

From Hittite Mythology: The Kumarbi Cycle

RENÉ LEBRUN

THE GOD KUMARBI was a central figure of a series of mythological tales, written for the most part in the Hittite language, that have been found in the ruins of Khattusha (modern Boğazköy), the capital of the Hittite Empire. The texts originally developed in the Syrian Hurrian culture, and later they were translated and adapted to the Anatolian Hittite world following the gradual Hurrianization of the well-to-do classes at the capital.

Kumarbi, often described in the texts as "king of the gods," was authentically Hurrian, as was Teshub, the storm god. His holy city was Urkish in upper Mesopotamia, east of the Tigris, where a Hurrian inscription datable to around 2100 BCE has been found. As has been observed by Maurice Vieyra, the elevation of Kumarbi to the title "king of the gods," succeeding other gods in a Sumero-Babylonian sequence, illustrates a theological reinterpretation provoked by the Hurrian preponderance in upper Mesopotamia and ultimately, in Syria, where Kumarbi was assimilated to Dagan (biblical Dagon). Kumarbi is well attested at Mari (Tell Hariri), Nuzi (Nuzu, modern Yorghun Tepe), Ugarit (Ras Shamra), Emar (Meskene), and Khattusha, although his place in Hurrianized Syria is difficult to define or assess. The Hittites were susceptible to syncretistic movements; depending on the theological school making the connection, Kumarbi was assimilated to the Canaanite El (from which he was nonetheless often distinguished), to the Mesopotamian Enlil (the result of an earlier equating of Enlil with Dagan), and to Dagan, the great

Syrian god symbolizing wheat. Introduced into Anatolia, Kumarbi was interchangeable with the goddess Khalki, meaning "grain" (Sumerian ^dNISABA). In Hittite religion he was thus not placed at the peak of the divine hierarchy; rather, he remained a foreign god, imagined eventually to have been conquered by the storm-god, the great god of the Hittites. It is generally agreed that a reference to Kumarbi can be found in relief 40 of the rock sanctuary of Yazılıkaya created near the Hittite capital by King Tudkhaliya IV, where the Hurrianized imperial pantheon is represented. Kumarbi figures here in a respectable position after Tashmishu, brother of Teshub, and just before Ea. In the festival rituals of the thirteenth century (often highly Hurrianized), Kumarbi was sometimes inserted after the group of storm-gods. However, in the god lists appearing in treaties earlier than the thirteenth century, when the Hurrianization of religion was less pronounced, Kumarbi is relegated to the end of the list, in the company of Sumero-Babylonian gods or after ancestral gods (Anunnaki). There must also have been a link established between Kumarbi and the netherworld. Kumarbi worship seems to have still existed at the beginning of the first millennium if it is admitted, following J. D. Hawkins, that the (DEUS) BONUS *Ku-pá + r-ma-sa* of the inscription of Til Barsip (Tell Aḥmar, I 1:2) constitutes a late and deformed Luwian form of Kumarbi. Quite rightly, several scholars have also compared Kumarbi with the Greek god Kronos, and the agrarian character of the Hurrian god has

reinforced this comparison. It is thus legitimate to go back to the Hurro-Hittite Kumarbi to grasp the nature of Kronos, who was worshiped notably in the Greco-Asiatic era in various places of southern Anatolia, for example at Tlos.

KUMARBI AND HURRIAN MYTHOLOGY

The mythological texts discovered at Boğazköy can be divided into those that record a pure Anatolian mythology, inherited from the ancient traditions of the region, and those that are translations of foreign mythology. The structure of the foreign texts was originally set by mythographer-theologians of Syria who amalgamated Mesopotamian mythic traditions in Hurrian with Canaanite influences. By way of Kizzuwatna, this mythology eventually reached the Hittite capital. It is also possible that already in the Old Kingdom, after their Syrian conquests, the Hittites carried back to Khattusha from Aleppo (ancient Halab) or Ebla (Tell Mardikh) a number of texts that were the object of later reworkings, themselves often recopied in the thirteenth century BCE. In some of these texts, Kumarbi plays an important role.

The purely Anatolian mythological texts correspond with the great feasts honoring the god to whom they were linked: Telipinu, the storm-god, the sun-god, or a god protective of the wilderness. The tales were integrated into a ritual intended to attract the god and to remind him of the necessity of renewing, for example for the coming year, the benevolence he displayed in mythic times.

The foreign mythological texts, on the other hand, are songs and poems that were recited independently of ritual or festival activities. Their recitation had as a goal to entertain and, more so, to educate. They are, in fact, rich in the theological instruction needed for the Hittites to better comprehend the personalities of the gods and the organization of a pantheon that was growing more and more complex. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that mythology does not always directly reflect religion as it was practiced by the Hittites. The high place occupied by a god in a mythological tale does not at

all mean that people accorded him an equivalent rank in religious life.

KUMARBI TEXTS

The bulk of the surviving texts involving Kumarbi (that is, the Kumarbi Cycle) are three long tales of which we have important fragments: *The Theogony* (or *Heavenly Kingship*), doubtless the most famous tale and the richest one from the point of view of theology; *The Song of Ullikummi*, an epic poem recounting the wrath of Kumarbi against Teshub and all the celestial gods when Kumarbi created a stone monster to rival Teshub; and *The Myth of Khedammu*, a poem that is a variant of the *Song of Ullikummi* except that the monster is a dragon. Each of these three texts are discussed below, followed by a section describing minor texts that also mention Kumarbi.

The Theogony (or Heavenly Kingship)

This fine mythic tale is part of a set of at least six "songs" relating in the epic mode the divine battles to seize power in heaven. It could just as well be called "The Rise of the Storm-God." It is perhaps the best-known Hittite myth among modern religious historians because the succession to divine kingship recalls Hesiod's *Theogony*, which might have been inspired by the Hittite text, however difficult it may be to explain the continuity between the two. (We do note that Hesiod's father emigrated from Aeolic Kyme in Anatolia.)

The myth is known to us from a thirteenth-century Hittite version reproducing an older but damaged model, itself dependent on a Hurrian redaction. The colophon sparkles in its precision: "First tablet of the song [of ?]. Written by Ashkhapa [son of Khan]titasshu, grandson of Kuruntalaman, <great>-grandson of Warshiya, pupil of Ziti. This tablet was damaged and I, Ashkhapa, copied it in the presence of Ziti." Before presenting and analyzing the tale, however, it is worthwhile to note two essential points.

First, the origin of the tale, like that of the others analyzed in this section, is not Anatolian; it emerged, rather, from a cultural koine that was

Anatolian myths tied to ritual

particularly in vogue in the scribal schools of Syria in the second millennium and was exported to southeast Anatolia and then to Khat-tusha. Involved in the tale are Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hurrian gods. Its geographic locale is sometimes Mesopotamian, sometimes Hurro-Syrian. The idea of the succession of divine generations and the concept of ancient gods (gods dethroned from heaven and then relegated to the netherworld, where they exercise diminished authority) are Mesopotamian in origin. These syncretistic tales were the fruit of the thought of several Hurrian theologian-scribes.

Second, the myth had educational value, notably for the Hittites. Having the same function as the *Iliad* had for the Greeks and the Book of Genesis has in Western culture, the Hurrian myths offered the Hittites a basic religious framework and defined the function as well as the kinship of certain gods; at the same time, they gave explanatory shape for the hierarchy among the gods. In the case of the *Theogony*, it above all offered a sort of cultural and religious credo regarding the origin and precedence of the Hurro-Hittite storm-god Teshub (Tarkhunt). The *Theogony* also provided the basis for the composition of other mythic tales that became a logical continuation of it divided into several episodes.

The *Theogony*, whose surviving copy is damaged near the beginning of the text, makes a solemn appeal, an invitation to the ancient gods (Hittite *karuilesh shiunesh*) to listen to the story. This invitation in a way guaranteed the story's veracity, since the ancient gods were, in light of their distant origin, the only beings capable of knowing and authenticating the evolution of the divine world from the most distant times.

Following the invitation, the tale proper begins with the narration of the succession of four gods on the heavenly throne, with each reign lasting nine years. The atmosphere of the heavenly court, sketched briefly in a few strokes, was inspired by that prevailing in the palaces of the ancient Near East; each divine king is at first served and then dethroned by his vizier, a theme familiar in Mesopotamian literature (for example, the king of Kish is dethroned by Sargon). The sequence of gods is as follows: Alalu, Anu, Kumarbi, Teshub. The following text describes Alalu's reign and his deposition by Anu:

Formerly, in ancient times, Alalu was king in heaven. Alalu occupies the throne and the powerful Anu, the first among the gods, stands before him; he prostrates himself at his feet and places in his hands the drinking vessels. Alalu reigned in heaven for nine full years; the ninth year, Anu joined battle with Alalu and vanquished him. He (Alalu) fled before him and descended into the dark earth. He thus descended into the dark earth and for his part Anu took over the throne. (A.I 8-15)

9 yr reigns

The *Theogony* goes on to the second reign:

Anu occupies his throne and powerful Kumarbi serves him drink; he prostrates himself at his feet and places in his hands the drinking vessels. Anu reigned in heaven for nine full years. The ninth year, Anu joined battle before Kumarbi (and) Kumarbi, the grandson of Alalu, joined battle before Anu. Anu no longer withstood Kumarbi's eyes and he escaped from Kumarbi's clutches. He fled, Anu did, and he tried to go to heaven. Kumarbi rushed after him and seized him. Anu, by the feet and pulled him from high heaven. He bit his loins: his manhood joined the entrails of Kumarbi like bronze. When Kumarbi had engulfed the manhood of Anu, he laughed with joy. Anu turned to him (and) addressed Kumarbi: "Do you rejoice within your entrails because you have engulfed my manhood? Do not rejoice in your entrails! Into your entrails I have placed a burden! Look! I have impregnated you with the powerful storm-god and, secondly, I have impregnated you with the river Aranzakh (Tigris), the irresistible. Thirdly, I have impregnated you with the powerful god Tashmishu. I have thus placed in your entrails two terrible gods as a burden. You will end up going to hit your head on the cliffs of the mountain Tassha (in Hurrian territory)!" When Anu had finished speaking, he climbed to heaven and hid.

impregnation of Kumarbi

The text goes on to the third reign: "Kumarbi, the wise king, spat; from his mouth he spat spittle [and sperm] mixed together . . ." (A.I 16-38). For a few passages the text is badly damaged; it is possible, though, to reconstruct its general outlines. The second column concerns the preoccupation of the gods with assuring Kumarbi a successful delivery. A god (^dA.GILIM, perhaps Marduk), Anu, and Ea successively lavish their counsel. It seems that the god KA.ZAL is first to be born, emerging from the skull of Kumarbi. Anu, and Ea as well, are eager to have the storm-god born in the best possible condition. Anu

ancient gods called for to witness & verify this tale

indicates to Teshub the part of Kumarbi's body from which it would be most suitable for him to exit. But Kumarbi makes his way to Ea, the god of wisdom par excellence, and informs him of the powerful hunger that makes him wish to devour his own child. Ea procures for him various foods that make Kumarbi ill. Ea then solicits the aid of human beings. Each one is asked to perform a sacrifice in accordance with his means, as described by Ea: "... and to you may the rich, the heroes, and the lords offer cattle [and sheep]; may the poor offer you [food]!" Finally Ea counsels Kumarbi to turn to magic to assure deliverance of the child. The birth of the storm-god, at which the goddesses of destiny are present, then proceeds under the most favorable conditions.

The end of the column appears to describe the birth of Shuwaliyat (Tashmishu), the storm-god's brother. The third column describes the plans for the destruction of Kumarbi worked out by Anu with the aid of Teshub, the storm-god, who in the course of a conversation with Anu himself, enumerates the various attributes with which he is endowed. Combat is then readied by the mobilization of the important gods, but the narrative of the battle is lost. The end of the fourth column is partially preserved; described there is the birth, at the beginning of the tenth month, of two children arising from Anu's fertilization of the earth.

Beyond noting how the several divinities emerged and how their qualities are established in this myth, we must also draw attention to several interesting details:

1. The divine succession Alalu-Anu-Kumarbi-Teshub resembles the sequence Elyon-Uranos-El-Baal (Hadad) mentioned by Philo of Byblos with respect to the Syrian pantheon and furthermore, the succession Uranos-Kronos-Zeus evoked for the first time in Greek literature in Hesiod's *Theogony* and repeated by other authors.

2. Although the storm-god is clearly Teshub, king of Kummiya, he is mentioned under his Luwian-Hittite name Tarkhun(t)-, as the phonetic complements, ^dIM-aš, ^dIM-ni, suggest. This constitutes definite proof of the adaptation of the Hurrian text by a Hittite scribe who, as a result of syncretism, was more readily disposed

to designate the storm-god in his native language.

3. The length of each reign is stipulated as nine years. The number nine was highly symbolic in Babylonia; the Hurrians inherited its significance as much as did the Hittites, in whose language the number signified newness, as it did in the other Indo-European languages. It is possible that a relationship can be established between the length of each reign and the period of human gestation.

4. The need of the gods to receive animal sacrifice from humans is clearly stipulated in connection with the birth of Teshub; the offerings themselves are specified: large and small cattle and food (at least for the heavenly gods). Furthermore, it is striking to see the stress upon the idea that each person make the offering according to his means; the offering of the pauper as well as that of the rich man had real value for the god.

5. The birth of the mysterious god KA.ZAL from the head of Kumarbi is reminiscent of Athena's emerging as a helmeted woman from the head of her royal father; here too, moreover, a deity is brought into the world by a god, not a goddess.

6. The presence of the Babylonian god Marduk and his association with the activity of the "ancient gods" like Anu and Ea is surprising. The equation of ^dA.GILIM with Marduk, however, is certain. This may show a Babylonian influence, but it also could be the result of a copying error by the scribe Ashkhapa working from a document in bad condition and writing ^dA.GILIM instead of ^dA.A., as F. Pecchioli Daddi and A. M. Polvani have suggested. From the Babylonian viewpoint, Marduk is the son of Ea, and it is this filiation that prevailed in the Near East.

The Song of Ullikummi

We know the *Song of Ullikummi* better than the *Theogony* thanks to its richer manuscript tradition. The two texts are related in that the *Song of Ullikummi* presents an essential and well-honed episode of the conflict pitting Kumarbi against the storm-god. From the union of Kumarbi with a mountain was born a monstrous diorite offspring with the meaningful Hurrian name Ullikummi, "destroyer of Kummi[ya]," the holy city of Teshub, probably located near Mount Casius.

Tes is called
by Hittite - Luwian
name - Tarkhun(t)-

From Hittite Mythology: The Kumarbi Cycle

The poem immediately gets to the heart of the subject, stating "I will sing of Kumarbi, the father of all the gods." After this simple introduction, the text recounts the coming into the world of Ullikummi, the monstrous diorite:

Kumarbi reflected to himself: one fine day he will create a malevolent being! He developed plans hostile to the storm-god and wished to give rise to a rival to the storm-god. Kumarbi mulls over thoughts in his heart and rolls them around like the pearls of a necklace. When Kumarbi had reflected [wisely], he rose promptly from his throne, took a staff in his hands, and put brisk winds [on his feet as sandals]. He left the city of Urkish and betook himself to the frozen lake. (Tablet 1, A.I 5-16)

is it also a female?
In this lake there is a large rock whose appearance so excites the desire of Kumarbi that he finally unites passionately with it. The end of the column is lost. The beginning of the second column suggests that Impaluri, the vizier of the Sea, describes to the latter the determination of Kumarbi to remain the king of the gods. The Sea then commands his vizier to faithfully report the following message to Kumarbi:

"Why have you come in anger against my house? Because of this, fear has seized the house and fear has seized the servants. For you has the cedar wood not been cut for a long time and has food not been cooked [for] you for a long time? Are the musicians not ready to play their instruments in your honor, day and night? Arise and come to me!"

Then he, Kumarbi, arose, and before him walked Impaluri. Kumarbi [left his] residence and he, Kumarbi, left to betake himself to the house of the Sea. The Sea says: "Let us bring a seat for Kumarbi. Let us prepare a table before him. Let us bring him food and drink and let us bring him beer to drink." The cooks brought the platters and the cup-bearers brought sweet wine to drink. They drank once, drank twice, drank thrice. They drank four times, drank five times, drank six times, they drank seven times. Then Kumarbi addressed a speech to Mukishanu, his vizier: "Mukishanu, [my vizier], lend your ear to what I am about to tell you! Take a staff in your hands, put sandals [on your feet] and [go] into the waters and [speak] before the waters. . . ." (Tablet 1, C.II 8-37)

A long lacuna follows, taking us to the third column, which describes the birth of Ullikummi:

[The midwives] brought him into the world . . . and the goddesses of destiny and [the mother goddesses] lifted up the baby. They placed it on the knees of Kumarbi and Kumarbi began to rejoice in this child; he began to caress him and decided to give him a sweet name. Kumarbi began to reflect: "What name [to give] to the child whom the goddesses of destiny and the mother goddesses have given me? Like an arrow he left the body; so! let his name be Ullikummi! May he accede in heaven to kingship and may he defeat Kummiya, the excellent city; may he do battle against the storm-god and may he trample him like chaff, may he crush him underfoot like an ant; may he break Tashmishu like a reed and may he disperse all the gods from the sky like birds and may he break them [like] empty vessels!" (Tablet 1, A.III 10-25)

The last curse is notable, as it sometimes applied to the enemies of the Hittite king in other texts from the era.

Kumarbi then deliberates over who should be entrusted with his child so that he might be raised unnoticed by the great gods. He orders his vizier Impaluri to go as quickly as possible to the Irshirra gods and summon them without revealing the reason. Upon their arrival Kumarbi says to them: "Take [the child who is before you] and treat him as a gift, raise him on the dark earth! Hurry, be quick, and set him like an arrow on the right shoulder of Upelluri (ancient god, Hurrian equivalent of Atlas)!" The Irshirra gods take Ullikummi and place him on the knees of Enlil, who is dumbfounded to see this being of diorite. After reflection, Enlil says that this creature represents an evil deed of Kumarbi. The Irshirras then place the little monster on the right shoulder of Upelluri. The diorite then expands at an astonishing rate.

When the fifteenth day arrived, the rock had grown and risen in the sea on the knees like an arrow. The rock, it left the water and its height was [. . .] and the sea, like a garment, met it at the height of the waist. Like a mushroom the rock rose and reached in heaven the temples and the dwelling of the gods (= *kuntarra*). (Tablet 1, A. IV 27-32)

The sun-god finally observes Ullikummi, and anger can be read in his face. He goes to the storm-god, where he is greeted by Tashmishu, who wonders: "Why does the sun-god of heaven, [the king] of the country, come? The reason for

his coming is a serious reason; it must not be rejected! Hard will be the struggle, hard will be the battle! There will be tumult in heaven, there will be famine and ruin on earth!" Inspired by the contemporary protocol for greeting distinguished guests, the narrative specifies that Teshub orders Tashmishu to bring a seat for the sun-god and to prepare a table for a meal. The sun-god, manifestly annoyed, refuses to sit and eat. Teshub then asks him: "Is the chamberlain who has set up your chair is so incompetent, that you have not seated yourself? Is the waiter [who] set [the table] so bad that you have not eaten? Is the cup-bearer who presented [the cup] to you so bad that you have not drunk?" With these words the first tablet ends.

The second tablet begins with the sun-god's explanation of his behavior to the storm-god, who is disturbed by what he hears. In a lighter mood after eating, the sun-god returns to the sky. Teshub and Tashmishu then leave the *kuntarra* and the temple, holding hands. They are soon joined by Ishtar, and they all climb to the peak of Mount Khazzi (possibly Mount Casius). Teshub spies the gigantic diorite and is seized at once by both wrath and despair. Ishtar then decides to intervene by seducing the monster. Richly adorned, holding in her hands a tambourine and rattles, she intones a song.

And she, the goddess Ishtar, sings and bedecks herself with shells and pebbles of the sea. Then from the sea comes a large wave; the large wave says to Ishtar: "For whom are you singing? Before whom do you fill your mouth with soft singing? The man is deaf; he does not hear, and, as for the eyes, he is blind and does not see. He has no feelings! So go, Ishtar, and find your brother before Ullikummi becomes all-powerful and before his brain becomes formidable." When Ishtar hears this speech, she stops her singing, discards tambourine and rattles, takes off the gold ornaments, groans, [. . .] and goes. . . . (Tablet 2, B.II 13-30)

Although the narrative on the second tablet is very fragmentary, it is clearly a description of the preparation for battle with the gigantic diorite, and the bull-servants of Teshub, Sheri, and Tella (Khurri) are brought on. The battle looms awful.

The third tablet begins with a sea battle between seventy gods led by Ashtabi, the Hurrian

war-god and Ullikummi. The diorite grows agitated and goes to the residence of the heavenly gods: "And it placed itself before the great gate of (the heavenly) Kummiya like a [. . .] and the diorite overturned Khepat (wife of the storm-god) and the temple so that Khepat did not hear the message of the gods and did not see with her eyes the storm-god and Shuwaliyat (Hittite name of Tashmishu)." Khepat becomes uneasy, imagining that her husband Teshub could have even been killed. So she sends her attendant Takiti to find out. Apparently, she returns to announce to Khepat the defeat of her husband.

In the second column, Tashmishu relates to Khepat the defeat of Teshub and the consequences that will follow. The reaction of Khepat and the other gods is described:

When Tashmishu heard the words of the storm-god, he rose promptly and took in his hands a staff, donned as shoes the brisk [winds], and climbed a high tower. He took up a [position] facing Khepat (saying): "(The storm-god must) remain in a humble place until he has completed the years assigned to him." (Tablet 3, A.II 1-7)

In other words, Teshub was condemned to exile.

When Khepat saw Tashmishu, she nearly fell from the roof. If she had taken one more step, she would have fallen from the roof; but the hierodules held her and did not let go of her. When Tashmishu finished speaking, he descended from the tower and went to the storm-god. He said to the storm-god: "Where then (shall we dwell)? Shall we dwell on Mount Kandurna? [If] we sit on Mount Kandurna, someone else will take over Mount Lalapaduwa. Where shall we carry [the . . .]? In heaven there will be no king." (Tablet 3, A.II 8-16)

Tashmishu plans to go right away before Ea, the wise god, in the city of Apshuwa (Apsu), domain of the primeval waters, kingdom of Ea. Very interesting is the following passage relating the words of Tashmishu to his brother:

We will ask for the return of the tablets of ancient words [and when] we arrive at the gate of the residence of Ea, (we will bow) [five times]; then at the internal gate (of the house) of Ea, we will bow five times; and [when] we arrive [before] Ea, we will bow fifteen times before Ea and perhaps we could move Ea; perhaps Ea [will hear] (us), will take pity on us, and will assign us the ancient [kingdom]. (Tablet 3, A.II 20-26)

Teshub defeated & forced into exile

Without delay, Teshub and Tashmishu go before Ea. Although the rest of the tablet is damaged, we can make out a speech of Ea to the gods gathered in assembly. This speech probably is similar to that given by the same god in identical circumstances in the myth of Khedammu. In it Ea underlines the gravity of the situation and the disastrous consequences for the gods in the event Ullikummi succeeds in destroying humankind. Ea then addresses Enlil and makes him aware of the danger faced by the gods. After this, he returns to Upelluri; after the usual greetings, Ea declares:

Do you know nothing, Upelluri? Has no one brought you the news? Do you not know what a swift god Kumarbi has created to face the gods? And (do you not know) that Kumarbi is forcefully plotting death for the storm-god and creating a rival to him? And the diorite which has expanded in the water, do you not know it? It has grown like a mushroom and has blanketed the sky, the holy temples, and Khepat. Is it because you, Upelluri, are removed from the dark earth that you do not know this swift god? (Tablet 3, A.III 30–39)

Upelluri replies that since the origin of the world, he has been unaware of all that comes to pass above him. Ea then makes him aware of the source of the wound that he feels on the right shoulder; it is Ullikummi shooting up like an arrow! Ea then addresses the ancient gods, asking them to reopen the ancestral storehouses to retrieve the ancient saw with which heaven was separated from earth; it can be used to cut off Ullikummi's feet and thus distance him, like Antaeus, from the source of his power. Although damaged, the end of the text provides us with Ea's announcement to the other gods that he has mutilated Ullikummi and his calling on them to fight more fiercely. Teshub then sets out in his chariot, descends into the sea, and enters combat with the diorite. The last lines seem to relate the defeat of Ullikummi.

In the *Song of Ullikummi*, we observe how gods of foreign origin that became important during the Empire period, and especially during the thirteenth century, are represented within Hittite theology and acquire a place within the Hittite pantheon. The power of the young storm-god Teshub arises from his triumph over Kumarbi. As in the Khedammu myth discussed be-

low, the Ninevite Ishtar appears as the combative but also seductive sister of Teshub and Tashmishu. She plays a crucial role in her brother's triumph, using her erotic appeal as her primary weapon. Ea, the god of wisdom, also plays a significant part in this narrative. Elsewhere, through the characterization of the "new" great gods, we witness the victory of rational powers over brute and blind force, as epitomized by Ullikummi. In this way are secured the benefits that ensue when reason is linked with Ea.

A few details of the myth should be mentioned. Placing a child on its father's lap was a gesture known to antiquity by which a father acknowledged his son and chose a name fitting the circumstances. Also worth notice is Upelluri, the Hurrian counterpart to the Greek Atlas, on whose shoulders the ancient gods raised heaven and earth before severing them with the famous knife. The *Song of Ullikummi* is distinguished by a rather lively yet lyrical narrative style, of which the seduction scenes featuring Ishtar are excellent illustrations. Its sometimes formulaic language is reminiscent of Homer; similar terminology is used whenever the myth describes the movements of the gods or their ministers, a technique that likely helped in memorization or recitation of the myth. Retelling it provided an occasion to focus on the need for rituals, and the myth is a reminder of the importance of teaching the proper way to worship the gods.

The Myth of Khedammu

The central characters of the *Myth of Khedammu* are Kumarbi and the dragon Khedammu, a variant of the monstrous Ullikummi. The relationships between the myths of Khedammu and Ullikummi are clear, but it is difficult to establish which might have served as the model for the other (if in fact one was based on the other). The point of departure is again the desire of Kumarbi to raise up a rival to Teshub. The beginning of the tale is lost. After this gap, we find the Sea granting to Kumarbi his daughter Shertapshurukhi, a woman of great beauty; from their union is born the sea monster Khedammu. The episode following informs us of the care accorded to the dragon and describes its extraordinary voracity. The tale continues with the first acts of destruction committed by the dragon. Ishtar then inter-

venes by coming to the Sea; she finds the cities by the sea deserted. A deity of unknown name gives instructions for receiving the goddess, but she refuses to sit or drink; she is then asked the reasons for her refusal, which was clearly prompted by anxiety. After a large lacuna, we learn of an assembly of gods apparently presided over by Ea. He underscores the danger facing the gods were humanity to be destroyed (cf. the myth of Ullikummi). The gods, he explains, would once again have to provide for their own needs:

If you destroy humanity, it will no longer extol the gods. No one will ever offer sacrificial bread (and) libation. Then it will come to pass that Teshub, the powerful king of Kummiya, will have to hold the plow himself and it will come to pass that Ishtar and Khepat themselves will have to turn the millstone. (Frag. 6, 11–15)

Ea then specifically addresses Kumarbi, whose unreflecting attitude he reproaches: "Why do you wish to injure humanity? . . . Do they not gladly offer their sacrifices in your temple, O Kumarbi, father of the gods?" Ea's speech illustrates a theme often found in near eastern literature: namely, the creation by the gods of people in their image because the gods, exhausted, needed capable servants. To suppress humanity would amount to forcing the gods back to the painful condition from which the creation of humankind had liberated them. (This is also the theme of the creation of humankind as related in the Babylonian myth of Atrakhasis.)

After this speech, an interview between the Sea and Kumarbi is arranged by Mukishanu, vizier of Kumarbi, who returns to the Sea by an underground route so as not to be seen by the great gods in heaven. The Sea thereupon visits Kumarbi. After another lacuna, an unknown deity undertakes preparations for neutralizing Khedammu. At this moment Ishtar appears, banking on her powers of seduction: "She prepared herself and gracefulness dogged her footsteps like hounds." The seduction of a monster by dance, music, and feminine grace is another common theme in the mythic literature of the Near East.

Ishtar goes to the shore with her two followers, Ninatta and Kulitta, and probably begins a dance to the sound of the tambourine. Khedammu

raises his head above the waves and espies the goddess fully nude and resplendently beautiful. A conversation commences between the goddess and the monster: unfortunately we have it only in very fragmentary form. Ishtar is now undertaking a new attempt at seduction, trying to excite Khedammu by her words, notably by declaring to him: "I am a wrathful child, and wrath has [overrun] me as foliage [overruns] the mountains": the image evoked is highly poetic. Ishtar then pours a sleeping potion into the water where the dragon lives, which dissipates his aggressiveness. She then shows herself to him naked, seduces him, and invites him, fully submissive, to follow her. Khedammu seems to submit, but the end of the myth is lost.

The composite character of the myth is obvious. The mythmaker(s) responsible for the Khedammu episode has selected and sequenced a cluster of motifs of diverse origins: Hurrian (by relying heavily on the *Song of Ullikummi* or by scrutinizing traditions of similar background); Mesopotamian (in the absence of Hurrian intermediaries); and Anatolian (by choosing a dragon as the storm-god's antagonist, which reminds one of the Anatolian Illuyanka, who similarly challenges a storm-god).

It is possible that the myth of Khedammu may have served as a link between the *Song of Ullikummi* and the myth of the Cilician (southern Anatolian) dragon Typhon (Typhoeus), as told in the fifth century CE by Nonnus of Panopolis (ancient Khemmis, Akhmim) in Song I of his *Dionysiaca*. In turn Nonnus himself seems to have been inspired by Pisander of Laranda (Karaman), an author of the third century CE whose work is suffused with Anatolian traditions, as well as by other Greek-speaking Cilician writers.

Other Fragmentary Sources That Mention Kumarbi

In addition to these three basic texts is a series of fragments mentioning Kumarbi and linked to his personality. The first of these is *The Romance of Keshhi*, a true literary composition of which, unfortunately, only the first part is extant. The Hurrian version of the tale contains the name of Kumarbi (fourteenth tablet), which is missing in the Hittite fragments. Keshhi, fatherless but a

heroic hunter, falls so in love with a pretty young woman that he renounces his hunting expeditions. The gods are thereby deprived of offerings and the city is deprived of sustenance. Cut to the quick by his mother's reproaches, he returns to the hunt, but since the gods wish to punish him, he finds no game. One day, exhausted and disappointed, he falls asleep on a mountain. Evil gnomes wish to devour him, but the hunter's dead father suggests to them that they strip Kesshi of his cloak instead; drawn to the idea of a practical joke, they do so. Stiff with cold, Kesshi returns to his house. Later he has several strange, premonitory dreams that his mother urges him to ignore.

The protagonist of another tale, *The Myth of Silver*, is a person labeled "Silver." His mother, seemingly a mortal, informs him that his father, who has abandoned him, is none other than the god Kumarbi, Lord of Urkish. She also tells him that his brother is Teshub and his sister is Ishtar of Nineveh (Tell Kuyunjik, Nebi Yunus). Silver heads for Urkish to seek his father. Following a lacuna in the text, we find Silver under the influence of Kumarbi, menacing the great gods of the sky and seeking to take power in heaven. This myth constitutes a phase of the war of the gods to conquer the heavenly kingship and of the vengeance harbored by Kumarbi toward Teshub.

A third set of fragments, *The Kingship of the god KAL/LAMMA*, is concerned with another episode in the conquest of the kingship in heaven. They include the efforts of the god Ea, the wise god, to moderate the hostility of Teshub, storm-god, toward Kumarbi and to curb his pretension to become king of the gods, whatever the cost and however violently. Ea prefers to Teshub a peaceable god who is susceptible to restoring calm and unity to the divine family. His choice is a god designated solely by the Sumerogram ^dKAL/^dLAMMA, which among the Hittites designates several protective gods of wild nature. However the Hurrian name of this god cannot be determined at present.

There are a few other fragments that are difficult to reconcile with any known mythological texts. The fragments, though, recall a Babylonian mythological model. One fragment in Hittite and two others in Hurrian contain episodes from the Gilgamesh epic. A fourth fragment con-

tains the Hittite version of the famous myth of Atrakhasis, so important for explaining the origin of man and his purpose. In these texts Kumarbi is Enlil, as he is known to the Hurrians.

CONCLUSION

The place of the Kumarbi Cycle in Hittite culture cannot be disassociated from the progressive Hurrianization of dominant elements in Hittite society that culminated in the thirteenth century BCE. It was contingent on the manifest and complete integration of Hurrian deities into the theological context obtaining in Anatolia, with the imperfect adaptation of Hurrian myths being a major factor in that development. The thirteenth century witnessed the adoption of Teshub, his consort Khepat, and Shaushka into the officially sanctioned pantheon. The position of Ea, the wisdom god, was bolstered. Whether imported directly or through intermediaries, the Hurrian and Canaanite myths gave the Hittite theologians an excellent opportunity to sharpen the roles that they could assign these gods within a Hittite universe. Above all it was necessary to explain the kingship and primacy of Teshub—assimilated to Tarkhunt—and of his divine circle, and the Kumarbi series of tales constituted an excellent vehicle by which to do so. Its enchanting poetic idiom was a matchless resource for instilling pedagogic and moralistic values.

Nevertheless, the concrete impact of these "foreign" myths on the Hittite population is difficult to assess, given the available documentation. In Hittite society, as elsewhere in antiquity, there was a real chasm between official and popular religion; therefore it is plausible conjecture, but still conjecture, on our part that what we recognize as Hurrian-developed myths were better known to the Hittite ruling classes than among the common folk, people who lived and worshiped far from where theological and political speculation was taking place.

A connection between diverse episodes in the Kumarbi Cycle and mythological passages in Greek is plausible, and the matter deserves further attention. We have already commented on the parallels with episodes in Hesiod's *Theogony*, as well as with other works known to the

Greeks, although we still do not know how the linkage actually occurred. It is possible that the Greek world of the second millennium—possibly through Akkhiyawa—knew these Hurro-Syrian myths at the same time as they came to be known to the Hittites, conceivably through mercantile channels.

Yet there is another plausible avenue of linkage. The linguistic, even cultural and religious, continuity between the Hittites and Greeks of Anatolia is becoming progressively more evident, especially in southern Anatolia (Cilicia, Pisidia, Pamphylia, Lycia). Would it be unreasonable to suppose that the memory of myths such as those associated with Kumarbi were sustained in homes and in religious centers that remained active for long centuries? Carchemish (Karkamish) and its surroundings at Comagene, Tarsus, or even in Comana—the Hittites' Kummani of Kizzuwatna—would have been excellent locales for such myths to survive into the classical period.

*Translated from the French by Peter Daniels
and J. M. Sasson*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Basic Works

FRANCA PECCHIOLO DADDI and ANNA MARIA POLVANI, *La mitologia ittita* (1990); HANS GUSTAV GÜTERBOCK, *Kumarbi. Mythen vom churritischen Kronos* (1946), "The Song of Ullikummi: Revised Text of the Hittite Version of a Hurrian Myth," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 5, no. 4 (1951) and 6, no. 1 (1952), and "Kumarbi," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 6 (1980); HARRY A. HOFFNER, JR., *Hittite Myths* (1990); EMMANUEL LAROCHE, *Catalogue des textes hittites* (1971), and

"Textes mythologiques hittites en transcription, deuxième partie: Mythologie d'origine étrangère," *Revue hittite et asianique* 26, no. 82 (1968); LIANE JAKOB-ROST, *Das Lied von Ullikummi. Dichtung von Hethiter* (1977); JANA SIEGLOVÁ, *Appu-Märchen und Hedammu-Mythus*, Studien zu den Boğazköy Texten 14 (1971); and MAURICE VIEYRA, "Les textes hittites," in *Les religions du Proche-Orient*, edited by RENÉ LABAT ET AL. (1971).

Special Studies

RICHARD D. BARNETT, "The Epic of Kumarbi and the Theogony of Hesiod," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 45 (1945); A. BERNABÉ, "Generaciones de dioses y sucesión interrumpida: El mito hitita de Kumarbi, la 'Teogonía' de Hesíodo y la del 'Papiro de Dervini'," *Aula Orientalis* 7, no. 2 (1989); CORINNE BONNET, "Typhon et Baal Saphon," in *Studia Phoenicia* 5, edited by E. LIPINSKI (1987); JOHN DAY, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (1985); OLIVER R. GURNEY, "The Symbolism of 9 in Babylonian and Hittite Literature," *Journal of the Department of English* 14 (1978–1979); HANS GUSTAV GÜTERBOCK, "The Hittite Version of the Hurrian Kumarbi Myths: Oriental Forerunners of Hesiod," *American Journal of Archaeology* 52, no. 1 (1948), "Die Inschriften," in *Das hethitische Felsheiligtum Yazılıkaya*, by KURT BITTEL ET AL. (1975), and *Les hiéroglyphes de Yazılıkaya* (1982); EMMANUEL LAROCHE, "Les dieux de Yazılıkaya," *Revue hittite et asianique* 27, nos. 84–85 (1969), and "The Pantheons of Asia Minor: The Organization of the Hittite Gods" and "Hurrian Borrowings from the Babylonian System" in *Mythologies*, vol. 1, compiled by YVES BONNEFOY (1991); RENÉ LEBRUN, "Pauvres et démunis dans la société hittite," *Hethitica* 4 (1981), and "Quelques aspects du symbolisme dans le culte hittite," in *Le Symbolisme dans le culte des grandes religions*, edited by J. RIES, *Homo Religiosus*, vol. 11 (1985); ALBIN LESKY, "Griechischer Mythos and Vorderer Orient," *Saeculum* 6, no. 2 (1955); FRANCIS VIAN, "Le Mythe de Typhée et le problème de ses origines orientales," in *Eléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne* (1960).

SEE ALSO Myth and Mythmaking in Sumer and Akkad (Part 8, Vol. III)
and Hittite and Hurrian Literatures: An Overview (Part 9, Vol. IV).