life symbolized the spirit double. Here is female form is obvious from the triangle, a metaphor for the female organ, and the primary form of the triangle. It also means fire, female, mother and the moon. The three phases of the moon became the Triple Goddess, Virgin, Mother and Crone. The priestess sat on a tripod, and the cauldron stood on a tripod.

8) Gorgon, from Abydos, Egypt, 1400 BC.

The leering face on the right with dark coloring and flat nose reflects African influence. Gorgons were said to have snaky, kinky hair like a headful of snakes. The Gorgon face was used to drive evil away with her protruding tongue.

On the left are three ivory vessels for kohl, in the shape of columns, and an alabaster ointment jar in the form of a pregnant woman with Hathor headdress.

9) Isis pectoral, Sudan, 600 BC.

Isis incorporated every nature goddess and her worship spread to Cyprus, Crete, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. One of Her names was Stella Maris. She was so beloved by the people that Christians could not stamp out Her worship, and were forced to admit Her, under the name Mary, into their sect.

This gold pectoral combines many symbols: She holds an anka and a sistrum, the ceremonial instrument of women. On her head is her hieroglyph, the throne of Egypt. She wears the wings of Nekhbet (the vulture goddess), the scaly skin of Ua Zit (the cobra goddess), and the cat face of Sky Goddess Nut.

In one inscription Isis states: "I am all that is, has been, or ever will be. No mortal has yet been able to lift the veil that covers me."

Robert Graves quotes Lucius Apuleius:

...By and by appeared to me from the midst of the sea a divine and venerable face, worshipped even of the gods themselves. Then little by little, I seemed to see the whole figure of Her body, bright and mounting out of the sea and standing before me...She had a great abundance of hair, flowing and curling... She bare many garlands interlaced with flowers, and in the middle of Her forehead was a plain circlet in fashion of a mirror...

Her cloak was shining black, speckled with stars and bordered with fruits and flowers. She carried a sistrum, and a golden boat with a cobra in its prow.

Isis said to Lucius:

Behold, Lucius, I am come; thy weeping and prayer hath moved me to succor thee. I am She that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the elements...chief of the powers divine, queen of all that are in hell, the principal of them that dwell in heaven, manifested alone and with one form of all the gods and goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the seas, and the lamentable silences of hell be disposed; my name, my divinity is adored throughout the world, in divers manners, in variable customs, and by many names...Behold I am present to favor and aid thee... Put away all thy sorrow, for behold the healthful days which is ordained by my providence.

10) and 11) Sistrum, Egypt, 600 BC.

The instrument of women, the sistrum, is a timbrel or rattle made of a flat metal or wooden piece doubled over and perforated with rods, holding metal disks that chime when moved. This one has Hathor's face and cobras carved on the rod ends. Plutarch wrote: "The sistrum shows that whatever exists ought to be shaken and never cease from movement, but should be aroused and agitated as if it were asleep...By means of movement, generation frees nature." Isis plays the sistrum when She wants to change conditions, to startle us into awareness of everything we are familiar with accepting. Egyptian and Greek women held out sistra to worshippers during the dance to bestow the blessing of the Goddess.

12) Ta-Urt, Egypt, date unknown.

This death Goddess is hippo, crocodile and crone. She is often shown with cow horns. She is the Mother taking back what she has borne. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, She guards the gates to the Underworld:

Lady of Heaven, the mistress of the world, you devour with fire...

She who prevails with knives... Fire, the lady of flames...

Lady of might who dances on the blood red ones...

Destroyer of fiends at eventide.

Here She holds a winged anka in a knot of Isis buckle amulet. The girdle tie of Isis granted immortality.

As we turn to other lands, Egyptian influences continue to be seen.

13) Sphinx (top center), Griffin (left), and Gorgon (right). From Greece, 600 BC.

The sphinx, a lioness with a woman's head, appealed to the Greek imagination. When Oedipus slew the Sphinx of Thebes, his was only one of many accounts of Greek heroes overcoming the might of fearsome females.

The griffin is half eagle or vulture and half lion. It symbolizes eternal vigilance and protection. Derived from the vulture goddess Nekhbet, the griffin is associated with the sphinx and Gorgon, as symbols of the Goddess of animals. Diana Nemesis took the form of a griffin.

The Gorgon is associated with both sphinx and griffin. In Greek myth, the Gorgons were three sisters who lived in Libya. Medusa was the most powerful of the three, a warrior queen whose totems were the horse and the snake.

A legend grew that whoever gazed upon Medusa turned to stone, petrified by Her power. The Gorgon face became a mask worn by a priestess, who hissed like a snake to drive evil away. Medusa is shown with teeth, mustache and beard, on bowls, cups, and oven doors, as a salutary warning to guard the contents. According to Greek myth, Perseus beheaded Medusa and the winged horse Pegasus sprang from Her blood. Wherever a drop of Her blood fell, vipers infested the desert sands of Libya. Her glaring face with gnashing teeth appeared on shields of both Greeks and Trojans during the Trojan War.

18) Athena with Medusa aegis, Cambridge, U.S., modern.

Athena, Goddess of War and Wisdom, is always shown with Medusa's face bordered by snakes on Her aegis, or breastplate. She wears a helmet with a sphinx on it. She has bright grey eyes and long hair. She carries a shield and spear, and throws lightning bolts. The olive and the owl are Her symbols. Her famous temple, the Parthenon, was built in 450 BC. Another temple on the Acropolis, the Erechthium, was devoted to Her snake. As a snake Goddess, Athena is related to the pre-Hellenic Cretan Goddess Rhea.

Athena was incorporated into the patriarchal pantheon when She was "reborn" from the head of Zeus, and enlisted against the Amazons of Asia Minor. A fifty foot gold and ivory clad statue of Athena stood in the Parthenon until Theodosius stole it in 426 AD and carried it off to Constantinople.

Athena's nickname "Pallas" means "She who brandishes a lance."

19) and 20) Medusa, Gardner Museum Court, Boston, U.S., date unknown.

The atrium in the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum is a Mediterranean-style Goddess temple, with many Greek Goddess statues. In the center of the court mosaic is the face of Medusa, associated with Artemis and the Sun in the Artemis temple at Corfu. According to A.L. Frothingham, She is "the pre-Olympian child of Mother Earth, and belongs to the matriarchal stage, when the Mother Goddess Gaia was supreme and the great snake, the emblem of life, symbolized the productive forces of Mother Earth...The darting snakes of Her nimbus are solar heat, and the snakes at Her girdle are earth moisture. At Corfu, She is the great producing force of the universe, through the combination of heat and moisture, the presiding genius over the creation and evolution of the world order."

Other symbols in the atrium are the dolphins flanking the Mother Goddess over the fountain, the amphora, or vase, and the toad.

21) Diana, Italy, Etrusco-Roman, 250 BC.

The Lady of the Beasts is often shown with wings and a crown, holding or throttling rampant lions. Gorgons often took this pose, as protecting or dominating the beasts. Artemis, whose name means "to slaughter," was honored by the sacrifice of castrated animals, and was served by eunuch priests.

The Christian Madonna sits on a throne adorned with lions, the Hindu and Buddhist Tara rides the cosmic lion and carries the sun in Her hand, and the Chinese Kuanyin stands between two lions. In the form we see here, Diana symbolizes the cruelty and death inflicted by Nature, as well as the spiritual protection of Her wings.

22) Artemis, Greece, 470 BC.

The followers of Diana, or Artemis, were women who shunned sex with men, and marriage. They roved in tribes, hunting, running in the forests, and learning sports. They turned their weapons against men who pursued them, such as Aktaeon, who happened upon Artemis bathing. She turned the peeping Tom into a deer, killed him and let her dogs tear him apart.

In ancient times, women hunted and fought with the best weapons of their day. Archaeologists excavated a Scythian burial mound near the Moldavian village of Balabany, and found an Amazon warrior of the 5th century BC. She was buried with her war horse, spears, arrows and gold earrings.

Battalions of Amazons from Asia Minor fought in the Trojan War. Hippe of the horse clan founded the temple of Artemis at Ephesus. Leucippe (white horse) was queen of the Thermodon Amazons. Hippolyte followed her as queen. After Hippolyte was killed by the Greeks, Penthesilea became the queen. She arrived in Troy after Hektor's funeral with an army of women. Giving a fearsome war cry, they attacked the Greeks and fought fiercely. Penthesilea killed many of the bravest Greeks before Achilles stabbed her to death and stripped her of her armor. When he saw how young and beautiful she was, he wished he had captured her alive. When his soldier Thersites laughed, Achilles killed him. He returned her body to the Trojans for burial.

The British Museum has a series of reliefs taken from the tomb of Queen Artemisia in Halicarnassus, Turkey (350 BC), showing Amazons fighting Greeks. Dressed like male soldiers, they have the light skin denoting females. They wear leggings, trousers, skimpy tunics, sometimes baring their breasts. Expert horsewomen, they fight with the labyris (double ax), spear and sword.

23) and 24) Labyris, Crete, 1500 BC.

This gold votive symbol of the double ax was found in the sacred cave of Arkalokhori. The inscription in Linear A Minoan reads I DA MATE, or Mount Ida Mother (Goddess Rhea). The earliest form of the ax, the labyris dates back to paleolithic times. It was a sacred emblem in Egypt, denoting double power. On Crete, it symbolized the sun. The labyrinth palace at Knossos was named after this symbol. Crete had paved roads, running water, and a sanitation system. Women enjoyed the sport of bull-leaping.

25) Rhea, Crete, 1500 BC (?), provenance challenged.

The Snake Goddess Rhea was the primeval Mother Goddess of Crete and most of the Mediterranean. The priestesses tamed snakes and kept them in pits or vessels, using their venom as a hallucinogen to assist in prophecy. This small idol of gold and ivory shows how priestesses dressed on Crete. She holds divine wisdom in each hand.

The Pythia was the Delphic Oracle. Oracles and sibyls were given the name Pythoness, which later meant "witch" to the Christian persecutors. The snake symbolizes wisdom, regeneration, and the truth. The Furies, who revenged breaches of taboo, were shown with snakes in this pose. In the myths, the Furies are militant harpies with wings to pounce on their prey.

26) Hekate, Greek Island of Aegina, 100 AD.

Hekate represents the darkness and terror of the night. She haunts crossroads and graveyards, announced by the barking of dogs. The Goddess of sorcery and witchcraft, She was also called Hekuba and Hekale. Scylla the sea monster was one of Her transformations.

The Furies were attendants of Hekate, Goddess of the Underworld. The fearful brood of night, their names are the persecutors, the angered ones (Erinyes), the terrible ones (Dirae), and the benevolents (Eumenides). Among the best known of these terrorists were Alecto, Tisiphone and Megeara. They had a sacred grove at Kolonos near Athens, in the time of Theseus and Oedipus. They carried out the curses of mothers, avenged matricide, and punished disobedience, and disrespect to old age.

27) Isis, Kephissa, Greece, 110 AD.

This is the grave stele of Sosibia, a devotee of Isis. She holds a sistrum and a bucket of sacred Nile water, and her robe is tied with an Isis knot.

28) Scylla, Chiusi, Italy, 250 BC.

Carved from limestone, this Etruscan sarcophagus shows the deceased woman above a sea serpent. Scylla, the devouring whirlpool, was the daughter of Hekate and Phorkys, who lived at the head of the treacherous Messina Strait. A triple Goddess, She ruled sky, earth and underworld. She was the storm and sea monster who killed six of Odysseus's men, devouring them at Her cave mouth.

29) Sphinx, Assos, Turkey, 530 BC.

These twin sphinxes once guarded the doorway of a temple, holding between them an altar or offering stand. They show the spread of Egyptian influence into the Middle East.

30) Astarte, Syria, 3000 BC.

This small bronze Astarte comes from Tell Jedeidah, Northern Syria. She displays Her breasts in a universal symbol of the life-giving Mother Goddess. Astarte, also known as Asherah and Ashtorah, was an amorous goddess whose priestesses were temple prostitutes, who mated with worshippers in fertility rituals. She was Goddess of ancient Phoenicia, who saved Her people from captivity by paying tribute to the Egyptians. She was worshipped all over the Mediterranean, along with Her son and lover, Baal, the golden calf; and Her warrior daughter, Anath.

When the Hebrews invaded Canaan (present-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria), they found that women owned land, property, businesses and temples. Women served as sacred "qadishtu" in the temples. The Hebrews fought back with their Levite law code, which forbad adultery on pain of death, in order to ensure paternity and male control of property. It took the Hebrews a thousand years to suppress the open worship of Astarte, which then went underground and has resurfaced in Wicce today.

Astarte was symbolized by the pillar (asherah), the fig tree, and the tree of life.

31) Ishtar, Iraq, 600 BC.

The lion was one of the Zodiac animals ornamenting the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. The blue-tiled gate of the city showed golden dragons, bulls and griffins as well. The griffin symbolized Ishtar's warlike aspect. In Babylonian epics, She caused the great flood.

Her foremother Tiamat (Tigris-Euphrates region, 4000 BC) was represented as a sphinx, and stood for primordial chaos and the sea. As a sea monster, She swallowed the spirit of the solar year (Marduk) and he was reborn as a goat-fish (Capricorn).

Ishtar appeared in Babylon around 1800 BC, taking over from the Sumerian Goddess Inanna. To the Hebrews, Babylon was a wicked city of harlots. The temple of Ishtar had hanging gardens fed by waterwheels from the Euphrates, and a ziggurat (the tower of Babel). Remains of Ishtar temples can be seen at Agade and Ashur, Iraq; and Mari, Syria.

32) Devi, India, 250 BC.

This Mother Goddess wears the pomegranate of immortal life and fertility. In India, She was called Ida, Maya, Shakti and Devi. In the Upanishads, the god Brahma pays homage to Her:

Thou art the pristine spirit, the nature of which is bliss.

Thou art the ultimate nature and the clear light of heaven,

which illuminates and breaks the self-hypnotism

of the terrible round of rebirth,

and Thou art the one that muffles the universe

for all time in thine very own darkness.

33) Durga, Java, 1000.

Durga "The Inaccessible" was a wild, ferocious warrior from the mountains. She was an earthly avatar of the Devi, an unconquerable woman who appeared as the wrath of all the assembled gods, when a demon tyrant was threatening the world. A monster named Mahisha could take any shape. He ravaged the earth like a giant buffalo. The gods projected a cloud of fire which condensed into a woman with six arms.

"She was young, fair-colored, with a lovely, serene and majestic face. She was richly dressed in red and gold. She rode a fierce lion. She was good personified, but the powerful good, not the weak good. She laughed loudly. Her laughter shook the earth. The gods and the sages fell before her and worshipped her." (from Shakti Stories by Oroon Ghosh)

They gave all their weapons to Durga, and She holds the spear, sword and noose, as well as the conch, symbol of the female organ.

"The buffalo demon also heard her laughter. He rushed with his troops to see who had dared to challenge him. He laughed scornfully when he saw a woman, but the woman soon destroyed all his soldiers. The buffalo demon then fought on, unafraid, with Durga." (ibid.)

He changed into a lion, which she beheaded, but he escaped as a man with a sword. She shot him with arrows.

We continue the story as told by Zimmer in Myths and Symbols:

"The demon returned now to his favorite shape, that of the giant buffalo shaking the universe with the stamping of its hoofs. But the Goddess scornfully laughed, and again roared with a loud voice of laughter at all his tricks and devices. Pausing a moment in full wrath, she lifted to her lips, serenely, a bowl filled with the inebriating, invigorating liquor of the divine life force, and while she sipped the matchless drink, her eyes turned red. The buffalo demon, uprooting mountains with his horns, was flinging them against her, shouting defiantly at her the while, but with her arrows she was shattering them to dust. She called out to the shouting monster: `Shout on! Go on shouting one moment more, you fool, while I sip my fill of this delicious brew. The gods soon will be crying out for joy, and you shall lie murdered at my feet.'

"Even while she spoke, the goddess leapt into the air, and from above came down on the demon's neck. She dashed him to the earth and sent the trident through his neck. The adversary attempted once again to abandon the buffalo body, issuing from its mouth in the shape of a hero with a sword, but he had only half emerged when he was caught. He was half inside the buffalo and half outside, when the Goddess, with a swift and terrific stroke, beheaded him, and he died."

34) Kali, East Java, 1400.

Kali is the destructive aspect of the Goddess, whose name means "time." She devours what She has created, and images of Her are meant to shock the onlooker with horror of death. She wears a necklace of human skulls. According to Zimmer, she is "the most cherished and widespread of the personalizations of Indian cult.

In the Shakti story, Kali is born of the anger of Durga. She is very dark with long, loose hair flying about Her. She holds a giant sword and a man's severed head in two of Her four hands, encouraging Her worshippers with the other two. Her earrings are corpses. Her skirt is made of severed hands, trophies of Her battle against the army of demons.

35) Kuanyin, Sian, China, 580.

Flanked by lions, Kuanyin stands on a lotus and holds a pomegranate. Kuanyin is the Chinese Goddess of mercy and infinite compassion, a protectress of women. She is often portrayed sitting on a rocky island in the Indian Ocean, dressed in the scarves and necklaces of an Indian princess.

Kuanyin is identified with Tara, the highest form of spiritual transformation according to Erich Neumann in The Great Mother. Tara is the redeeming one who leads the soul to enlightenment, the godhead and mother of all Buddhas. As perfection of wisdom and knowledge, She is Prajnaparamita, who leads the soul across the river of world involvement to nirvana on the other shore. Kuanyin is often shown with an ambrosia vase (kalasa) to sprinkle the water of life on Her worshippers.

36) Kuanyin, Sian, China, 700.

Gautama Buddha lived in the Himalayas in the 6th Century BC. Buddhist missionaries entered China around 300. He was reincarnated 11 times, and since Kuanyin shares his attributes, this Kuanyin has 11 heads. She too has the urna, third eye of enlightenment, and the lotus of self-creation.

The lotus symbolizes the opening of the womb of the universe. In the Rig Veda, the Lotus Goddess is named Lakshmi. The Tara Upanishad and the Tantric Shakti are Hindu and Buddhist teachings of the female godhead.

37) Coatlicue, Honduras, 731.

This Mayan sculptured monolith shows the Mother Goddess of the Earth displaying Her breasts. Serpent skirt, the corn mother with seven snakes, was the original Mexican deity called Our Ancestress, the Heart of the Earth, who yielded crops only if warriors offered sacrifice.

Around 1200 BC, female figurines began to appear in the agricultural settlements of Honduras. Then the Olmec built pyramids to honor their dead. Their water goddess was called Jade, Lady Precious Green (Chalchiutlicue). Her moon temple can be seen at Mexico's largest classic city, Teotihuacan. The Mayan Moon Goddess Ixchel was represented with a serpent headdress. Mayan women were expected to make a pilgrimage to Cozumel, Her sacred island, to make offerings at Her sanctuary and receive Her blessing. Isla Mujeres was also devoted to Her worship. The Olmec and Mayan classic age ended by 900.

38) Quetzalpetlatl, Honduras, date unknown.

Quetzalpetlatl was a bright star, whose feathered shawl represented night and darkness. The ancient Mayan Goddess of the Sun and heavens was called Eagle Woman, and Ixchel was also called Eagle Woman. This modern day pottery Goddess is from Travesia on the Ulua River. She wears a bird headdress, and functions as a whistle. The Bird Goddess ruled over life and death. The sacrificial blood bowl was called the eagle bowl.

39) Pottery from Honduras, date unknown.

A woman and children wait patiently.

40) Mangbetu Goddess, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire), modern.

God the Mother is represented in a ceramic female effigy jar with the elongated headdress of a Mangbetu woman. The jar is used for palm wine, and its breasts highlight the identification between the Goddess and the woman, the primordial female in her life-giving aspect. Other Goddesses from Zaire show a mother carrying a jar while suckling a child, a female ancestor, a stool supported by a female figure, and women at the ends of staffs of authority. Tribal art reveals that in many tribes, authority comes from the mother. Just as Isis was pictured as a throne for the pharaoh, women support the chief's stool. Akua-ba figurines in the anka form are carried by women who want to become pregnant.

Women create most of the pottery and wood carvings showing aggressive, exaggerated breasts and dynamic poses that reveal their vital role in tribal society. Queen mothers ruled in West Africa, and those of the Akan tribe claimed to be the incarnation of the Triple Moon Goddess Ngame.

41) Isis, Boston, US, modern.

This spiritual statue carries the bowl of abundance in one hand and scatters its contents with the other. Wings lifted, She strides on the earth, personifying freedom and movement.

Every urban center has goddess images, paintings and statues, outdoors and in museums, but we don't need to live in cities to see Her presence. She is Mother Nature, found in animals and plants, earth, sea and sky. Look for these symbols of the Goddess: mirror, double ax, anka, vase, maze, triangle, cavern, and the round stone with a hole.

The Holy Stone Talisman with its helper, Red Goblin:

Walked I forth on May Day morning,

searched I faithful for the round stone.

Ask I help of Great Diana, ask I help of Great Aradia.

Found I the round stone,

held within my hands the golden round stone.

Lo I cast my eyes toward Heaven,

caught I the round stone, held I fast the round stone,

lest the falling round stone return to Earth from whence I took it.

I conjure thee Red Goblin

I conjure thee by Diana,

I conjure thee by Aradia,

beautiful and beloved Mother, lovely Goddess of all witches,

Lovely Goddess of the Earthlings, by them did I conjure thee.

By the word of my Moon Mother,

lovely Goddess of the moonbeams,

By them did I conjure thee.

Now I pray thee, Red Goblin,

do not abandon or forsake me, for I have great need of thee.

Covered I the round stone, with silk of red I wrapped it,

prepared for thee a warm abode.

Rest thou inside my pocket until I have need of thee.

Be thou willing to assist me, for thou shalt do my bidding

when I call thee forth, Red Goblin.

Abidest thou within the round stone until the day when by Diana

I release thee to return unto the nether, to the place where I called thee.

So mote it be.

--from the Grimoire of Lady Sheba by Jessie Wicker Bell

MAY THE GRACIOUS GODDESS FREE YOU FROM ALL SLAVERY. BLESSED BE.