

## “Tracking the Dragon across the Ancient Near East”

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PRELIMINARY DRAFT, NOT FOR CITATION

In 2001, Michael Witzel called for “exploring the historical development” of the Indo-European and Near Eastern myth-families “by setting up a family tree of such groupings,” to “fill the gap between, say, the reconstructed Near Eastern branch and the individual local mythology, e.g., that of the Sumerians or Hittites.”<sup>1</sup> I am in the midst of a massive attempt to do just that, to track the storm god-slays-dragon myth across the Ancient Near East, from the Rig-Veda to Iran and Anatolia, from Sumer through the Levant. The present paper is a condensed version of the first half of that trek, (Davidson 2006) “a combination of extremely close reading of text passages in the original ... with the traditional Comparative Method.”<sup>2</sup> My comparative method is genetic; fundamentally, “its goal is history.”<sup>3</sup> But I want to be cautious. Scholars tend far too often to equate vaguely similar stories by circular reasoning and leap of faith, to blur vegetation gods with storm gods, for example. I consider it probable that broadly shared mythic themes of the Aarne-Thompson sort are the result of any number of non-genetic factors, as Wim van Binsbergen has written, ranging from shared diffusion from the Paleolithic period (as per Michael

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Witzel, "Comparison and Reconstruction: Language and Mythology," *Mother Tongue* 6 (2001).

<sup>2</sup> Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon* (Oxford, 1995), vii.

<sup>3</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 4

Witzel)<sup>4</sup> to biological-evolutionary factors inherent to the human brain (à la Robert Segal).<sup>5</sup> As Calvert Watkins noted, the dragon slaying myth “may be quasi-universal. We cannot speak of an exclusively Indo-European dragon; our task is rather to sort out the Indo-European modalities of the myth.”<sup>6</sup> I want to compare a relatively concise mytheme, although a bit more broadly defined than Watkins’ linguistic formulas.<sup>7</sup> We will not hope to derive the fundamental principle of comparison solely from linguistics, although we shall certainly employ this analysis. I am in full agreement with Boris Oguibenine’s paper last year lamenting the loose definition of “motif,” and I embrace his definition of “narrative structures generated by agents in a text.”<sup>8</sup>

It was Watkins who clearly and magisterially synthesized the linguistic data illustrating the relationship between the Vedic myth of Indra defeating Vritra, the Avestan myth from Iran of Thraetaona slaying Azi Dahaka, and the Hittite Illuyanka myth. Here he is talking about myths from individual poetic traditions from which he reconstructs the Common Indo-European element:<sup>9</sup> the storm god<sup>10</sup> defeats the dragon-who-is-water<sup>11</sup> and who stands for chaos,<sup>12</sup> and this is celebrated

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Witzel, "Slaying the Dragon Across Eurasia," in *In Hot Pursuit of Language in Prehistory*, ed. John D. Bengtson (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2008), 265.

<sup>5</sup> Wim van Binsbergen, "Rupture and Fusion in the Approach to Myth," *Religion Compass* 3 (2009), 323.

<sup>6</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 297.

<sup>7</sup> See Watkins, *How to Kill*, 10-11, 299.

<sup>8</sup> Boris Oguibenine, "On the Concept of Motif in Comparative Mythology" (Cambridge, MA, IV International Conference on Comparative Mythology, October 2010, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 50, 165.

<sup>10</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 297.

<sup>11</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 298

<sup>12</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 299-300.

in New Years' rituals.<sup>13</sup> In to-day's paper, I am not so much interested in what is Common Indo-European as I am in its manifestations in the individual traditions and in their non-Indo-European afterlives. Watkins is correct that the Rig-Veda and the Hittites have this mytheme from their Indo-European heritage,<sup>14</sup> and not from each other, although the situation is not simple and we shall see a great deal of relatively late movement of Indo-Europeans across the ancient Near East.<sup>15</sup> The common formula is HERO+SLAY (\**g<sup>w</sup>hen* in the perfect or imperfect) +SERPENT. In the Rig-Vedas, this is *Índro vṛtrám* (or *áhim*) *jaghāna* or *áhann*.<sup>16</sup> At the risk of boring you with what you already know, let me follow the trail of this mytheme, beginning with the Rig Veda. I highlight only features that will be important further on.

The god Indra's primary exploit is the slaying of the serpent Vritra (RV 8.85.7; elaborated in 1.32 and 1.61.1) – sometimes merely called “the serpent” (3.30.8; 3.32.4; 5.30.6) -- which releases pent-up waters (4.19.6; or stolen cows in later 10.108). As hymn 1.32 says, “He slew the serpent (*áhim*), drilled through to the waters.” In other hymns, what is released are “seven streams” (RV 4.28.1; 2.12.3). In hymn 2.12, Vritra is called the “swelling serpent,” *ojāyámānam yo áhim*; elsewhere, “the encompasser,” *âçáyâna*. The verb for Indra's act can also be *avadhīt*, “slay” (PIE \**wedh-*), as in 1.33.4: “You slew the rich Dasyu with your ‘slayer’” – or

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<sup>13</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 300.

<sup>14</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 303, 359.

<sup>15</sup> M. L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 301.

*tur* “overcome” (*Indreṇa taruṣema vṛtrám*; 7.48.2) or *bhinátti* “split” (PIE *\*terh<sub>2</sub>-* or *\*bheid-*).<sup>17</sup>

Indra came to the battle after all the other gods had fled in fear (RV 3.32.4; 8.85.7; this may be a later stratum of the story<sup>18</sup>). Nevertheless, Indra needs help to defeat Vritra.<sup>19</sup> The weapon with which he defeats Vritra is the iconic *vajra*, or thunderbolt, which becomes Indra’s totem (RV 2.12.10; 4.19.1; and, later, 1.57.2, 6; 1.32.5, 15; 1.73.10; 1.101.1; etc.).<sup>20</sup> The weapon was specially made for Indra for the combat by Tvaṣṭṛ (1.61.6), and it is used to split Vritra’s head (8.6.6, 76.2). The victory over Vritra is mostly treated as a past event, but the tenses fluctuate between past and present (e.g., 1.32.12-13), so that the impression is given that Vritra might not quite be dead forever (RV 1.32.14).<sup>21</sup> In any case, Vritra is for now consigned to “the deep” (RV 1.32.8).<sup>22</sup>

Indra himself is the giver of agriculture (RV 5.39; 4.32; 8.24),<sup>23</sup> a storm god (RV 2.12; 4.18.9),<sup>24</sup> and identified as a “bull” (*vṛśá*; RV 3.50.1; 6.33.1; 8.15.6).<sup>25</sup> Indra was sometimes portrayed as a bull.<sup>26</sup> Indra is also symbolic of kingship (RV 3.26.2; 3.34.2; 4.19.2), especially in later tradition (*Atharva Veda* 3.4.6; *Aitareya Brahmana*; *Satapath Brahmana* 10.4.1.5; 2.5.2.27-4.8). In the *Puranas*, “Indra”

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<sup>17</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 341.

<sup>18</sup> Raymond Hodgson, "Indra and Vrtra: A Study of Continuity and Change in the Indian Religious Tradition" (Ph.D., McMaster University), 158.

<sup>19</sup> Uma Chakravarty, *Indra and Other Vedic Deities* (Contemporary Researches in Hindu Philosophy & Religion 8; New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1997), 114.

<sup>20</sup> Chakravarty, *Indra*, 97-98.

<sup>21</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 257; Chakravarty, *Indra*, 115-16.

<sup>22</sup> Shanti S. Gupta, *A Study of the God Indra*, Vol. 85 (New Delhi: Krishna Publisher, 2001), 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21

<sup>24</sup> Ev Cochrane, "Indra: A Case Study in Comparative Mythology," *Aeon* 2 (, 8.

<sup>25</sup> J. Gonda, *The Indra Hymns of the Rgveda*, Vol. 36 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 93, 118.

<sup>26</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 246.

becomes merely a title for rotating kingship of the gods (*Puran Prabesa; Vishnu Purana*; a tradition as early as the *Aitareya Upanishad*). Mircea Eliade and Boris Oguibenine consider the Indra-Vritra to be a cosmogony: the dragon represents formless watery chaos before creation.<sup>27</sup> Indra is the creator in RV 2.12.2, 4, and there are clear references to Indra's creative acts after the slaying of Vritra: RV 5.29.4, "Then he propped both the worlds far apart"; 7.23.3, "Indra with his greatness pushed asunder both the world-halves, as he slew the irresistible Vritra."<sup>28</sup> Multiple other explanations have been given over the centuries, but it is probable that like the other myths we shall examine no single meaning explains the myth.<sup>29</sup> Raymond Hodgson argued the Indra-Vritra conflict was utilized in a cultic setting reflecting the king's ritual function in the New Year's ceremony.<sup>30</sup> The king overcoming his enemies is homologous to the god of kingship overcoming the dragon.<sup>31</sup>

It is possible, however, that this myth is not originally about Indra at all.<sup>32</sup> Indra performed his deeds "like Trita" (RV 1.52.5), Trita Āptya that is, who in RV 1.187 dismembers Vritra.<sup>33</sup> In RV 10.8.8, Trita kills three-headed Visvarupa (identified with Vritra and killed by Indra in *Satapath Brahmana* 1.6.3.2; cf.

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<sup>27</sup> Lahiri, *Vedic Vṛitra*, 14. Others consider creating to be Indra's original myth, the dragon slaying being a later accretion, on which see below; *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>28</sup> Lahiri, *Vedic Vṛitra*, 103.

<sup>29</sup> Lahiri, *Vedic Vṛitra*, 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Hodgson, *Indra and Vrtra: A Study of Continuity and Change in the Indian Religious Tradition*, ii

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 4

<sup>32</sup> Lahiri, *Vedic Vṛitra*, 191. Note that Indra is "born" in RV 6.67.1; 7.20.5; 4.18.10; 10.101.12.

<sup>33</sup> Nataliya Yanchevskaya, "Trita" (Cambridge, MA, IV International Conference on Comparative Mythology, October 2010, 2010).

1.2.3.2<sup>34</sup>) with “ancestral weapons.”<sup>35</sup> Trita’s name means “third,” or fully “third of waters,” and he is the protagonist of the unrelated story where he is thrown into a pit by his two older brothers (RV 1.105), the story picked up by the Mahabharata.<sup>36</sup> These are, in the Rig Veda, separate myths – Indra delivers Visvarupa to Trita (RV 2.11.19), and I will admit that books 1 and 10 of the Rig Veda are considered the latest,<sup>37</sup> but there is reason to believe the Trita myth is the original.<sup>38</sup>

In Iran, Trita Āptya reappears as Thrīta, the haoma-presser (like Indra) whose son kills a dragon, but also as Thraetaona son of Āthwya, who slays the three-headed dragon or “snake of evil religion” (Yt. 18.7.490) Azhi Dahāka (freeing stolen cows; Yt. 5.9.33).<sup>39</sup> The account is preserved in the relatively late *Yashts* (Yt. 5.29-35; 9.13-15; 14.38-40; 19.34-52; also in the *Yasna* (*Hom Yasht*) Y.9.7-8, 11), but as Watkins showed, the Avestan *yō janaŋ ažiim* is the exact cognate of the Vedic *áhann áhim*, in the same word order,<sup>40</sup> and we also have. The slaying act also occurs as *tauruuاییاتا* (<PIE \*terh<sub>2</sub>-; Yt. 13.38) and *vādāya*<PIE \*wedh also occurs. In Pahlavi literature, the dragon is chained to Mount Demavend until the end of the world.<sup>41</sup>

This Avestan myth is not derived from the Vedic. Although the Iranian migration followed the Indic by several centuries,<sup>42</sup> Indic was already differentiated

<sup>34</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 262.

<sup>35</sup> Muralidhar Mohanty, *Indra in Indian Mythology* (Kolkata: Punthi Pustak, 2008), 92.

<sup>36</sup> Yanchevskaya, *Trita*

<sup>37</sup> Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 104.

<sup>38</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 260.

<sup>39</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 313; West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 260.

<sup>40</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 314.

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<sup>42</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 10; Vannucci, *Ancient Gods*, 21, 302.

from Iranian much earlier.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, as Michael Witzel writes, “Old Iranian *in general* is too archaic to have moved out of India *after* the composition of the RV.”<sup>44</sup> We have here a separate, probably earlier, derivation from the Indo-European original.<sup>45</sup>

However, a derivative of the Avestan Thraetaona-Azhi Dahaka story is found in Firdausi’s 1000 AD *Shahname* or “Persian Book of Kings.” The book mainly covers Sassanian lore of 225-650 AD, but has a mythological section at its beginning,<sup>46</sup> which is aware of some historical traditions as far back as Artaxerxes in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>47</sup> Following the fourth king of the mythical first dynasty, an Arabian usurper named Zāhḥak takes the throne of Persia.<sup>48</sup> Zāhḥak had been previously seduced by Iblis or Ahriman (the devil) and bears two live snakes sprouting from his shoulders as a result.<sup>49</sup> After a thousand-year reign, the Persian hero Faridun, whom Zāhḥak has dreamt of as the “youngest of three” young men,<sup>50</sup> defeats Zāhḥak and chains him to Mount Demavend until the end of the world.<sup>51</sup> Zāhḥak is from Dahaka; the dragon has become the dragon-shouldered, although Zāhḥak is repeatedly called a dragon himself (e.g., 1.177.634); in Dick Davis’

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<sup>43</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 9; but cf. Michael Witzel, "Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Exchange in Prehistoric Western Central Asia," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 129 (December, 2003), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Witzel, "Autochthonous Aryans? the Evidence from Old Indian and Iranian Texts," *Electric Journal of Vedic Studies* 7-3 (2001), 53.

<sup>45</sup> William W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 81.

<sup>46</sup> Olga M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*, 2nd ed., Vol. 12 (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2006), 1-3, 8.

<sup>47</sup> B. W. Robinson, *The Persian Book of Kings* (London: Routledge, 2002), 154.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15

<sup>49</sup> Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*, 13

<sup>50</sup> Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, trans. Dick Davis/Vikin, 2006), 14.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *The Persian Book of Kings*, 16

translation, “the Serpent King.”<sup>52</sup> Faridun, as Olga Davidson has shown, is Thraetaona.<sup>53</sup> Faridun rides a bull, and his weapon against Zahhak is a bull-headed mace, forged by the smith Kāva<sup>54</sup> (1.61.183-67. 277),<sup>55</sup> and he is depicted with this mace subduing Zahhak on a Sassanian amulet in the British Museum.<sup>56</sup> My reasons for highlighting this late permutation of the myth will be clear at a later point.

The Hittite version of the Indo-European dragon myth is probably also a direct inheritance from Proto-Indo-European times, and not a borrowing from a later period. In fact, it may provide better approximation of the Proto-Indo-European mytheme than the Rig-Veda.<sup>57</sup> The Anatolian branch of Indo-European represented by Hittite (or, properly, “Nesili,” as the Hittites called it) and related languages of Asia Minor was the first to diverge from common Indo-European (2900 BC at the latest; perhaps as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium<sup>58</sup>), and continued to evolve for some time after this divergence before breaking up further.<sup>59</sup> Hittite, Luwian, and Palaic all appear in Anatolia about 1650 BC.<sup>60</sup> But Hittite names occur already in the records of the Assyrian trading colony at Karum Kanesh four hundred years earlier, and Indo-European-speaking peoples were surely well established in Anatolia before 2000, and the geographic distribution concentrating them in

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<sup>52</sup> Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 12-13

<sup>53</sup> Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*, 131-32

<sup>54</sup> Whose name is not only from *kavi*, “wizard,” but reminds us of the Vedic smith Kavya Usanas. *Ibid.*, 103

<sup>55</sup> Robinson, *The Persian Book of Kings*, 15

<sup>56</sup> Aḡ mad Tafazzolī, "

Ferēdū," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Maciej Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor* (Warsaw: Academic Publishers Dialog, 1995), 39.

<sup>59</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 5, 10, 20.

<sup>60</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 7.



southwestern Anatolia suggests they or at least the language entered not from the east via the Caucasus but from the west, like the Phrygians and Galatians of later eras.<sup>61</sup>

There were non-Indo-European people already in Anatolia, the so-called Hattic peoples attested from the Early Bronze Age,<sup>62</sup> and also mentioned in the Assyrian texts from Karum Kanesh.<sup>63</sup> The Hattic center of Ḫattuša became the capital for the Hittite Old Kingdom, which include both the Luwian and Palaic lands.<sup>64</sup>

Old Hittite religion was largely Hattic.<sup>65</sup> The Karum Kanesh texts mention priests with Hittite names officiating for a god they called “Haddad,” the name of the storm god they knew from Assyria.<sup>66</sup> The name of the Hattic storm god was Taru, and we must note that this cannot possibly be from the PIE *\*terh<sub>2</sub>-*, from which came the Vedic *tur*; the Hatti were pre-Indo-European.<sup>67</sup> We know nothing about Taru except that he was depicted as a bull.<sup>68</sup> The Hittite storm god is Tarḫuna, which certainly is from PIE *\*terh<sub>2</sub>-*, as is his Luwian name Tarḫunt (in

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<sup>61</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 7; vs. the eastern route of Vannucci, *Ancient Gods*, 301. There is no way to support the views of Colin Renfrew, Kamil Zvelebil, and Tamaz Gamkrelidze that the Indo-Europeans were indigenous to Anatolia; *Ibid.*, 40

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 39

<sup>63</sup> Bleda S. Düring, *The Prehistory of Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 261.

<sup>64</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 62

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 69

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 54

<sup>67</sup> In light of the Dravidian *tīr* and Tamil *tūr*, I will allow the possibility of Hattic Taru sharing with PIE *\*terh<sub>2</sub>-* an origin in a Eurasian *\*Vr(H)V*, “to go through”; see Aharon Dolgopolski, *Nostratic Dictionary* (Cambridge: M, 2008), 2426.

<sup>68</sup> Daniel Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: SUmmary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8, no. 1 (2008), 17.

cuneiform Luwian; in hieroglyphic Luwian it was Tarḫunz).<sup>69</sup> Arguably, this Indo-European name for the storm god was chosen because it sounded like the Hattic Taru.<sup>70</sup> Tarhuna was the chief deity of the Hittites. Many of the Hittite rituals are from Luwian regions and reflect Luwian cultic and poetic traditions.<sup>71</sup> The Hittite storm god was represented as a bull,<sup>72</sup> as on a vase from Inandiktepe.<sup>73</sup> From the earliest Hittite text onwards, the close relationship between the storm god and the king is emphasized.<sup>74</sup> The Hittite king reigned in the name of Tarhuna and acted as his chief priest.<sup>75</sup> On a rock relief from Traktin, the king and the storm god are depicted almost identically.<sup>76</sup>

The Old Hittite form of the Indo-European dragon slaying myth, known from several copies, is the Illuyanka Myth (*CTH* 321).<sup>77</sup> Here, the storm god and his mortal son (line 22)<sup>78</sup> -- or in a second variant [Par II, line 6], “mortal Hupasiyas/Hupashiya”<sup>79</sup> defeat the dragon/serpent Illuyanka (i.e., El+yanka

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<sup>69</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 69; Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II*, 18

<sup>70</sup> Manfred Hutter, "Aspects of Luwian Religion," in *The Luwians*, ed. H. Craig Melchert, Vol. 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 220-21.

<sup>71</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 52. In Palaic, the storm god was Ziparwa. John Colarusso and I exchanged a few emails last spring discussing this name. I believe it is Hattic, originally Taparwasu or Tiparwa, the t>z being quite natural.

<sup>72</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 108.

<sup>73</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 78

<sup>74</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 86.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 78

<sup>76</sup> Dominik Bonatz, "The Iconography of Religion in the Hittite, Luwian, and Aramaean Kingdoms," in *Iconography of Deities and Demons*, (2007), 7.

<sup>77</sup> Beckman 1989:104; Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 450.

<sup>78</sup> Beckman 1982:24; 1989:105.

<sup>79</sup> T. H. Gaster, *Thespis* [1950; rev. ed., New York: Doubleday, 1961], 245, 258; Beckman 1982:18. According to Watkins, *How to Kill*, the two variants are not “older” and “newer” as per Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 8; following Albrecht Goetze.

[serpent]<sup>80</sup>; COS 1.150-51 #1.56; CTH 321), who is also called “the river of the watery abyss” (Line 17). In both versions, the serpent initially overpowers the storm god (KBo 3.7 i 11).<sup>81</sup> In the first variant, the victory takes place at the sea and the son dies (voluntarily) at his father’s hand in the course of his father slaying the dragon (Part III, line 26’),<sup>82</sup> and, although in different circumstances, mortal Hupasiyas ends up dying in the second version. The introduction of a mortal helper who is killed finally even though the god’s victory is largely his doing is “unique, paradoxical and disconcerting,” in the words of Walter Burkert.<sup>83</sup> “Though the text does not make it very clear why this was unavoidable,” he writes, “it is indicated, instead, that he accepts his death out of his own free will. This is suspiciously reminiscent of sacrificial ideology.”<sup>84</sup> This martyrdom and victory is followed by a banquet assembly of the gods (Part IV).<sup>85</sup> The Illuyanka myth was narrated in the Purulli New Year’s festival,<sup>86</sup> with the king presiding.<sup>87</sup>

The linguistic formula is again the same here: <sup>MUŠ</sup>*illuyankan kuenta* (<PIE \**g<sup>w</sup>hen*; KUB 17.5 I 17 §12), <sup>MUŠ</sup>*illuyankaš* <sup>DIM-an</sup> *tarḫta* (KBo 3.7 I 11), or <sup>MUŠ</sup>*illuyankan tarahḫūwan* (<PIE \**terh<sub>2</sub>*-).<sup>88</sup>

<sup>80</sup> G. Komoróczy, “Zu den Anfänger der Mythographie im Alten Orient,” *Acta Antiqua* 19 [1971]: 187; Beckman 1982:11; Watkins, *How to Kill*, 449.

<sup>81</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 324, 344.

<sup>82</sup> Gaster, *Thespis*, 247, 262-65; Beckman 1982:19, 24

<sup>83</sup> Burkert, *Structure*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Burkert, *Structure*, 9.

<sup>85</sup> Gaster, *Thespis*, 265

<sup>86</sup> Hatice Gonnet, “La Fête Hittite Du Printemps,” *Revue De La S 2* (1989), 14-15. Watkins, *How to Kill*, 154, 444. Note the feast is “at the head of the year” (MU.KAM-*aš* SAG.DU); KUB 36.97 iii 3’. Hittite New Year began with the first full moon after the spring equinox; Houwink ten Cate, “Hittite Storm God,” 93-94.

<sup>87</sup> Richard J. Dumbrill, *The Archaeomusicology of the Ancient Near East* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2003), 270.

<sup>88</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 302, 321, 356.

This myth is the old Indo-European inheritance.<sup>89</sup> However, we should note that there were several other Indo-European contacts after the Hittite Old Kingdom. By 1450, the kingdom was crumbling, with Ahhiya(ma) from Greece taking the coast and Hurrians invading from Syria.<sup>90</sup>

The Hurrians themselves had occupied Upper Mesopotamia since 2200 B.C.,<sup>91</sup> with some living in Anatolia by 2000, as they are mentioned in the Karum Kanesh texts.<sup>92</sup> They are related linguistically only to the later Urartans.<sup>93</sup> By 1600, following further incursions of Hurrians from the northeast, they established the kingdom of Mitanni in Upper Mesopotamia,<sup>94</sup> although the Hurrian population extended far beyond Mitanni.<sup>95</sup> The kingdom was consolidated in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, dominated Syria until the mid-14<sup>th</sup>, and lasted until the 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>96</sup> But in spite

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<sup>89</sup> And not Hattic, as per Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 147 n.76. Hans Güterbock thought the first version was Hattic and the second Cilician, but this is also unlikely. Galina Kellerman, "Toward the further Interpretation of the Purulli Festival," *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 5-6 (1981), 36. The difference of the two versions depends on where the Purulli was performed; Harry A. Hoffner, "A Brief Commentary on the Hittite Illuyanka Myth (CTH 321)," in *Studies Presented to Robert D. Biggs*, eds. Martha T. Roth and others (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2007), 129.

<sup>90</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 63, 85

<sup>91</sup> Older scholarship attributed the occurrence of Khirbet Kerak Ware with the migrations of the Hurrians around 2650 B.C. (Burney 1958:167; Burney and Lang 1971:49; Mellaart 1966:80). Circuitous routes were drawn for a relocating "Kura-Araxes Yanik Shengavit East Anatolian culture of the Eneolithic Copper-Age Early Bronze Early South Trans-Caucasus" from the southeast Georgia south to Armenia, then west across northeast Anatolia, dipping southwest to the plains of Elazig. From there the route went south along the Euphrates, then into the Amuq from the Northeast, and finally into Palestine either via the coast or inland past Aleppo-Hama-Homs (Lamb 1954:30; Burney 1958:174; Burney and Lang 1971:44). But KKW is centuries older than the Hurrians. Gernot Wilhelm, *The Hurrians* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1989), 6. ). There is no trail of destroyed sites leading from anywhere to Palestine (Hennessy 1967:88), and KKW is absent in Cilicia (despite the andirons), Islahiye, and Harran (Todd 1973:188). Neither the lack of KKW influence on other local ware, the lack of precursors, nor sudden disappearance dictate migration (Esse and Hopke 1987:332).

<sup>92</sup> Düring, *The Prehistory of Asia Minor*, 261

<sup>93</sup> Gernot Wilhelm, "The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack Sasson, Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1246.

<sup>94</sup> Jacques Freu, *Histoire Du Mitanni*, Vol. 3, 2003), 32-34.

<sup>95</sup> Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 123.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-49, 222

of the origins of the Hurrian language, which remained the spoken language of Mitanni, *all* of the kings of Mitanni have Indo-Aryan or Indic names.<sup>97</sup> Their gods include Indra and other Vedic deities.<sup>98</sup> Either there were certain groups among the later Hurrian immigrants from Transcaucasia who spoke an archaic form of Indo-Aryan, or, since the evidence of Indo-Aryan is confined to names of rulers and gods and technical terms to do with the training of horses, Indo-Aryan settlers in Transcaucasia influenced some Hurrians – the future ruling class -- *before* they migrated to Mesopotamia.<sup>99</sup> This bears upon more than the Hittite case, as Indo-Aryan Mitanni names are found in the Late Bronze age all the way down into Palestine.<sup>100</sup>

A Hurrian dynasty was in place in Hattusha by 1425, expanding the territory into a Hittite Empire by 1350.<sup>101</sup> The empire would last another two hundred years.<sup>102</sup> Even before the Empire, the religion was Hurrianized, identifying Tarhuna with the genuinely Hurrian storm god Tešub.<sup>103</sup> The same cuneiform logogram was now used for Taru, Tarhuna, and Teshub.<sup>104</sup> This logogram, the Tonitrus (the sign *HH* no. 19), happens to look a lot like Indra's *vajra*.<sup>105</sup> Increasingly, this god – depicted as a bull<sup>106</sup> -- was a god of agriculture, too.<sup>107</sup> A 13<sup>th</sup>-century relief from

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<sup>97</sup> Wilhelm, *The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia*, 1246

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 1246

<sup>99</sup> Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 17

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

<sup>101</sup> Antonio Sagona and Paul Zimansky, *Ancient Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 279.

<sup>102</sup> Van De Mieroop, *History*, 156.

<sup>103</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 87

<sup>104</sup> Sagona and Zimansky, *Ancient Turkey*, 280

<sup>105</sup> Hawkins, "What," 55. The sign has no phonetic value or syllabographic usage; Hawkins, "What," 63. Examples of the sign, normally held in the god's left hand, have been found at Tarsus, Yazilikaya, Alaca Höyük, Malatya, and elsewhere; Hawkins, "What," 64-65.

<sup>106</sup> Bonatz, *The Iconography of Religion in the Hittite, Luwian, and Aramaean Kingdoms*, 3

Melid (Arslantepe) shows Tešub with a serpent.<sup>108</sup> The elaborate Yazılıkaya rock carving at Hattusha illustrates the entire Hurrian pantheon and its mythology—including Teshub with his two bulls -- right in the Hittite capital.<sup>109</sup> Nothing suggests the Hurrian dynasty of the Hittite Empire was Indo-Aryan, but the Hurrianization of Hatti took place after Indo-Aryan rulers were firmly in control of the Hurrian homeland.

Another wave of Indo-European immigration came after 1200, when Phrygians came from the Balkans.<sup>110</sup> It is thus of great importance when the Hittite myths originate, whether in the “pure” period of the Old Kingdom or the Middle or Empire period when Indo-European influence could have come anew. Yet, writes Watkins, “For all that the Indo-European languages of 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium Anatolia have been in contact with and doubtless culturally influenced by the poetic traditions of Hattic on the one hand and Hurrian on the other, it is clear there is a significant inherited Indo-European component in their component as well.”<sup>111</sup>

Of Hurrian origin is the Kumarbi cycle, the general plot of which is the efforts of the storm god Teshub to defeat the ruling usurper earth god Kumarbi and avenge his deposed father (KUB 47.48 I 9’-14’).<sup>112</sup> The cycle contains six songs, the order of which is unclear. The fourth and fifth were probably the dragon slaying of Hedammu (preserved in two versions, *CTH* 348.I.1-29 and II.1-2) and the *Song of Ullikummi* (also two versions, *CTH* 345.I.1-10, preserved in Hittite, and II.1-2 in

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<sup>107</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 110

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 165

<sup>109</sup> Sagona and Zimansky, *Ancient Turkey*

<sup>110</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 8.

<sup>111</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill*, 147.

<sup>112</sup> West, *Indo-European Myth*, 247.

Hurrian).<sup>113</sup> The myth of Ullikummi describes the victory of Teshub over the rock-monster Ullikummi, offspring of Kumarbi.<sup>114</sup> This battle, according to Tablet 2, line 32, takes place on Mount Hazzi, which is 1700m-high Jebel el-Aqra (Keldağ in Turkish), on the Syrian/Turkish border.<sup>115</sup> In other texts, this mountain was deified as one of Teshub's lieutenants.<sup>116</sup>

In the other song, Kumarbi's son Hedammu, who has the form of a serpent,<sup>117</sup> comes forth from the sea – or is identified as the sea (Hur. *kiaže*) and wreaks havoc on earth before being destroyed by Teshub.<sup>118</sup> Hedammu is also said to have been born on Mount Hazzi, which does in fact overlook the sea.<sup>119</sup> And Teshub is only successful when he is saved by the goddess Inara seducing the serpent.<sup>120</sup>

The component songs of the Kumarbi cycle are not all of the same age, and the Song of Ullikummi may be based on the Hedammu myth.<sup>121</sup> In any case, in all of the songs Teshub needs help from other gods in order to prevail.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, a fragmentary text that may be unrelated (CTH 349)<sup>123</sup> mentions a victory of the storm god over the sea (1.17'),<sup>124</sup> as well as mentioning Mount Hazzi (11.19'-20').<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Jean-François Blam, "Fragment Hittite Bo 7247," (.; Watkins, *How to Kill*, 53.

<sup>114</sup> V. Haas, *Hethitische Berggötter und hurritische Steindämonen* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1982), 149-60.

<sup>115</sup> Hoffner 1998:55-66.

<sup>116</sup> Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 50

<sup>117</sup> Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: SUmmary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II*, 25 n.67

<sup>118</sup> Alberto Bernabé, "La Lucha Contra El Dragón En Anatolia y En Grecia," *Huelva Arqueol* 19 (2004), 129-144.

<sup>119</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 115-16; Robin Lane Fox, *Traveling Heroes in the Epic Age of Homer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 286.

<sup>120</sup> Fox, *Traveling Heroes*, 285.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 135

<sup>122</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 119.

The first million-dollar question is whether any relationship exists between Illuyanka and Hedammu (or Ullikummi). We do not know how extensively the Hittites modified the Hurrian tales themselves,<sup>126</sup> so even if the two myths began independently, Hedammu may have been shaped to the contours of the Indo-European myth.<sup>127</sup> Illuyanka dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Kumarbi Cycle to the late 15<sup>th</sup>-early 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>128</sup> If they are related, it would probably be dependence from Illuyanka (and the Indo-European common myth) to Hedammu and Ullikummi.<sup>129</sup> The second big question is whether the Hurrian myth owes anything to the Semitic world, and we shall return to this issue momentarily.

After the Hittite Empire disintegrated around 1200 B.C., several Neo-Hittite states emerged between the two zones of Aramean concentration along the Khaibur River and south of the Orontes around Damascus.<sup>130</sup> Much of the population was neither Aramean nor Hittite, but called themselves Hittites.<sup>131</sup> There were Semitic peoples living in the area prior to Luwian hegemony, probably Amorites, to whom we shall return.<sup>132</sup> A slow Aramization thereafter took place, especially in contact with Assyria,<sup>133</sup> and the Hittite storm god, already Hurrianized, now merged with

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<sup>123</sup> But cf. Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 117; Manfred Dijkstra, "The myth of *apši* 'the (sea) dragon' in the Hurrian tradition," *Ugarit Forschungen* 37 (2005): 321.

<sup>124</sup> Gary Beckman, "Mythologie. A. II. Bei Den Hethitern," in , 569.

<sup>125</sup> Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Storm God," 116.

<sup>126</sup> Sagona and Zimansky, *Ancient Turkey*, 280

<sup>127</sup> West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 263.

<sup>128</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 126

<sup>129</sup> Vannucci, *Ancient Gods*, 105; Beckman, *Mythologie. A. II. Bei Den Hethitern*, 570

<sup>130</sup> O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites* (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>131</sup> Schloen and Fink, "New Excavations," 7.

<sup>132</sup> Schloen and Fink, "New Excavations," 6.

<sup>133</sup> Schloen and Fink, "New Excavations," 9.



the Aramean Haddad, to whom we shall also return.<sup>134</sup> Seals of the storm god as a bull are found throughout this region.<sup>135</sup>

Farther north, Luwian worship of Tarhunza continued through the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium down until the Roman period, appearing as the Lycian Trqqas and Pisidian Termessus.<sup>136</sup> He continues to be represented as a bull, even in a Roman example from Cappadocia.<sup>137</sup>

The waning years of the Hittite Empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were the height of the ancient city of Ugarit, only few miles south of Mount Hazzi. Ugarit is the source for the most complete Bronze Age “Storm god vs. Dragon” narrative, the Baal Cycle. The entire cycle is written on six tablets preserved well enough to understand the general flow of the material but with several lacunae ranging from ten to forty lines or more.<sup>138</sup> The first two tablets describe the battle of Baal with the Sea god, Yamm, who is serpentine (*KTU* 1.83 4-12; 1.3 iii 39-42). The High God El has given Yamm, his beloved son, the kingship of the gods. Yamm sends messengers to convey the news to Baal, who does not give in to Yamm's edict of subjection, while all the other gods cower in fear (*KTU* 1.2 i 20-25; 1.2 I 37-45). Instead, with the help of his sister Anat and magical weapons made by Kothar-wa-Khasis (*KTU* 1.2 iv 10-12, 27-28), Baal finally—after a failed first attempt—vanquishes Yamm (*KTU* 1.2 iv 20-28; 1.3 iii). The next two tablets explain how, after much effort, Baal and Anat get underway with the building plans for Baal's

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<sup>134</sup> Bonatz, *The Iconography of Religion in the Hittite, Luwian, and Aramaean Kingdoms*, 15

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>136</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 173

<sup>137</sup> Bonatz, *The Iconography of Religion in the Hittite, Luwian, and Aramaean Kingdoms*, 12

<sup>138</sup> See *KTU* 1.3: I.i; VI.iii as examples.

palace on Mount Hazzi, now called Mount Zaphon, and a victory feast to which all the gods are invited (*KTU* 1.4 vi 44-46). Cylinders uncovered at Ugarit also depict Baal's defeat of the monstrous horned serpent (e.g., *RS* 22.251 (144); *RS* 10.038 (167)).<sup>139</sup> Most scholars understand the myth to focus on the kingship of Baal and, by extension, of the king of Ugarit.<sup>140</sup>

In spite of a few caveats – El, not Baal, is a bull;<sup>141</sup> this is not a cosmogony, Yamm is not evil and is a threat only to Baal, not to the whole of the divine or the world;<sup>142</sup> the Baal myth was not a cultic or liturgical text<sup>143</sup> -- this is familiar territory. Baal is a storm-god, identified with the human kingship of Ugarit (*CAT* 1.15 obv. II 11ff).<sup>144</sup> The enemy is the sea, which is also a seven-headed “swelling serpent” (*KTU* 1.5 i 1-2) called “Lord River” like Illuyanka. All the other gods cower in fear of Yamm, as the gods did on Vritra. Baal is initially unsuccessful and requires both assistance and specially-made weapons. The impression is given that Yamm might not quite be dead forever. Moreover, the story centers on the *same mountain* as Ullikummi and Hedammu – Jebel el-Aqra, rising 6000 feet from the seashore at its foot. Robin Lane Fox writes of it, “In autumn, when the summer's heat breaks, the great claps of thunder echo round the neighbouring hills, lightning

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<sup>139</sup> Amiet, “Dieu,” 10.

<sup>140</sup> Nick Wyatt, “Religion in Ancient Ugarit,” in , 118.; Nick Wyatt, “What has Ugarit to do with Jerusalem?” *Studies in World Christianity* (, 149.

<sup>141</sup> Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'Al*, Vol. 140 (Fribourg: University Press Fribourg, 1994), 165.

<sup>142</sup> Wyatt, *Religion in Ancient Ugarit*, 123

<sup>143</sup> Allan R. Petersen, *The Royal God: Enthronement Festivals in Ancient Israel and Ugarit?*, Vol. 259 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 87, 91, 93.

<sup>144</sup> Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: SUmmary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II*, 10

strikes the sea below and the waves roar in reply.”<sup>145</sup> In Canaanite mythology, it is the home of Baal (*CTA* 6.1.14-31; 4.5.116-19; *KTU* 1.3.1.21-22). Thus, in the Baal epic, the mountain is called “the sacred mountain” (6.2.23), “the cosmic Zaphon” (6.3.22), and “my mountain, the divine Zaphon ... the mountain of possession” (IVAB 3.31). Because it is after Baal’s defeat of the chaos sea Yamm that Baal receives his temple on Zaphon (*KTU* 1.4 v 1), the mountain is called the “hill of victory” (*CTA* 3.3.28; 10.3.31), and “in the hands of Zaphon are victory and triumph” (*KTU* 1.19 ii 34-36).

Dependence on the Kumarbi Cycle is unquestionable.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, texts in Hurrian have been found at Ugarit, albeit not from the Cycle.<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, we have already seen that Kumarbi is itself an admixture of strands. Whether or not Kumarbi has any Semitic elements, it is nearly certain that Baal does. Prior to falling under Mitanni’s hegemony in 1500, Ugarit had been Amorite. It was periodically subject to the Hittite Empire, as well. The epithet *ba`lu* as the proper name of a particular god is attested for all sorts of gods in various eras, but also occurs as the endingless “Ba`al” as early as the 25<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>148</sup> In the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it had developed on the Levantine coast from an epithet of the storm god Haddad to his primary name, independently from the gods called *Ba`al*

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<sup>145</sup> Fox, *Traveling Heros*, 245.

<sup>146</sup> Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 127; Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 61; Houwink ten Cate, “Hittite Storm God,” 147 n.75., following Güterbock, Haas, Wilhelm, and others. In the polyglot god-list of RS 20.123<sup>+</sup>:35”, El is identified with Kumarbi.

<sup>147</sup> Van De Mieroop, *History*, 155.

<sup>148</sup> Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: SUmmary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II*, 8

centuries earlier.<sup>149</sup> Storm gods became mutually interchangeable. A colossal statue from Karatepe in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium bears a Phoenician inscription identifying Luwian Tarhunzas with Baal.<sup>150</sup> The pantheon of other 1<sup>st</sup>-millennium Neo-Hittite kingdoms included Haddad.<sup>151</sup>

The difficulty with the background of the Semitic storm god Haddad (or Haddu or Adad), whose origin lies in the Syria-Upper Mesopotamia area,<sup>152</sup> is the absence of myths.<sup>153</sup> We do have iconography. In Old Babylonian Mesopotamia (18<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries), Adad is always depicted with a bull and often holding lightning,<sup>154</sup> ordinarily a triple trident.<sup>155</sup> This representation continues into the Kassite Period (to the 12<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>156</sup> The storm god of Aleppo was at first known as Adad, but by the 16<sup>th</sup> century had merged with the Hurrian Teshub.<sup>157</sup> In the Hittite capital of Hattusha, a temple was dedicated to the “Storm God of Aleppo” already by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>158</sup> Not only was Hattusha defined as the “city of the storm god of Aleppo,” but the festival of the thunder of the storm god of Hatti was attributed to the storm god of Aleppo.<sup>159</sup> Thus in the vast region now called Al-

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>150</sup> Bonatz, *The Iconography of Religion in the Hittite, Luwian, and Aramaean Kingdoms*, 13

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>152</sup> Daniel Schwemer, "The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part I," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7, no. 2 (2008), 136.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 160

<sup>154</sup> Van Buren, *Symbols*, 35.

<sup>155</sup> Van Buren, *Symbols*, 68-69.

<sup>156</sup> Van Buren, *Symbols*, 67.

<sup>157</sup> Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 50

<sup>158</sup> Alfonso Archi, "Hurrian Gods and the Festivals of the Hattian-Hittite Layer," in *the Life and Times of Hattušili III and Tuthaliya IV*, ed. van den Hout, T. P. J. Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2006), 158.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 161

Jazira, the same god was known as Haddad, Baal, or Teshub depending on the speaker.<sup>160</sup>

The one myth from the Semitic world that is comparable to the dragon slaying is also the ancient Near East's most famous, the *Enuma Elish*. The oldest copies we possess of the *Enuma Elish* are from 1000 BC; it was likely composed at the earliest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>161</sup> Not earlier. We cannot refer to the *Enuma Elish* as the "Mesopotamian Creation Story," as there are numerous creation stories much older (*Atrahasis*, *Enki and Ninmah*, *Enki and the Ordering of the World*, KAR 4, *Wood and Reed*) and they look nothing like *Enuma Elish* and have no theomachy at all.<sup>162</sup>

The story is familiar. The monster Tiamat, who is also the Chaos Sea (2.23, 108-109, 116, 119), threatens to destroy the gods, and no champion can be found. Marduk offers to defeat her if he can become king of the gods (2.157-59; 4.31-32). Wielding lightning (although he is not a storm god),<sup>163</sup> he is victorious (4.39-40, 93-104), and from her remains creates the world (4.135-40; 5.11-12, 53-59) – from the now-split carcass, just like Indra (4.136-38). When he finishes, he releases the remaining waters of Tiamat to form the cosmic sea (5.63-64).<sup>164</sup> He is then declared king, and the gods build a temple-home for him, just as in the Baal Cycle (6.55-68).

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<sup>160</sup> Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part I*, 165

<sup>161</sup> Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 108.

<sup>162</sup> Svetlana Tamtik, "Enuma Elish: The Origins of its Creation," *Studia Antiqua* 5, no. 1 (2007), 66-67.

<sup>163</sup> Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part I*, 127-28

<sup>164</sup> Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 120.

The subtext is kingship – both of Marduk (6.161-62), and the human king of Babylon, his installation as heir to the cosmic victory.

The myth was ritually rehearsed in the Akitu festival,<sup>165</sup> which although does not appear to be in origin a New Year festival,<sup>166</sup> became so in the Neo-Babylonian period.<sup>167</sup> The Akitu is much older than the *Enuma Elish*, and the myths inclusion was probably a late 2<sup>nd</sup>- or even 1<sup>st</sup>-millennium addition.<sup>168</sup> In the full Neo-Babylonian Akitu, the defeat of Tiamat and creation of the world were ritually linked to the enthronement of the Babylonian king: as we said of Indra, the king overcoming his enemies is homologous to the god of kingship overcoming the monster.<sup>169</sup> This myth-and-ritual complex lasted into the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

In the bilingual gods' lists at Ugarit, the Akkadian parallel of Yamm is Tiamat.<sup>170</sup> Since no copy of the *Enuma Elish* predates the Baal Cycle, and the probable origin of the *Enuma Elish* no more than two hundred years prior to the Baal Cycle, and since the *Enuma Elish* looks so odd to anyone who has read the Sumerian and Akkadian creation myths, Thorkild Jacobsen once argued that the myth had been traveled from northwest to southeast. The myth was Northwest

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<sup>165</sup> Julye Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2004), 60. It was recited, even if not re-enacted as Jacobsen and Lambert believed. Piotr Michalowski, "Presence at Creation," in *Lingering Over Words*, eds. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard and Piotr Steinkeller (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 393.

<sup>166</sup> Mark E. Cohen, *Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 417; Bidmead, *Akitu*, 41.

<sup>167</sup> Alasdair Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 156; Bidmead, *Akitu*, 42-43; Benjamin D. Sommer, "The Babylonian Akitu Festival: Rectifying the King of Renewing the Cosmos?" *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 27 (2000), 85.; Michalowski, *Presence at Creation*, 391.

<sup>168</sup> Cohen, *Cultic Calendars*, 422; Bidmead, *Akitu*, 67.

<sup>169</sup> Bidmead, *Akitu*, 83.

<sup>170</sup> Matthiae, "Some Notes," 177.

Semitic (Amorite) or even Indo-European, and moved into Mesopotamia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium (Friedrich Delitzsch thought it was the other way round).<sup>171</sup> It does seem unlikely that Mesopotamians would come up with a battle against the sea.<sup>172</sup>

Unfortunately things are much more complicated. First, there are major differences between the other myths and *Enuma Elish*.<sup>173</sup> Baal is not a creation myth; the battle takes place on a fully created earth. Baal, Teshub, and even Tarhuna only defeat the dragon with great difficulty, while Marduk has no trouble. Tiamat is a danger to the entire universe; Yamm is not. And it is not clear Tiamat is a serpent or a dragon. Nowhere is she described as being such, although some iconography suggests she is serpentine.

Secondly, some of the materials used by the author of the *Enuma Elish* are much older, such as the list of monsters Tiamat creates (1.141-46), which is found in two Sumerian texts (*Lugal-E* and *Angimdimma*; their destruction is attributed to Ningirsu or other deities).<sup>174</sup> Tiamat herself is known earlier, but only as a breeder of monsters.<sup>175</sup>

Third and most important are textual snippets that prefigure the narrative of *Enuma Elish*. A seven-headed *muš.SAG.imin* is killed by the god Ninurta, as is a *bašmu* snake dragon (*KAR 6; Return of Ninurta to Nippur*),<sup>176</sup> and some argue that

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<sup>171</sup> J. -M Durand, "Le Mythologeme Du Combat Entre Le Dieu De l'Orage Et La Mer En Mesopotamie," *MARI* 7 (1993), 50, 56-57, 60.

<sup>172</sup> Tamtik, *Enuma Elish: The Origins of its Creation*, 75

<sup>173</sup> Wayne Pitard, "The Combat Myth as a Succession Story at Ugarit" (Bourbonnaise, IL, Creation and Chaos: Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaaskampf Hypothesis, February 2011, 2011).

<sup>174</sup> Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 108.

<sup>175</sup> Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 155.

<sup>176</sup> Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 162.

Marduk in *Enuma Elish* is modelled on Ninurta.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, the sea plays no role as the opponent of the gods in any of the Ninurta myths.<sup>178</sup>

A text from Mari in Syria dated to 1780 has, “Thus speaks Haddad, ‘I have brought you back to the throne of your father, and have given you the arms with which I fought against Tiamat’” (*ARMT* A.1968, 2’).<sup>179</sup> And even more interesting is a 2350 text from Eshnunna in central Mesopotamia: “Steward of Tiamat, fierce warrior, arise! Tishpak, steward of Tiamat, fierce one, arise!” (*MAD* 1.192).<sup>180</sup> Here Tiamat is neither evil nor chaotic. But Tishpak is interesting.<sup>181</sup> His iconic figure is the *Mušḫuššu* dragon, at least from the 25<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>182</sup> Marduk later takes this symbol over from Tishpak.<sup>183</sup> Some argue that Marduk takes this totem because of *Enuma Elish*,<sup>184</sup> but the image is attached to Marduk as early as 1800 while not restricted to Tishpak and Marduk, and it does not look serpentine.<sup>185</sup>

To return to Tishpak, he is a storm god.<sup>186</sup> In an Old Akkadian text, Tishpak fights a different dragon the sea or “River” has created (*CT* 13.33-34 obv. 6, 23).<sup>187</sup> The other gods cower in fear (*CT* 13.33-34 obv. 14). Tishpak’s weapon is the

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<sup>177</sup> Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works*, 142.

<sup>178</sup> Schwemer, *The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II*, 26

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>180</sup> The text is too early to be considered “Amorite” as per Nick Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*, Vol. 85 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 99.

<sup>181</sup> Jacobsen thought his name connected with “Teshub,” but this is unlikely. Theodore J. Lewis, “*CT* 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, no. 1 (1996), 28.

<sup>182</sup> F. A. M. Wiggermann, “Transtigridian Snake Gods,” in *Sumerian Gods and their Representations*, eds. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Geller, Vol. 7 (Groningen: Styx, 1997), 37.

<sup>183</sup> Salvini, *Babylone*, no. 147.

<sup>184</sup> Salvini, *Babylone*, no. 159; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 162, 169.

<sup>185</sup> Lewis, *CT* 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths, 37

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 28

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 30



thunderbolt (rev. 5-7), and his reward for victory is kingship (obv. 19). The standard representation of Tishpak shows him with two snakes emerging from his shoulders, looking exactly like Zahhak.

Many creative scenarios have been proposed to explain the Mesopotamian myth. Some attribute the story to supposedly Indo-Aryan Kassites,<sup>188</sup> a people from the Zagros Mountains first mentioned in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC who took over Babylon around 1500.<sup>189</sup> Aside from the fact that this is too early for the *Enuma Elish* and far too late for Tishpak, only a few Kassite words come from Indo-European (e.g. *Šuriišaš* "sun god"; *Maruttaš* "divine Marut comrades of Indra"; equestrian terms such as *akriyaš* = *agriya-s* "(running) in front?", *timiraš* "black?", etc..<sup>190</sup> The Kassite language is unrelated to any other known language family.<sup>191</sup> It is minimally possible that a few Indo-European warriors came west with the art of horse-warfare and stimulated the hitherto benign Kassites to their sudden aggressiveness in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>192</sup>

Others (William Crooke, Buddha Prakash) have cited parallels to argue for influence *from* the Mesopotamia to the Rig Veda.<sup>193</sup> All sorts of things are possible,

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<sup>188</sup> Vannucci, *Ancient Gods*, 97; and most recently in the work of Subhash Kak: "On the Decipherment of the Indus Script," *Indian Journal of the History of Science* 22 (1987): 51-62; "Babylonian and Indian Astronomy: Early Connections," in *History of Science, Philosophy & Culture in Indian Civilization*, ed. G.C. Pande, vol. 1, part 4 (New Delhi: CSC, 2005), 847-869; "Akhenaten, Surya, and the Rgveda," in *The Golden Chain*, ed. G. C. Pande (New Delhi: CSC, 2005), 1-34.

<sup>189</sup> D. T. Potts, "Elamites and Kassites in the Persian Gulf," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 65 (2006): 112-13.

<sup>190</sup> Witzel, *Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Exchange in Prehistoric Western Central Asia*, 9; Vyacheslav V. Ivanov, "Comparative Notes on Hurro-Urartian, North Caucasian, and Indo-European" .

<sup>191</sup> Potts, "Elamites," 114; Van De Mieroop, *History*, 173.

<sup>192</sup> Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 227.

<sup>193</sup> Lahiri, *Vedic Vṛitra*, 124-25, 207.

as trade and, no doubt, influence runs from the collection of Harrapan items kept by Queen Puabi of Ur in 2600 BC to the Greek rulers of India in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>194</sup>

The dragon slaying in the *Rig Veda*, *Avesta*, and Illuyanka are independent manifestations of the common Indo-European heritage. It is also clear *Shahname* is a genetic descendent of the *Avesta*, the Baal myth is directly dependent on the Kumarbi Cycle, and the *Enuma Elish* is indebted to earlier Mesopotamian myths. The relationship within the Near East of Hittite Illuyanka, Hurrian Kumarbi Cycle, Canaanite Baal myth, and Mesopotamian myths remains incredibly complex. I suspect these influenced each other repeatedly and in all directions, each society building its own myth out of various components in a manner unique and particular, as Emily Lyle has described.<sup>195</sup> As the folklorist Slavica Rankovic says, “What we hoped to be a string (something one can actually follow) would immediately start splitting at its tip, shooting innumerable threads both horizontally synchronically ... and vertically/diachronically ... The texture of this network is hardly as regular as that of a fishing net or a sweater. ... There is no regularity in the way of sprouting, or the intervals in the progression of branching: the threads would not always depart from one another—some would occasionally merge into one and the same point, some would also have to loop back into the point from which they started.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Jonathan M. Kenoyer, “Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley,” paper presented to the Pittsburgh Biblical Archaeology Society, December 1998.

<sup>195</sup> Emily Lyle, “The Cosmological Theory of Myth,” in , 269.

<sup>196</sup> Slavica Rankovic, “Who is Speaking in Traditional Texts?” *New Literary History* 38 (2007): 298.

As I stated earlier, this is only halfway along the dragon's elusive trail. Further research is leading northwest, to Zeus slaying Typhon also on Mount Hazzi/Zaphon, forward to St. George or El-Khidr, whom Muslim writers felt connected to Faridun, and south to the elusive dragon-slaying bull god known as Yahweh.

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