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Baal, Son of Dagan:  
In Search of Baal’s Double Paternity

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The Ugaritic expression “Baal, son of Dagan” has been the subject of several studies which attempt to resolve the contradiction between the depiction of Baal as El’s son on the one hand and the expression “Baal, son of Dagan” (bʿl bn dgn) on the other. Despite the paucity of literary evidence, the majority of scholars have identified Dagan with either El or Baal, consequently attributing a single “real” father to Baal. This paper suggests a new solution in light of the literary traditions preserved in the Hurro-Hittite texts—contemporary with those from Ugarit—and the development of these traditions in the writings of Philo of Byblos (first–second centuries C.E.). Both these texts describe the storm-god as having two fathers: the grain-god (Kumarbi / Dagon) and the veteran god of the pantheon, the god of Heaven (Anu / Ouranus). Given the close relationship among Ugarit, the Hurrians, and the Phoenicians, it is difficult to regard this parallelism as coincidental.

Like all the Ugaritic gods, Baal is customarily regarded as a son of El, the head of the Ugaritic pantheon. 1 His close relationship to El is portrayed in several Ugaritic texts; the most convincing is found in the Baal Cycle—which otherwise actually describes the hostility between El and Baal. Here El’s deep grief over Baal’s death is depicted in a similar fashion to that of Jacob’s mourning of his beloved son Joseph (Gen. 37:33–35): “Thereupon Beneficent El the Benign descends from the throne . . . sits on the earth. He pours dirt of mourning on his head . . . He raises his voice and cries aloud: ‘Baal is dead! What of the peoples? . . . After Baal I shall descend to Sheol (ʾaṯr bʿlʾard.bʾarṣ).’” 2 This account resumes a few columns later with El’s dream of Baal’s rejuvenation, his great joy at that idea, and his calling upon Anat to search for him. 3

While Baal also appears as the son of Dagan in Ugaritic literature, this relationship is purely formulaic, being expressed solely in the fixed phrases “Baal, son of Dagan” (bʿl bn dgn) and “Baal, offspring/lineage of Dagan (bʿl ḥtk dgn).” 4 In contrast to El and despite his appearance in rituals and sacrificial lists, Dagan is a shadowy figure in Ugaritic epic. 5 Likewise, only two Ugaritic personal names contain his name (ʾil-Dgn; [A]mnmini-Dagan) as a theophoric element. 6 This circumstance indicates that—at least in the second part of the

I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Edward L. Greenstein and Prof. Dennis G. Pardee for their comments on the present article.

1. Cf. CAT 1.2 I 18–19, 35, 37; 1.5 VI 23–24; 1.6 I 6; 1.10 III 12–14; 1.12 II 24–25.
4. CAT 1.2 I 18–19, 35, 36–37; 1.5 VI 23–24; 1.6 I 6, 51, 52; 1.10 III 14–15; 1.12 II 26; 1.14 II 77–78, IV 170.

second millennium B.C.E.—Dagan was relatively insignificant in the daily life of the common people.

These facts have prompted some scholars to explain the epithet “Baal, son of Dagan” as reflecting an identification of Dagan and Baal either by virtue of their parallel function as storm-gods (accepting the Arabic etymology of the root d-g-n for the god Dagan) or on the grounds that they “competed” for supremacy over the gods in Syria. According to this theory, no early tradition of any genealogical tie between the two gods existed. However, in the epithet “Baal, son of Dagan,” Baal is not equivalent to Dagan—as he is represented in relation to the names hd (Haddu) or dmrm—but is said to be Dagan’s son.

Other scholars have suggested that El and Dagan were identified with one another at Ugarit in consequence of the two gods being regarded as heads of a pantheon in different locations—one along the coast, the other in the interior of the country. This assimilation may have occurred either in a period prior to our extant texts or at the time of their composition. At whatever point this process took place, in the end, Baal had become the son of a single god, the head of the pantheon. Though firm traditions from inner Syria and the northwestern Euphrates indicate that Dagan was considered to be the father of the gods—like El at Ugarit—the fact that only Baal and none of the other gods in the Ugaritic pantheon has attained this unique status remains enigmatic.

All of these explanations endeavor to resolve the problem of Baal’s two fathers at Ugarit by searching for his one “real” father, either Dagan or El. However, contemporary Hurro-Hittite texts and the development of the same traditions by Philo of Byblos—composed ca. 1500 years after the destruction of Ugarit but based upon much earlier Phoenician traditions—provide us with evidence of a dual parentage for the storm-god: the grain-god and the...
veteran god of the pantheon. When taken in the context of the close ties among the Ugaritic, Hurrian, and Phoenician cultures, this datum is of great significance. While some scholars have noted the affinity between the Ugaritic texts and one of the traditions mentioned above, either the Hurrian or the Phoenician, none has adduced both simultaneously.

TEŠŠUB’S DOUBLE PATERNITY IN THE HURRO-HITTITE TRADITION

Second-millennium B.C.E. Hurrian and Hurro-Hittite texts—whose origins lie primarily in North Syria—portray the Hurrian storm-god Teššub as the son of two fathers: the gods Kumarbi and Anu. The Hurro-Hittite composition known as the Song of Kumarbi (CTH 344) describes how Kumarbi swallowed Anu’s member in the course of hostilities between them, thereby conceiving and giving birth to the storm-god Teššub. A similar tradition also appears in the Hurrian psalm to Teššub of Aleppo, of whom it states: “Anu is your father (attai=vu=(š)=mma dAni=š) . . . Kumarbi is your mother (nera=vu=(š)=mma dKumarve=ne=š) . . .” Following Teššub’s birth as a result of this strange coupling between Anu and Kumarbi, Teššub sought to inherit his father Kumarbi’s kingdom—thereby becoming his rival and Anu’s ally.

Additional Hurro-Hittite compositions—such as the Song of Ḫedammu and the Song of Ullikummi—portray the dysfunctional relations between Kumarbi and Teššub in a fashion similar to those depicted between El and the storm-god Baal in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Thus, just as El enthrones Yamm in place of Baal, Kumarbi enthrones his sons in place of Teššub. Likewise, Teššub’s opponents—Ḥedammu the sea-serpent and Ullikummi the giant stone monster—are represented as Kumarbi’s beloved sons in a way analogous to that in which Baal’s enemies Yamm and Mot, as well as Līn, Tīn, and the remainder of the creatures, are regarded as El’s beloved.

Anu, Teššub’s “positive” Hurrian father, serves as the god of heaven and one of the veteran gods in Mesopotamian mythology. The Hurrians apparently adopted his name following their migration to northern Syria from their homeland in the Caucasus. Kumarbi, Teššub’s “negative” Hurrian father, is an indigenous Hurrian god portrayed as the father of

10. See, for example, B. L. Crowell, “The Development of Dagan: A Sketch,” JANER 1 (2001): 62–65. Although Crowell points to the parallels between Dagan and Kumarbi as father of the storm-god, adducing this in explanation of the epithet “Baal, son of Dagan,” he regards Kumarbi’s status as the grain-god as a stumbling block to this theory. H. Niehr (“Zur Frage der Filiation des Gottes Baʿal in Ugarit,” JNSL 20 [1994]: 165–77) cites the identification of both Dagan and El with Kumarbi as the reason for their both being regarded as Baal’s father in Ugaritic literature. While J. D. Schloen (The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001], 354) links the Ugaritic epithet with Philo’s Phoenician History, suggesting that “the title ‘son of Dagan’ reflects an awareness already in the Late Bronze Age of a longer family history of the Canaanite pantheon,” he does not discuss the Hurrian tradition on which Philo apparently draws.


all the gods.¹⁴ Hitite sacrificial lists of Hurrian origin and the AN.TAH.ŠUM celebration descriptions—which replace Kumarbi with the Mesopotamian grain-goddess Nisaba and the Hitite grain-goddess Ḥalki—indicate that he also functioned as a grain-god. The rock-cut relief from Yazılıkaya in which Kumarbi is represented as holding an ear of grain hieroglyph also evinces this association.¹⁵

As is well known, Kumarbi also exhibits links with Dagan—who also functioned as a grain-god.¹⁶ This is reflected in the fact that Dagan’s home city in northern Syria, Tuttil, is also attributed to Kumarbi, and Dagan’s consort Šalaš is also said to accompany Kumarbi.¹⁷

**DEMAROUS’ DOUBLE PATERNITY IN THE PHOENICIAN TRADITION**

Around a millennium and a half after the Hurrian traditions concerning the storm-god Teššub’s two fathers were written down, Philo of Byblos described a very similar divine dynasty in his *Phoenician History*, portraying Demarous (Δημαροῦς) as the son of both Ouranos (Οὐρανός) and Dagon (Δαγών).¹⁸ As was noticed long ago, Demarous is the storm-god Baal—whose parallel name *dmrn* occurs once in the Ugaritic texts (*CAT* 1.4 VII 39).¹⁹


¹⁷. For Tuttil as Kumarbi’s city, see, for example, the *Song of Ḫedammu* (KUB 8.67; KBo 26:82:22 = CTH 348.1.2; 348.1.22) and possibly the Ugaritic spell *CAT* 1.44; for Šalaš/Šaluš as Kumarbi’s consort, see, e.g., KUB 29.8 (= ChS I/1 9) 117–18; KBo 15.37 (= ChS I/3–2 133) II 17; cf. Laroche, “Teššub,” 132; Güterbock, “Kumarbi,” 326; M. C. Astour, “Semitic Elements in the Kumarbi Myth: An Onomastic Inquiry,” *JNES* 27 (1968): 173–74. According to Felius, *The God Dagan*, 299 (cf. pp. 269–71), the identification between the two gods is further reflected by way of a comparison between a Hurrian hymn from Ugarit (*CAT* 1.42) in which Kumarbi appears prior to Teššub of Aleppo and follows ‘Il-lab (in atn in Hurrian) and El, and the West Semitic lists from Ugarit in which Dagan appears after ‘Il-lab and El and before Haddu of Aleppo = Baal Zaphon (*CAT* 1.47 = 1.118 = 1.148 = RS 20.024). Note that an alternative order, ‘Il-lab-El-Baal-Dagan/in-atn-El-Teššub-Kumarbi, is attested in the West Semitic sacrificial text *CAT* 1.162 and the Hurrian 1.111 (cf. *CAT* 1.46, 1.109, 1.100).

¹⁸. See A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1981). Although Philo was evidently acquainted with a separate tradition according to which Belos (= Baal) was Elos’ son (*Eusebius, Praep. ev.* 1.10.26), he appears not to have been aware of its link with the Demarous tradition.

Dagon represents the Phoenician pronunciation of the Syrian Dagan, and Ouranos is the Greek god of heaven—presumably reflecting the original Phoenician god of heaven (אורים). Philo’s explanation of Demarous-Baal’s dual parenthood differs from the Hurrian account, being predictably more rationalistic: Elos (= Kronos) fights Ouranos and, having defeated him, gives Ouranos’ concubine to Dagon when she is pregnant with Ouranos’ son Demarous (Praep. ev. 1.10.18–19). Consequently Demarous-Baal, the storm-god, was considered to be the son of Ouranos, the god of heaven, and stepson of Dagon, the grain-god. This account closely corresponds to the early Hurrian depiction of Teššub, the storm-god, as the son of Anu, the god of heaven, and Kumari, the grain-god.

**BAAL’S DOUBLE PATERNITY IN LIGHT OF HURRO-HITTITE AND PHOENICIAN TRADITIONS**

The storm-god’s “two fathers” according to the various versions can be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song of Kumarbi</th>
<th>Philo of Byblos</th>
<th>Ugaritic tablets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(second generation:)</td>
<td>(second generation:)</td>
<td>El Dagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anu (the god of heaven)</td>
<td>Ouranos (the god of heaven)</td>
<td>Baal (the storm-god)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(third generation:)</td>
<td>(third generation:)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumarbi (the grain-god)</td>
<td>Dagon (the grain-god), Elos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teššub (the storm-god)</td>
<td>Demarous (the storm-god)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teššub is born from the seed of Anu deposited in Kumari’s stomach. Anu and Kumari are rivals. Kumari and Teššub are adversaries. Anu and Teššub are allies.

Demarous is the seed of Ouranos but is born in the household of Dagon after Elos, Dagon’s brother and Ouranos’ son, gives Ouranos’ concubine to Dagon while she is pregnant. Ouranos and Elos are rivals. Ouranos and Demarous are allies who fight against Elos.

Baal calls El “my father” but is also called “son of Dagan.” In the story of Baal’s struggle against Yamm in the Baal Cycle, El and Baal are described as rivals.

As the first two columns demonstrate, both the Song of Kumarbi and Philo depict the storm-god as the joint son of the second and third generations of the divine dynasty. The second generation is represented by the god of heaven—the Akkadian Anu in the Hurro-Hittite tradition and the Greek Ouranos in the Phoenician tradition. The third generation is associated with the grain-god—either the Hurrian Kumari or the Phoenician Dagon. In both the

mologies for dmrm, see these references. For other—unconvincing—suggestions, see J. C. de Moor, The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba’lu according to the Version of Ilimilku (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1971), 166–67; B. Margalit, A Matter of “Life” and “Death”: A Study of the Baal-Mot Epic (CAT 4–5–6) (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1980), 65.

Hurrian and Phoenician texts, the god of heaven and grain-god are said to be enemies, the former being allied with the storm-god.

The discovery of the Ugarit and Ḫattuša archives has enabled scholars to appreciate the fact that, despite its late date and obvious Greek influence, Philo’s account retains residues of earlier local traditions. No one, therefore, disputes the fact that Philo’s story of the dynastic generations, which refers to Demarous and his two fathers, Ouranos and Dagon, has been greatly influenced by Hurrian tradition—which could have reached Phoenicia from the second half of the second millennium onwards. Philo’s source reworked the Hurrian tradition, however, not only turning the fantastic tale into a more realistic account—i.e., transforming the coupling between two male gods into two fathers, one biological, the other a stepfather—but also dividing Kumarbi’s features between Elos-Kronos and Dagon. The former is Kumarbi’s counterpart in his opposition to the god of heaven, and is described as an aggressive figure; the latter parallels Kumarbi with respect to his grain aspect, without any mention of his activity. Thus, as in the Ugaritic texts, Philo’s Dagon is a very “flat” figure who, other than being Demarous-Baal’s second father, engages in no mythic activity.

The third column in the table demonstrates that in Ugarit the storm-god too has two fathers—El and Dagan—who, in Philo’s text, share the same generation (Elos-Kronos and Dagon, respectively). While the Ugaritic Dagan appears to possess the same function as the Phoenician Dagon—thereby making him equivalent to the Hurrian grain-god Kumarbi—El is identified with Kumarbi in his role as head of the pantheon. A trilingual list from Ugarit confirms this identification: [dEn-Il :: k]u-[m]ur-wi :: dingir-lum (i.e., Ilum = El). And indeed like the Hurrian Kumarbi—and to some degree the Phoenician Elos-Kronos—El is portrayed in the Baal Cycle as the adversary of the storm-god, enthroning his son Yamm, the storm-god’s rival, and allying himself with the storm-god’s opponents, Yamm beloved of El (Ym mdd ’Il), Mot beloved of El (Mt ydd ’Il), Arš beloved of El (ʾArš mdd ʾIlm), etc.

The designation “Baal, son of Dagan” thus served the Ugaritic author of the Baal Cycle to distinguish Baal from El’s family—as well as making Dagan Baal’s “positive” father—albeit only in the most nominal sense, without playing any active role. In Ugarit, however, these circumstances occurred only in the Baal Cycle. No other Ugaritic texts contain any reference to the tension between Baal and El—and thus no dichotomy between Baal as the joint son of El and of Dagan. It appears that, just as in the Phoenician literature, Dagan customarily functions in the Ugaritic myth as another father of Baal, without possessing any real substance.


The “fossil” figures of Dagan as Baal’s father and Dagon as the father of Demarous (in the Phoenician texts) indicate that the source of the two-father motif lies in a parallel culture, wherein it was employed actively and whence it was transmitted to Ugarit and Phoenicia. This culture must be recognized as Hurrian—the sole place in which the focus of the mythologem is on the activity of the storm-god’s two fathers: the grain-god and the veteran god, namely, the god of heaven. Having incorporated the motif of the storm-god’s two fathers, this tradition was left empty of substance in Ugaritic mythology. Although the Phoenician source which served Philo of Byblos restored literary significance to Demarous-Baal as the son of two fathers, while Kronos-Elos replaced Kumarbi as the rival of the god of heaven, Dagon, the grain-god, retained no other role than serving as Demarous-Baal’s second father—as in Ugarit.

SUMMARY

The survival of three groups of texts from different periods and cultures has enabled us to outline the transmission of the mythologem we have examined here and to identify the source of the designation “Baal, son of Dagan” in Ugarit. The above analysis demonstrates that the Hurrians developed a tradition regarding the storm-god’s dual fathers—one his rival, the other his ally—who together, in a violent and unnatural manner, gave birth to him. Since this mythologem reached Ugarit devoid of any active mythological elements, the feature of Baal’s two fathers was left as a fossil. The sole anomaly in this situation is the Baal Cycle, wherein the mythologem serves to highlight El’s tension with Baal. While Dagon’s fatherhood also remained as a fossilized element in Phoenician literature, there it retained more substantial traces of the earlier Hurrian literature.