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A NEW BABYLONIAN THEOGONY AND HESIOD

A volume of cuneiform texts just published by the British Museum[2] contains a short theogony, which is of interest to Classical scholars since it is closer to Hesiod's opening list of gods than any other cuneiform material of this category. The first-named author is including a critical edition of the original text in his corpus of Babylonian creation myths. Since, however, it may be a year or two before this book is published, and to facilitate the second-named author's work on Hesiod, it has been thought desirable to give a translation accompanied by some comment immediately.

The tablet, BM 74329, is Late Babylonian and can only be dated by its script and other scribal aspects. It comes from some time between the beginning of the Late Babylonian empire, and the end of the Persian empire, that is between 635 and 330 B. C., though probably it is earlier rather than later within this range. Some 40 lines of script (though not all complete) are preserved on the obverse, but only a few damaged lines remain on the reverse. Some of these belonged to the colophon, and one phrase in particular can be read: "written and collated [according to] a tablet, an original of Bab-[ylon] and Assur". This means that our copy was made from a tablet written in Babylon, which in turn was based on one of Assur, or vice versa that the Babylonian original was copied in Assur, and that from this the surviving copy was made. Whichever of these alternatives is correct, it supplies a *terminus ante quem* for the text, since Assur, one of the Assyrian capitals, was destroyed by the Medes in 614 B. C. It is most unlikely that the text was written before 2,000 B. C., but neither grammar and style nor content allows a more precise estimate of the date of composition. Even if the first copy referred to in the colophon was the Assur one, it would not follow that the text is Assyrian, for by far the greater

[1] Lambert is responsible for the translation of the text and for the elucidation of it on the Mesopotamian side. The classical commentary is the work of Walcot, though both authors have read and discussed the other's contribution.

[2] Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, Part XLVI, by W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1965, no. 43 (copied by Millard)

part of literary tablets found at Assur contain texts originating in Southern Mesopotamia. First, the translation:

BM 74329 Obverse

1 [. .] in the beginning [. . .
2 [. .] . . and . [. . .] . . . . [. . .
3 They . . . [. .] and . [. .] . their plough
4 [With the] stroke of their plough they brought Sea into being.
5 [Second]ly, by themselves they bore Amakandu;
6 [Third]ly, they built the city of Dunnu, the twin towers.
7 Ḫain dedicated the overlordship in the city of Dunnu to himself.
8 [Earth] cast her eyes on Amakandu, her son,
9 "Come, let me make love to you," she said to him.
10 Amakandu married Earth, his mother, and
11 Ḫain, his [father], he killed, and
12 Laid [him] to rest in the city of Dunnu, which he loved.
13 Then Amakandu took the overlordship of his father, [and]
14 Married Sea, his sister . .
15 Laḫar, son of Amakandu, went [and]
16 Killed Amakandu, and in the city of Dunnu
17 He laid [him] to rest in the . . . of his father.
18 He married Sea, his mother.
19 Then Sea murdered (?) Earth, her mother.
20 In the month Chislev on the 16th day he took the overlordship and kingship.

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21 [. . .], son of Laḫar, married River, his own sister, and
22 He killed [Laḫar], his father, and Sea, his mother, and
23 Laid them to rest [in . .] . . . . . .
24 [In the month . . .] on the first day [he] took the kingship and overlordship for himself.

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25 [. . ., son of] . . . married Ga'um, his sister
26 . . .] earth . . . [. . .
27 . . .] . . . . . [. . .
28 . . .] . . fathers and . [. . .
29 . . .] . . [. .] . for the . . . of the gods . [. . .
30 . . .] he killed River, his mother, [and]
31 . . .] he settled them.
32 [In the month . . . on the . th day] he [took] the overlordship and kingship for himself.

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33 [. . ., son of . .] ., married Ningeštinna, his sister, [and]
34 Killed [. . ., his father, and] Ga'um, his mother.
35 . . .] he settled them.
36 [In the month . . .] on the 16th (variant: 29th) day, he took the kingship and overlordship.

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37 . . .] the child/servant of Ḫaḫarnu [. . .
38 . . .] married his own sister [and]
39 . . .] took the overlordship of his father and [. . .
40 . . .] to the city of Shupat(-)/Kupat(-) [. . .
41 . . .] . . . . [. . .

* * * * * * * * * *

The story is told in simple language without any literary embellishment, and there is no pedantic precision of wording. "His sister" and "his own sister" occur indiscriminately, and "overlordship and kingship" freely interchanges with "kingship and overlordship". It is a theogony in the sense that pairs of primaeval deities lead on from the first pair to the beginnings of human history, though in this case the end of the story is missing. The account is not concerned with physical generation alone. The male of each pair holds power until he is killed by his successor. It is also, therefore, a succession myth. The regular tale of incest and murder was needed to explain the succession within a single line of descent. The following are the deities involved set out in a genealogy, the males on the left, the females on the right:

Ḫain	----	Earth
Amakandu	----	Sea
Laḫar	----	River
[x]	----	Ga'um
[y]	----	Ningeštinna

* * * * * *

The first three in the female line are all well known in related myths. Earth is, indeed, the commonest prime mover in ancient Mesopotamian myths. Sea is well known from Tiamat ("Sea") in the Babylonian *Epic of Creation*, but otherwise is very unusual. River occurs in this kind of context less frequently than Earth, but more commonly than Sea. The big mystery is Ḫain, who is unknown outside this text. In view of his male successors a possibility of textual

corruption may be mentioned. It is that the two signs ḫa-in are miscopied from the one big sign used to write the name of the corn goddess Nidaba. The difficulty over the wrong sex of this deity is not fatal. In ancient Mesopotamian religion a number of deities appear in different places in different genders. Due to the damage to the first two lines it is not clear if the first pair was conceived as having existed from all time, or if their beginnings were explained. Of the second pair, Sea was created by the simple expedient of making a furrow with a plough, which presumably filled with water and so gave rise to Sea. Amakandu, however, the male of the second pair, was begotten by the first pair "by themselves", which presumably means by normal bisexual reproduction without the aid of any implement such as the plough. Amakandu is one form of a title of the Sumero-Babylonian god of wild animals, Šakkan (also written Sumuqan), whose attributes may also cover domesticated animals and plant life. Laḫar is the Sumero-Babylonian god of cattle. Ga'um is obtained by a very slight emendation (*ga* for *ú*), since he too is a shepherd god, while Uaum (as the text actually reads) could at the most be a disease demon, a deified groan. Elsewhere there are less than half a dozen occurrences of the name Ga'um, and always in lists, where interchange of gender takes place most easily. Thus his use here in the feminine line is not unexpected. Ningeštinna is a form of the name Ningeštinanna or Geštinanna, a sister of Tammuz and some kind of mother goddess. She is the first deity in this list of whom we know that a cult was practised. Her name, meaning "Vine of Heaven", continues the theme of husbandry set in many of her forebears. One further name occurs in the text (line 37), though since the pattern of the previous sections has changed it is not certain how he should be placed in the genealogy, Ḫaḫarnu. He occurs twice elsewhere in cuneiform texts, and both times accompanied by Ḫa'ašu. They always occur at the head of a list of major deities, but nothing otherwise is known of them.

The text leads one to suspect that it contains a local myth of the city Dunnu. It records that the first divine pair built the city, that Ḫain loved the city, and that both he and his son Amakandu were buried there. One wonders if the people of Dunnu used to point out to visitors some structure in their city as the tomb of Ḫain. Another city is named in line 40, but the reading of the signs is not quite certain, and the name may be incomplete. Unfortunately more than one city Dunnu is named in ancient texts, but their locations are unknown. Certainly they were of no great importance. Our theo-

gony suggests that this one was dominated by two towers. Another local connection is probably implicit in one aspect of the succession. The month and day given on which each new holder of power took over no doubt refer to events in the calendar of festivals of the city Dunnu. Quite commonly with myths of origins it was conceived that what took place at the beginning of time was repeated at regular intervals throughout history. Usually this pattern of thought served to connect myth with ritual. The rites were in some sense a re-enactment of the original events. Since only the first of these dates is preserved completely nothing final can be said about them, but some suggestions can be made. Three days of the month are still preserved: the 1st, the 16th (twice), and the 29th, given as a variant reading to the second occurrence of the 16th. All these are of course key days in a lunar month. Nothing in the vast mass of ancient Mesopotamian texts bearing on the various calendars directly explains these items, but there are suggestive parallels. The Mari texts, from the 18th centruy B. C., record offerings to the dead on the 1st, 8th, 16th, and 30th of the month, and similar offerings took place under the Third Dynasty of Ur (21st century B. C.), but on the 1st and 15th days. In the latter case the "dead" meant, in part if not completely, deceased rulers. In the case of Mari the term used is ambiguous, but it probably refers to underworld gods. Those deities could be either the responsible gods who presided over the shades, or various deities who had been deposed in theogonic struggles and as "dead gods" were down below. The better known of these are Enmešarra, Enki, and Lugaldukuga. For these three, offerings on the 29th of Tishri are laid down in the calendars. For Enmešarra alone offerings on the 15th of Sivan and 26th of Tebeth are similarly prescribed. The matter is not susceptible of proof, but one may suspect that the succession dates in this theogony are the days on which offerings were made to the deposed dynast.

II

Archaeology, the mythology of the Near East and Egypt, and the fact that Hesiod's style is that of an oral poet[3], all suggest that

[3] The cave on Mount Aigaion (484) where baby Zeus was concealed must recall Minoan cult (M. P. Nilsson, The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion, Lund², 1950, pp. 459—60 and 60ff., and R. W. Hutchinson, Prehistoric Crete, Pelican, 1962, pp. 201—3). The birth of Ploutos in Crete (969—71) with its suggestion of a *hieros gamos* affirms the antiquity of the *Theogony's* two references to the island. Com-

the *Theogony* stood at the end of a tradition which stretched back to the Mycenaean Greeks. The best known creation myth apart from the *Theogony* is the Babylonian *Epic of Creation* or *Enuma Eliš*. It has been generally considered that this work is an Old Babylonian poem, whose original composition should be assigned to the reign of King Hammurabi of Babylon in the eighteenth century B. C. Recent research, however, has shown that it is wrong to exaggerate the importance of the god Marduk, the hero of *Enuma Eliš*, at the time of the First Dynasty of Babylon[4], and this and other factors are causing a re-assessment of the date of *Enuma Eliš*, which now seems not to have been compiled before the last quarter of the twelfth century B.C.[5]. At the same time its author made extensive use of older material: his account of the conflict between Marduk and Tiamat, for example, owes much to the already existent story of the god Ninurta's struggle against the monstrous Zu bird[6]. Both the *Theogony* and *Enuma Eliš*, therefore, are relatively late poems, but both include material of a considerably earlier date.

The specialist in Akkadian studies has a great advantage when compared with his Classical counterpart: the long established use of writing throughout the countries of the Near East to record literary and religious texts means that he has at his disposal some of the raw material from which the Babylonian *Epic of Creation* was itself created. It is true that the decipherment of Linear B has yielded new evidence relating to the *Theogony*[7], but the archives of a palace administration are a sorry recompense for a lack of literary

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parative evidence is offered by the Hurrian Kumarbi and Ullikummi myths (H. G. Güterbock, Kumarbi, Zürich—New York, 1946), and by an Egyptian tradition according to which sky devoured her own children, quarrelled with her husband, the earth, and they were therefore separated (the relevant text is translated by A. de Buck in H. Frankfort's The Cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos, London, 1933, p. 83). J. A. Notopoulos, Hesperia 29 (1960), pp. 177—97 discusses Hesiod as an oral poet and what this implies.

[4] H. Schmökel, Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale 53 (1959), pp. 183—204

[5] For the present see L. Matouš, Archiv Orientální 29 (1961), pp. 30—4. Lambert sketches the development of Mesopotamian thought and literature in the introductory chapter of his Babylonian Wisdom Literature, Oxford, 1960, pp. 1—20.

[6] S. Langdon, The Babylonian Epic of Creation, Oxford, 1923, pp. 17ff., and O. R. Gurney, Proceedings of the British Academy 1955, p. 26

[7] Of a special interest in this respect is L. R. Palmer's case for a Mycenaean version of the Anthesteria and a New Year Festival (The Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek Texts, Oxford, 1963, pp. 250—68).

texts. Unlike Hesiod's poem, *Enuma Eliš* opens immediately with a theogony where we read of the descent of the first gods. Lambert has collected the evidence for Babylonian theogonies, and it is his conclusions which are presented here. The major gods of the Babylonian pantheon in the second millennium B. C. were Enlil and Anu. Both were reputed to have been descended from primary forces, Earth in the case of Enlil, and either Nammu, primaeval water, or Duri Dari, 'ever and ever', in the case of Anu. The theogony with which *Enuma Eliš* opens is an adaptation of the alternative theogonies of Anu, taking the concept of primaeval water, although Apsu and Tiamat replace Nammu, from the one tradition, and the idea of descent through matched pairs (Apsu and Tiamat, Laḫmu and Laḫamu, Anshar and Kishar) from the other. Ea, who is always the father of Marduk and himself the son of either Nammu or Anu, is introduced into the genealogy in order to accommodate the birth of Marduk.

All three primary forces of Babylonian tradition appear in Greek sources: with Duri Dari we seem to have the principle of eternal time, and so, now for the first time, a convincing prototype of Pherecydes' Chronos[8]; Homer's Okeanos, 'the genesis of the gods' and 'the genesis of all' (*Iliad* 14, 201 and 246), represents the concept of primaeval water, although the primaeval water is made a river which surrounds the earth (*Iliad* 18, 607—8); in the *Theogony* (116ff.) Earth is one of the two[9] *Urgötter* produced when Chaos came into being. If one, moreover, examines Hesiod's list of powers which appear before the union of Gaia and Ouranos, it will be found that they fall into sets of pairs (Gaia and Eros, Erebos and Night, Aither and Hemera) as do the first gods of *Enuma Eliš* and the gods of the theogony translated in this article. The pairs, however, become a triad when Gaia gives birth to Ouranos, the Mountains and Pontos, the sea (126ff.). All three children in this grouping are difficult. The inclusion of Ouranos must imply that Gaia here is not simply the earth but something like the universe, for, while mountains and the sea cover much of the earth's surface, this can hardly be said of heaven, at least not in the same sense. References in the

[8] Cf. G. S. Kirk in Kirk and Raven, The Presocratic Philosophers, Cambridge, 1957, p. 56

[9] Verse 119 forms part of the relative clause which begins in 118, Olympus and Tartarus representing the top and bottom respectively, as in verses 680—2. See also H. Schwabl, WS 72 (1959), pp. 30—5, and M. C. Stokes, Phronesis 8 (1963), pp. 1—4.

Theogony show that land and sea formed a natural pair for Hesiod (762, 790 and 972; 964; 843—5), to which heaven could be added as a third element (427, 678—80 and 847). The list might be extended by the further addition of Tartarus (736—7 and 807—8), of Okeanos and Tartarus (839—41), and of the underworld (847—52), but nowhere by the addition of the Mountains. Outside verse 129, the Mountains are ignored by Hesiod, and it is difficult, therefore, to resist the conclusion that they are an artificial creation of the poet, chosen to complete the grouping heaven, land and sea, and at the same time to prevent too glaring a clash with the mother, Gaia herself. If we exclude the Mountains, we are left with what was originally another pair, Ouranos and Pontos.

Pontos is also a problem, this time for two reasons. First, among the offspring of Ouranos and Gaia is included Okeanos (133). It is clear that Pontos and Okeanos are two distinct types of water: Pontos is the sea, while Okeanos, the father of the rivers, is the source of all rivers. Thus in one passage (695—6) Okeanos' streams appear with land and *pontos* to express the totality of earth and water. But Pontos and Okeanos can also serve as alternatives, so that, when two of the short catalogues from the *Prooemium* of the *Theogony* are compared, we find in verses 19—20 Dawn, Sun and Moon (= heaven?), Gaia, Okeanos and Night, but in verses 106—7 Earth, Ouranos, Night and Pontos, the second of these lists being followed by another comprising gods, earth, rivers, sea, stars and heaven (108—10). Secondly, we must ask why Pontos is placed with Ouranos and before Okeanos so early in the development of the cosmos. The significance of Ouranos is obvious: he is the direct opposite of earth and covers earth completely (126—7), and is soon to join with Gaia in providing the gods with their first king and queen. Pontos can claim no such honour, nor does Pontos in Hesiod seem to qualify as a form of primaeval water.

An answer is supplied by the theogonic text translated above, for in it not only do we have a first generation of the gods which includes Earth, but Sea also as one of the two deities of the next generation. River as the feminine constituent of the third generation may help to explain why Pontos is born before Okeanos. If it can be assumed that Hesiod was handling traditional material, according to which Sea was descended in the second generation from Earth in the first, we are able to understand the position of Pontos in the poet's scheme. The new Babylonian text allows that assumption to be made. The text also relates the story of the dynasties of heaven,

beginning with Amakandu who killed his father Ḫain and married his mother Earth. At first sight this suggests Hesiod's story of the overthrow of Ouranos by Kronos, especially as Gaia, like her Babylonian equivalent, takes the initiative in urging her son to action. To marry one's own mother and to castrate one's own father, moreover, reflect the same subconscious desire. But a link with the first deities of the *Theogony* is even closer: while the Titans freely contract brother-sister marriages — Tethys and Okeanos (337), Theia and Hyperion (371—4), Phoibe and Koios (404), and Rheia and Kronos (453) — it is only Ouranos and Pontos who practise incest to the extent of mating with their own mother, Ouranos to produce a whole horde of children (132ff.) and Pontos (238) to produce Nereus, Thaumas, Phorkys, Keto and Eurybie. The only other example in the *Theogony* of a union between mother and her child comes when the combination of Echidna and Orthos gives birth to the Sphinx and Nemean Lion (326—7), and here the relative pronoun of verse 326 is somewhat ambiguous.

Coincidence of detail may represent a common legacy going back to the Neolithic period. Alternatively, there may have been contact, direct or indirect, between the Greek and Mesopotamian worlds during the Mycenaean era or when contact with the Near East was re-established in the late ninth century B. C.[10]. Foreign material would have been modified by its borrowers, and in the case of both possibilities, common legacy or external influence, distortion must have occurred in the course of time, so that exact correspondence between Greek and Near Eastern parallels is not to be expected. What we may hope for is what we have illustrated here, an anomaly in Hesiod on which the non-Greek evidence throws fresh light.

[10] The discovery of Babylonian cylinder seals at Thebes provides new evidence of the overseas contacts of the Mycenaeans (E. Touloupa, Kadmos 3 (1964), pp. 25—7, and A. Falkenstein, ibid., pp. 108—9). The study of the Greek pottery from Al Mina by J. Boardman, BSA 52 (1957), pp. 5ff. and 24—7 and The Greeks Overseas, Pelican, 1964, pp. 62—70, means that it is possible to trace a line of transmission from North Syria to Euboea and so to Boeotia in the eighth century B. C. As Al Mina can no longer be separated from the region to the south (J. Du Plat Taylor, Iraq 21 (1959), pp. 62—92, and J. M. Birmingham, AJA 67 (1963), pp. 15—42 and PalEQ 1963, pp. 80—112), the presence of Greek settlers at Tell Sukas is also noteworthy (P. J. Riis, AArchSyr 8—9 (1958—9), pp. 128—30; 10 (1960), pp. 123ff.; and 11—2 (1961—2), pp. 137—40). Cf. in addition the Greek pottery from Tarsus as reported by G. M. A. Hanfmann in The Aegean and the Near East, Locust Valley N. Y., 1956, pp. 165—84