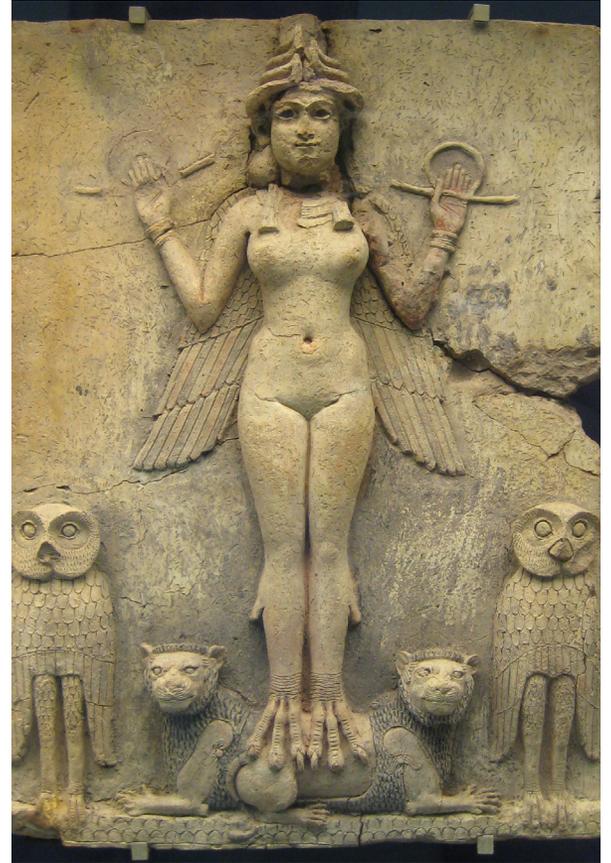


TOKIN' WOMEN  
A 4000-YEAR HERSTORY

BY  
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The goddess  
**Ishtar**, whose  
aromatic herb  
was qunnabu  
(cannabis)  
(2300 B.C.E.)



In ancient Sumeria, “Ishtar was held in high esteem as a heavenly monarch,” writes Jeanne Achterberg in *Woman as Healer*. “Her temples have been found at virtually every level of excavation.” The Ishtar Gate to the inner city of Babylon was one of the ancient wonders of the world.

Also called the Queen of Heaven, Ishtar was a compassionate, healing deity. Her medicine kit likely included plant allies: a clay pot likely used for distillation of plant essences into medicines was found at a Sumerian grave site circa 5500 BC. The herb called Sim.Ishara, meaning “aromatic of the Goddess Ishtar,” is equated with the Akkadian qunnabu, or “cannabis,” writes Assyriologist Erica Reiner.

As the land of Sumer became a perpetual battlefield, Ishtar became the goddess of war and destiny, and became more sexualized, even as women were restricted from education and the healing arts.

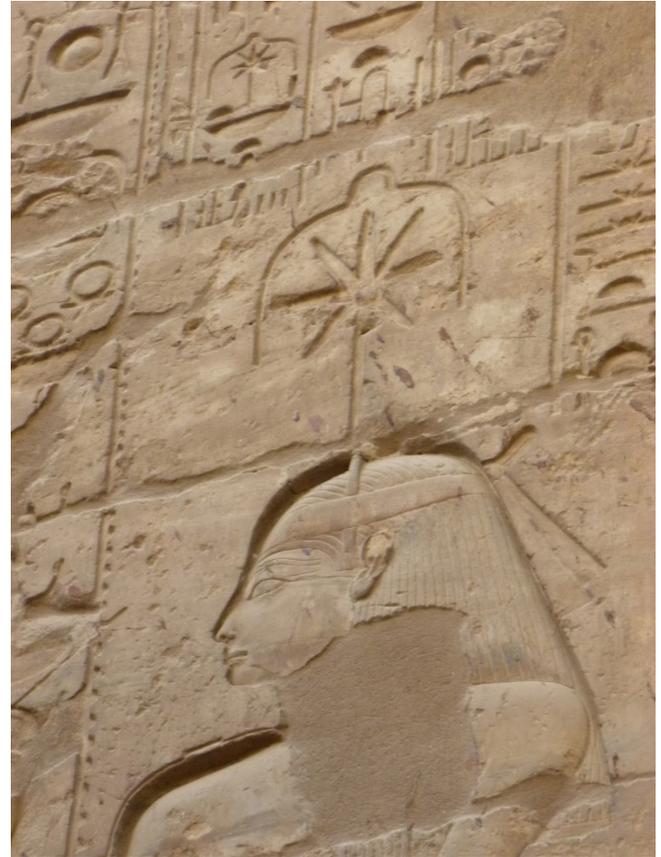
In mankind’s first written story *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

(circa 2000 BC), the cruel king Gilgamesh calls Ishtar a predatory and promiscuous woman, and rebukes her advances, just before taking off with his buddy Enkidu to chop down the great cedar forest. Gilgamesh’s repudiation of Ishtar, some scholars say, signifies a rejection of goddess worship in favor of patriarchy in ancient times.

In ancient Babylon, around the spring solstice, people celebrated the resurrection of their god Tammuz, who was brought back from the underworld by his mother/wife Ishtar (pronounced “Easter” in most Semitic dialects). Flowers, painted eggs, and rabbits were the symbols of the holiday then, as now.

Thus the goddess Ishtar resurrects every spring at Easter time, by way of the German goddess Ostara, “the divinity of the radiant dawn,” doubtlessly a reincarnation of Ishtar, who the Babylonians called “the morning star” and “the perfect light.” The biblical heroine Esther is also a descendant of Ishtar.

The Egyptian  
goddess  
**Seshat,**  
“She of  
Seven Points”  
(1250 B.C.E.)



Seshat (also spelled Sakhket, Sesat, Seshet, Sesheta, and Seshata) was the ancient Egyptian goddess of mathematics, creative thought, knowledge, books and writing (her name means “she who is the scribe”). Sister to Bast and daughter/sister/wife to Thoth or the moon god Djehuti, the Egyptians believed that she invented writing, while Thoth or Djehuti taught writing to mankind.

Often depicted in coronation ceremonies wearing a leopard-skin garment, Seshat's emblem is a seven-pointed leaf in her headdress that looks much like hemp. Pharaoh Tutmosis III (1479-1425 B.C.E.) called her Sefket-Abwy (She of Seven Points).

It was Seshat who the Pharaoh consulted as to the orientation and structure of temples to be built. Hemp rope was used in the “stretching the cord” ceremonies conducted before building. It is perhaps hemp's psychoactive effect that is acknowledged in the saying that, “Seshat opens the door of heaven for you.”

Hemp fibers were found in the tomb of Amenophis IV ca. 1350 B.C. and cannabis pollen was found inside the mummy of Ramses II, who died ca. 1213 B.C. Cannabis is mentioned as a medication as far back as 1700 B.C.E. in Egypt, possibly copying earlier texts that date back to 3100 B.C.E.

Seshat was associated with Isis in the Late period, and was scribe to Hathsheput, the female Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty. The Greeks demoted her to a muse, and in

Plato gives to Thoth the invention of arithmetic and letters.

In modern times, Seshat is referred to as the “Silicon Goddess” ruling over computers, telecommunications, electronic networks, knowledge systems, and other related technology. Some view the Internet as an example of the Silicon Goddess manifesting Herself in space and time. Seshat's name has been given to the Global History Data bank at the Evolution Institute and Sesheta.net is the name of the African Women's Autobiography project.

The goddess  
**Parvati** with  
her consort,  
Lord Shiva  
(400 B.C.E.)



Legend has it that the goddess Parvati, wife of the Hindu god Lord Shiva, brought cannabis to mankind.

It seems Shiva was busy frolicking on the mountaintops with various nymphs when Parvati, left alone at home, discovered a cannabis plant growing in her garden. When Shiva returned to her, Parvati put some of the plant into a pipe for him to smoke. He did, and thereafter the two invented tantric yoga and saved their marriage.

Rather like the Adam and Eve story, here it is the woman who discovers the magical plant (which is “forbidden” in the Bible, what Timothy Leary called “the first controlled substance.”)

Parvati is the Hindu mother goddess of love, fertility and devotion. Along with Lakshmi (goddess of wealth and prosperity) and Saraswati (goddess of knowledge and

learning) she forms the Trinity of Hindu goddesses. Two of her forms are Durga (Goddess beyond reach) and Kali (Goddess of Destruction). She is the mother of Ganesh.

To this day, worshipers in India drink bhang (cannabis milk) during the Shivratri Festival, celebrating the marriage of Shiva and Parvati. Women in particular practice devotions during this time.

Parvati is believed to be sister to the Goddess Ganga, the personification of the sacred river Ganges and the term for cannabis leaves and flowers that are smoked. Bhang and Ganga are said to reside side by side on Shiva's head, while he dances on the body of a dwarf who embodies indifference, ignorance and laziness.

Another interpretation of these ancient myths is that the cannabis plant is another form of Parvati.

# Goddess Magu “The Hemp Maiden”



Magu is a Taoist xian ("inspired sage," "ecstatic") whose name means Hemp Maiden or Goddess.

Magu's name combines the Chinese character MA – which derives from a Zhou Dynasty ideograph showing plants drying in a shed – with GU, a kinship term for a woman also used in religious titles like Priestess. It's been proposed that the name is related to the Old Persian word "magus" (magician, magi).

Magu is called Mago in Korea and Mako in Japan, where a saying "Magu scratches the itch" hearkens to her long, crane-like fingernails. Several early folktales from Sichuan province associate Magu with caves, and one describes a shaman who invoked her. She is said to have ascended to immortality at Magu Shan ("Magu Mountain") in Nancheng. A second Magu Mountain is located in Jianchang county.

Magu was also goddess of Shandong's sacred Mount Tai,

where cannabis "was supposed to be gathered on the seventh day of the seventh month," wrote Joseph Needham in *Science and Civilization in China* (1959). Needham wrote, "there is much reason for thinking that the ancient Taoists experimented systematically with hallucinogenic smokes... at all events the incense-burner remained the centre of changes and transformations...." The (ca. 570 B.C.E.) Daoist encyclopedia records that cannabis was added into ritual censers.

Ma Gu is often depicted flying on a crane, riding a deer or holding peaches or wine (symbols of longevity). She is associated with the elixir of life and is the protector of females. Before becoming immortal she freed slaves who were working for her evil father. She is often pictured on birthday cards in China, where cannabis has been continuously cultivated since Neolithic times and the saying, "When you see a deer you know Ma Gu is near," is common.

Magu Wine is made in Jianchang and Linchuan.