# The 'Kingship in Heaven'-Theme of the Hesiodic *Theogony*: Origin, Function, Composition

*Erik van Dongen*

## 1. *Introduction*

THE 'KINGSHIP IN HEAVEN'-theme as it appears in the Hesiodic *Theogony* has often been connected to appearances of the theme in various texts from southwestern Asia. So far, however, scholars have only investigated the differences and similarities between the relevant texts; how these comparisons can improve our understanding of the *Theogony* has not yet been a subject of discussion. With this article, I would like to change that. I will show how a comparison of the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Going Forth* ('Song of Kumarbi'; *CTH* 344) and the *Theogony* can shed new light on the process of composition of the *Theogony* as we know it, providing new explanations for a number of choices that have been made in the text.[1]

To be able to do so, I will first discuss all relevant southwestern Asian texts. While scholars normally consider these as all more or less equally relevant to the *Theogony*, I propose to single out the *Song of Going Forth* in this context. An analysis of the theme as it appears in the *Theogony* follows next. It is generally acknowledged that praising Zeus is one of the main purposes of the *Theogony*; but I argue additionally that one of

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[1] The following abbreviations are used: *CTH*: *Catalogue des Textes Hittites*; *KBo*: *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*; *KUB*: *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*. In S. Košak, *Konkordanz der Hethitischen Keilschrifttafeln: Online-Datenbank Version 1.81* (http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/; last accessed 7 February 2011), exhaustive lists of references are provided for all Hittite texts mentioned in this article; therefore I will not supply these references below.

the ways in which this purpose is achieved is by modeling the theme in such a way that it allows for an easy comparison between Zeus and his predecessors on the throne, Ouranos and Kronos, causing Zeus to stand out even more. After that I will come to the process of composition of the theme, treating several specific sections along the way. In the conclusion, I will briefly argue for the importance of this kind of study for the field of interaction studies.

The term 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme' needs defining. It is a general designation (alternatively, 'Succession Myth') for any narrative concerning a succession of kings of the gods. Many versions are possible, varying, for example, in the number of kings, their mutual relationships, and how they succeed each other. One such version appears in the *Theogony*; it can be summarized as follows.[2]

Gaia gives birth to Ouranos (lines 126–128), with whom she produces the Titans (132–138). Ouranos hides these inside Gaia, who incites the youngest Titan, Kronos, to attack his father. Provided with a special cutting tool by Gaia, he castrates and defeats Ouranos (154–182). Kronos subsequently begets six gods with Rhea. However, he eats them as soon as they appear, because of a prophecy by Gaia and Ouranos about Kronos' successor. Gaia and Ouranos then help Rhea save Zeus, the youngest child, by feeding Kronos a stone instead. Once full-grown, Zeus forces Kronos to vomit up his siblings (453–506). The Titanomachy ensues, which Zeus and his side win through the help of the hundred-handers, as advised by Gaia (617–720). Two challenges to Zeus's rule follow. First, Gaia and Tartaros bear Typhoeus, who is quickly defeated (820–868). Next, Zeus eats Metis after having impregnated her, as Gaia and Ouranos had prophesied that a male child born of Zeus by Metis would eventually replace Zeus on the throne (886–900).

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[2] As Chaos nowhere in the *Theogony* features as an active character, there is no reason to consider him part of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme.

## 2. *Origin*

If I assume that the variant of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme that appears in the *Theogony* was adapted to its context there, I must also assume the existence of an earlier, different version of the theme. It is fortunate that such an earlier version can be identified: the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Going Forth*.[3] For as far as preserved, this text describes the succession of three divine kings, Alalu, Anu, and Kumarbi, and the birth of the storm-god[4] from the latter. Not much remains of the text after this; but as the storm-god was the supreme deity of the Hittite pantheon, probably his ascension to the throne was narrated as well.

The similarities of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony* are very strong, as has been generally noted.[5] There is in both texts a

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[3] *CTH* 344; transl. H. A. Hoffner Jr., *Hittite Myths*[2] (Atlanta 1998) 42–45. Because of a gap at the relevant place of the fragment, the title of this text was long lost. Consequently various titles have come into use, such as "Song/Epic of Kumarbi" and "Song of Kingship in Heaven." Recently, however, Corti identified a fragment as containing the actual title, which is written logographically as SÌR GÁ×È.A: C. Corti, "The So-Called 'Theogony' or 'Kingship in Heaven': The Name of the Song," *SMEA* 49 (2007) 109–121. Corti (119–120) translates this as "Song of Genesis/Beginning," but this seems to me too liberal (see also A. Archi, "Orality, Direct Speech and the Kumarbi Cycle," *AF* 36 [2009] 209–229, at 219 n.26: "a too modern interpretation"). "Song of the Having Come Out" would be a more literal translation of the Sumerian, but I prefer "Song of Going Forth" (suggested to me by Mark Weeden), which fits the contents of the text better; see also E. van Dongen, *Studying External Stimuli to the Development of the Ancient Aegean: The 'Kingship in Heaven'-Theme from Kumarbi to Kronos via Anatolia* (diss. U. Coll. London 2010; online at http://www.academia.edu) 105–108.

[4] In the text, this deity consistently is referred to with the logograms that are used to designate the storm-god ($^{\text{D}}$IŠKUR and $^{\text{D}}$10). As the names of most of the other gods in the text are Hurrian, these logograms are often read as 'Teššub', the Hurrian name of the storm-god. The phonetic complements used, however (e.g. $^{\text{D}}$IŠKUR-*ni-it*, $^{\text{D}}$IŠKUR-*ni*), indicate that the scribe thought of the Hittite name of the storm-god, Tarhunna-. To avoid confusion, I will simply refer to the relevant deity as 'the storm-god'.

[5] Among recent literature, see e.g. M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon*

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clear succession of divine kings, which features a deity called 'heaven'—Anu, Ouranos—as an early ruler. Both Anu and Ouranos are castrated by their successors, Kumarbi and Kronos. These successors at some point carry their children inside them. Kumarbi and Kronos both intend to eat at least one of their children, and in the case of their own eventual successors, the storm-god and Zeus, they are fed a rock instead. This rock subsequently becomes an object of worship.[6] As mentioned, the section of the *Song of Going Forth* in which the storm-god gains kingship is lost, but it seems certain that he did, as in the *Theogony*. Finally, in both texts the earth-goddess begets offspring in a late stage of the story. But as this episode in the *Song of Going Forth* does not survive beyond part of the birth story, it is uncertain whether or not the offspring concerns an opponent of the storm-god, similar to Typhoeus in the *Theogony*.

This is not the only text from southwestern Asia that features a variant of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme similar to that of the *Theogony*. Scholars have also mentioned the 'Phoenician Theogony', the *Baal Cycle*, the *Theogony of Dunnu*, and *Enūma Eliš* in this context. Usually, these texts and the *Song of Going Forth* are considered as all more or less equally relevant for the study of the *Theogony*.[7] But as I will argue below, whatever is the

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(Oxford 1997) 103–105, 278–292; R. D. Woodard, "Hesiod and Greek Myth," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (Cambridge 2007) 83–165, at 92–98; I. Rutherford, "Hesiod and the Literary Tradition of the Near East," in *Brill's Companion to Hesiod* (Leiden 2009) 9–36; C. López-Ruiz, *When the Gods Were Born: Greek Cosmogonies and the Near East* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2010) 87–94, all with further references.

[6] The stone-substitute section of the *Song of Going Forth* is fragmentary (lines ii 39–73), but on close examination of the text, there can be little doubt about the general sequence of events, viz. that Kumarbi wants to eat the storm-god, but is given a rock to eat by Ea, which Kumarbi spits out, and which is then ordered to become an object of worship.

[7] As argued for specifically in W. Burkert, "Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels," in J. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London 1987) 10–40, at 19–24: "We finally begin to hear a

relation of these additional four texts to the Greek text, they are considerably more remote from it than the *Song of Going Forth*.

The 'Phoenician Theogony' is attributed to Sanchuniathon, who is supposed to have lived before the Trojan War, and in turn to have made extensive use of the records of Taautos/ Thoth, the inventor of writing. But the text that is known is a version by Philo of Byblos, an author of the late first/early second centuries CE whose work is largely lost.[8] Opinions of the background of Philo's text have evolved over time as new information on Syro-Palestinian mythology became available, such as through the discovery of Ugarit in the 1920s. Currently, it is thought that Philo's text is a dense mixture of traditions, including both Syro-Palestinian and Aegean elements. These are presented in euhemeristic fashion, and were put together as such in the Hellenistic age at the earliest. Consequently, while there is a possibility that similarities between the 'Phoenician Theogony' and the Hesiodic *Theogony* are the result of both texts going back to Syro-Palestinian traditions, it may also be that Philo, or whichever author he relied on, modeled his account after the *Theogony*, borrowing heavily from it. There is hardly a single instance where there are conclusive arguments to prefer one option over the other. The status of the 'Phoenician Theogony' as a predecessor of the Hesiodic *Theogony* is thus problematic.

The partly Ugaritic background of the 'Phoenician Theogony' suggests that similarities to the Hesiodic *Theogony* might also be found among Ugaritic texts. Most interesting in this

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many-voiced interplay of Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite and West Semitic texts, all of which seem to have some connection with Hesiod" (22). See also R. Mondi, "Greek Mythic Thought in the Light of the Near East," in L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore 1990) 141–198, at 151–157.

[8] Philo (*FGrHist* 790) is quoted in Eus. *Praep.Evang.* 1.9.20–1.10; see e.g. A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary* (Leiden 1981), esp. 1–7 on the history of scholarly research. On Sanchuniathon, Philo, and the composition of the text, see López-Ruiz, *When the Gods* 94–101, with further references.

regard is the so-called *Baal Cycle*. Probably part of an older tradition, what remains of this composition—which may or may not have formed a continuous narrative—are six fragmentarily preserved tablets, written in either the middle of the fourteenth or the late thirteenth century BCE. The text recounts how the storm-god and dominant deity Baal ('Lord'; proper name: Hadad) has to defend himself against two challengers to the throne, Yamm ('Sea') and Mot ('Death'), and how he acquires a palace.[9] There are indeed strong similarities between individual characters in this text and the *Theogony*, such as between El, the patriarch of the gods, and Kronos, and between Baal and Zeus; and one might well be justified in thinking that these gods could not have obtained their specific characteristics in Syria and in the Aegean independently of each other. The 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme itself, however, does not feature in the cycle: Baal is predominant already at the start and does not permanently lose this position. Also, in contrast to the *Song of Going Forth*, there are no similarities with the *Theogony* regarding specific narrative details. The *Baal Cycle* therefore does not have to be taken into account further in the present context.

The *Theogony of Dunnu* is a Babylonian text from, probably, the early second millennium BCE.[10] Only its opening section survives, through a fragment from the middle of the first millennium BCE. It tells of a sequence of at least six generations of gods, but its narrative is limited mostly to an enumeration of acts of incest and parricide. As a consequence, the similarities

[9] M. S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* I; M. S. Smith and W. T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* II (Leiden 1994–2009). On the similarities to the Hesiodic *Theogony* see López-Ruiz, *When the Gods* 101–125.

[10] On the *Theogony of Dunnu*, also in relation to the Hesiodic *Theogony*, see M. Stol, "The Theology of Dunnum (1)," in *The Melammu Database* (http://www.aakkl.helsinki.fi/melammu/database/gen_html/a0001475.php; last accessed: 7 February 2011); to the references there add C. S. Littleton, "The 'Kingship in Heaven' Theme," in J. Puhvel (ed.), *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans* (Berkeley 1970) 83–121, at 112–115.

with the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in the Hesiodic *Theogony* are superficial. Both texts describe a series of divine rulers, each of whom violently disposes of his predecessor, who is always his father. Both texts abound in incestuous relationships. And both feature the earth-goddess in the first generation of the gods, giving birth to a sea-deity (Pontos in the *Theogony*). That is all. Similarities on the level of specific narrative details, such as there are between the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony*, are lacking completely. Therefore, any connection between the latter text and the *Theogony of Dunnu* must have been relatively remote.

   *Enūma Eliš* requires a longer discussion.[11] The text survives in copies from the first half of the first millennium BCE, but probably was created at the end of the second, while it also includes materials that seem to have originated at the start of that millennium. It is essentially a hymn to Marduk, the supreme god of Babylon. Starting from the creation of the world, when only Apsû and Tiāmat existed, the sweet and salt waters, it recounts how Marduk eventually became king of the gods, and how his order was established in the universe.

   *Enūma Eliš* does not have a clear succession of kings, as the *Theogony* has. Apsû is killed by his son Ea, who takes his crown. But the all-important Tablet of Destinies is given by Tiāmat to her son Qingu. Nonetheless, the big confrontation of the story is not between Marduk (Ea's son) and Qingu, but between Marduk and Tiāmat. Still, the similarities between *Enūma Eliš* and the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in the

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[11] For an edition see P. Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš* (Helsinki 2005). Translations and discussion: e.g. S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*² (Oxford 2000) 228–277; W. G. Lambert, "Mesopotamian Creation Stories," in M. J. Geller and M. Schipper (eds.), *Imagining Creation* (Leiden 2008) 15–59, at 37–59. Recent studies with comparisons to the *Theogony* include e.g. West, *East Face* 280–283; Woodard, in *Greek Mythology* 98–101; K. A. Raaflaub, "Zeus und Prometheus: Zur griechischen Interpretation vorderasiatischer Mythen," in M. Bernett et al. (eds.), *Christian Meier zur Diskussion* (Stuttgart 2008) 33–60, at 49–51.

*Theogony* are considerable. In both cases there are personified geophysical entities among the earliest beings. Among these, both Apsû and Ouranos dislike their children, who are or end up inside both or one of their parents. Apsû and Ouranos are also both defeated by the more daring one of their children, i.e. Ea and Kronos, both of whom have the personified sky as their father (Anu and Ouranos). Although they do not join battle in the Babylonian text, the opposition in *Enūma Eliš*, Tiāmat and her allies versus the other gods, is similar to that of the Olympian gods versus the Titans in the *Theogony*. After their battles, both Marduk and Zeus are proclaimed king by the other gods.

Nonetheless, these similarities cannot conceal the fact that the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in *Enūma Eliš* is less close to the variant of the *Theogony* than the variant of the *Song of Going Forth* is. The similarities between the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony* are more detailed and precise, including a closer resemblance in the development of their narratives. Furthermore, all the elements that occur similarly in *Enūma Eliš* and the *Theogony* are present in the *Song of Going Forth* as well.

This may also include the idea of two opposing groups of gods. The Hurrians and the Hittites knew of a group of so-called 'primeval gods', who in contemporary times resided in the netherworld.[12] As is made clear in lines A iii 6–9 of the *Song of* $^D$*KAL* (or $^D$LAMMA/LÀMA; *CTH* 343), the possibility exists that the primeval gods will arise to do battle with the current king of the gods. This implies that they are an opposing force which the divine ruler at some point might have to fight. Probably lines iii 34–38 of the purification ritual *CTH* 446, which refer to the storm-god having driven the primeval gods into the earth, should be understood in the same context. If so, this means that the primeval gods are in the netherworld as a result of their defeat in a confrontation with the storm-god, related to the latter's position as, or his aspiration to become, king of the

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[12] See e.g. *Song of Release* fr.4 (*CTH* 789, *KBo* 32.13). On the primeval gods see P. Taracha, *Religions of Second Millennium Anatolia* (Wiesbaden 2009) 125–127, with further references.

gods. Nothing in what survives of the *Song of Going Forth* indicates that the text featured a battle between the primeval gods on the one hand and the storm-god and his allies on the other. Considering the above and the broken status of the song, however, as well as its strong similarities with the Hesiodic *Theogony*, it is possible nonetheless that the song included an episode similar to the Titanomachy, e.g. in the first half of column four, which is entirely lost. In that case, the primeval gods may have been headed by Kumarbi, who in lists often features as one of them.[13]

On the basis of these observations, I would posit that the *Song of Going Forth*—which itself contains several Mesopotamian elements—and *Enūma Eliš* originated in the same Mesopotamian tradition of stories featuring the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme.[14] The differences between the two texts, however, suggest that they represent separate strands of this tradition: in *Enūma Eliš* there is no clear succession of kings before Marduk ascends the throne, no castration story, no swallowing of gods, and no mention of a stone. Considering, again, that the Hesiodic *Theogony* is much closer to the *Song of Going Forth* than to *Enūma Eliš*, it seems to me that the variant of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme found in the *Theogony* has to be connected only to the strand of tradition that the *Song of Going Forth* was part of.

This idea is confirmed by the specificness of the similarities

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[13] For the group of deities surrounding the storm-god see D. Schwemer, "The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies, Part II," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8 (2008) 1–44, at 6–7. *KUB* 20.65 is an example of a text in which the storm-god musters his forces. Note that the Titans have often been connected to the primeval gods and various other mythological figures from Syria-Palestine: e.g. J. N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden 2008) 85–88; N. Wyatt, *The Archaeology of Myth* (London 2010) 43–68. Perhaps the development of a shared eastern Mediterranean tradition concerning such a group of earlier gods could be postulated.

[14] Comparisons between the *Song of Going Forth* and *Enūma Eliš* also feature in H. G. Güterbock, *Kumarbi: Mythen vom churritischen Kronos aus dem hethitischen Fragmenten* (Zurich 1946) 105–110; Littleton, in *Myth and Law* 83–121.

between the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony*. As mentioned, these include the general plot, as well as striking narrative details such as the figure of the heaven-god, his castration by his son, the presence of grown-up gods inside another god, and the stone substitute. It is improbable that these elements were present together in the Hurro-Hittite text at first; that they were transmitted independently from each other subsequently; but that, half a millennium later, they nonetheless ended up together again in the *Theogony* in a similar way in a similar narrative context. It must be assumed that these elements traveled and reached the Aegean together, in the form of a narrative that remained largely unaltered regarding its general outline and several specific, narratively important details.

Where and how the theme existed before its appearance in the surviving version of the *Theogony* is of less importance for the present argument. Perhaps it reached the Aegean already in the Late Bronze Age, via the Luwians in western Anatolia or by sea through contacts between people from the Aegean and from Syria, Cilicia, and Cyprus. Or perhaps the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme continued to be part of Syro-Anatolian traditions for a few more centuries—an important 'area' for the convergence of traditions from southwestern Asia and their transmission towards the Aegean[15]—to become known in the Aegean only in the course of the Iron Age, again by either route.[16] One way or another, the point is that, at some

[15] See also M. Bachvarova, "The Eastern Mediterranean Epic Tradition from *Bilgames and Akka* to the *Song of Release* to Homer's *Iliad*," *GRBS* 45 (2005) 131–153, at 148–152; López-Ruiz, *When the Gods*.

[16] There is plentiful evidence for intense interaction between the Aegean and southwestern Asia in both periods; see E. van Dongen, "Contacts between Pre-Classical Greece and the Near East in the Context of Cultural Influences: An Overview," in R. Rollinger et al. (eds.), *Getrennte Wege? Kommunikation, Raum und Wahrnehmung in der Alten Welt* (Frankfurt am Main 2007) 13–49, with further references. Among the studies not mentioned in its bibliography, see especially G.-J. van Wijngaarden, *Use and Appreciation of Mycenaean Pottery in the Levant, Cyprus and Italy* (Amsterdam 2002); O. Casabonne and J. De Vos, "Chypre, Rhodes et l'Anatolie méridionale: la

moment, the theme reached the Aegean in a form similar to that of its appearance in the *Song of Going Forth*. It had probably developed and changed at least somewhat by then; like any cultural element, stories are always adapted to fit their new context during the process of transmission from one community to another. But considering how ingeniously the tripartite scheme of the theme works in the *Theogony*, it seems unlikely that the theme had obtained the specific shape it has there already before the composition of the version of the poem that would eventually become fixed. As a consequence, even without taking into account the historical context, a comparison of the appearances of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme in the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony* should be able to shed light on the process of composition of the latter text, especially concerning the parts pertaining to the theme.

### 3. *Function*

As has often been argued, extolling Zeus must have been one of the main purposes of the Hesiodic *Theogony*.[17] Most of the second half of the poem focuses on him, including the story of his birth and subsequent conflict with Kronos (lines 453–506),

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question ionienne," *Res Antiquae* 2 (2005) 83–102; López-Ruiz, *When the Gods* 23–47.

[17] Among recent studies see e.g. S. Nelson, "Hesiod," in *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (Malden 2005) 330–343, at 335–338; Raaflaub, in *Christian Meier* 46–49; C. Ulf, "The World of Homer and Hesiod," in *A Companion to Archaic Greece* (Malden 2009) 81–99, at 92–93. In general, traditions concerning the exaltation of the divine king, and through him also of the earthly king, are known from all over southwestern Asia. On Ninurta in Mesopotamia see e.g. A. Annus *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Helsinki 2002); on Baal in Mesopotamia and Syria, J.-M. Durand, "Le mythologème du combat entre le dieu de l'orage et la mer en Mésopotamie," *MARI* 7 (1993) 41–61; P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee, "Le combat de *Ba'lu* avec *Yammu* d'après les textes ougaritiques," *MARI* 7 (1993) 63–70; N. Wyatt, "The Religious Role of the King in Ugarit," in K. L. Younger (ed.), *Ugarit at Seventy-Five* (Winona Lake 2007) 41–74; and on the storm-god in the kingdom of Mittani and the Hittite empire, van Dongen, *External Stimuli* 208–212.

the Titanomachy (617–720), and the battle with Typhoeus (820–885). In each case, Zeus gains a glorious victory. To place these episodes in a larger context, I suggest that the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in the *Theogony* has been composed in such a way that the eventual king in heaven, Zeus, appears particularly strong and powerful, and superior to his predecessors beyond doubt. This has been done by means of a modification of the tripartite scheme of heavenly kings through which the narrative of the theme progresses. In the *Theogony*, each king has been made to face similar challenges, viz. to try to stop a son from growing up to become a threat to him, and to fight a competitor. As a result, the kings' respective abilities to rule become easily comparable to each other, causing Zeus to stand out in the process.[18]

As the first divine ruler, Ouranos performs worst (156–182). He tries to curb his children by hiding them inside Gaia, their mother, as soon as they are born. But they remain free to act there, and their imprisonment angers Gaia. Consequently, she incites her children to take action, and is able to provide a weapon to Kronos, the only one who dares to respond. A single act of Kronos suffices to castrate and thus defeat Ouranos.

As king, Kronos does somewhat better than Ouranos (453–506, 617–720). He opts for hiding his children inside himself, which paralyzes them. But again this frustrates their mother,

[18] For a different discussion—which leads to similar conclusions nonetheless—see M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Hassocks 1978) 57–105. In my opinion, however, their close analysis of the text leads them to read too much into it, and they too easily use variants of the storyline of the *Theogony* that occur in Aeschylus' *PV* and the *Bibliotheca* of Ps.-Apollodorus to resolve issues regarding the *Theogony*; these variants could just as well represent developments in mythological traditions postdating the *Theogony*, or different strands of these traditions. Detienne and Vernant also argue that Ouranos was never king of the gods (61–62). It is true that Ouranos is not explicitly referred to as such in the *Theogony*. But from his ability to imprison his offspring, it follows that, if not a formal king, Ouranos was at least the 'predominant being' until his defeat by Kronos.

Rhea, who devises the plan of the stone substitute to save at least her youngest child, Zeus. Having grown up in hiding, Zeus returns later to challenge his father. Although Kronos himself seems to have been overcome rather quickly, Zeus also has to fight a ten-year battle against Kronos' siblings, the Titans, before he can really be proclaimed king.[19]

Zeus, finally, deals with all problems satisfactorily (836–868, 886–900). He avoids having to deal with his children and having trouble with their mother altogether, by simply eating the mother of his challenger-to-be, Metis, when she becomes pregnant. Through the union of Gaia and Tartaros, he does have to face an adversary nonetheless, Typhoeus.[20] But after a brief but furious battle, Typhoeus is defeated. The parallel with Ouranos and Kronos is not perfect, as the order of the challenges is reversed (Zeus fights Typhoeus before eating Metis) and Typhoeus is not a son of Zeus. This last difference is unavoidable, however, for preventing a son from being born is part of Zeus's superior problem-solving. The reversed order is more difficult to explain. Perhaps it is to be attributed to the fact that the Metis episode also fits with the general enumeration of the offspring of Zeus. By placing the Metis episode after instead of before the defeat of Typhoeus, it can function as a link to the enumeration section.

The scheme thus functions to emphasize the superiority of Zeus over his predecessors. While all kings are faced with the same challenges to their rule, only Zeus manages to deal with these challenges decisively. This can be summarized through

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[19] Although the *Theogony* does not make this explicit, there is a hint that Zeus actually was king already after having forced Kronos to vomit up his siblings. As suggested in R. Mondi, "The Ascension of Zeus and the Composition of Hesiod's *Theogony*," *GRBS* 25 (1984) 325–344, perhaps this episode and the Titanomachy originally had been separate accounts of Zeus's ascension to the throne, which were merged in the *Theogony*.

[20] Prometheus is another adversary of Zeus in the *Theogony*. But although Prometheus does challenge Zeus's authority, he does not aspire to the position of king of the gods. He therefore does not belong in the same category as Typhoeus.

the following table:

| Divine king | Solution to threat of children | Confrontation with a competitor |
|---|---|---|
| Ouranos | Hides his children in their mother (156–159) | Competitor defeats king by a single stroke (178–182) |
| Kronos | Hides his children in himself (459–462) | Competitor defeats king after a ten-year battle (492–496, 617–720) |
| Zeus | Eats the pregnant mother, so no children born (886–900) | King defeats competitor after a brief fight (836–868) |

### 4. *Composition*

With the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme functioning so well to advance one of the main purposes of the *Theogony*, viz. extolling Zeus, it is likely that the theme obtained the specific shape that it has in the poem only in the course of the composition of the version of the *Theogony* that would become fixed—no matter how many stages this version went through before reaching its final form, the one we have now. Consequently, a comparison of the appearances of the theme in the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony* might shed light on the process of composition of the latter text.

To avoid misunderstandings, I should state my view on the context and background of the composition of the surviving version of the *Theogony*. There is no space here for details;[21] but in summary, I think that the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as known from the *Song of Going Forth* had become known and had gained some degree of popularity in the Aegean already before the period of composition of the *Theogony* (ca. 750–650 BCE). The theme probably was not the only such text circulating in the region at that time, and there probably already had been a tradition of telling theogonic stories, too. Working within that context, the composer of the *Theogony* as we know it set out to create his own theogonic variant. Aware of various existing traditions, he chose the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as known

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[21] For these see van Dongen, *External Stimuli* chapters 3, 5, and 6.

from the *Song of Going Forth* as the framework to structure his own poem, thinking that it would best help him to achieve the purpose of his composition.[22] For it to fit his ideas perfectly, however, some changes had to be made.

This requires first looking at the differences between the two texts. Five may be mentioned. The *Song of Going Forth* features four divine kings, the *Theogony* only three. As Anu is not related to either Alalu or Kumarbi, the succession of kings in the song does not always run from father to son, while it does in the Greek text. Anu is castrated by Kumarbi with his teeth, Ouranos by Kronos with a sickle. Unlike Kronos, Kumarbi does not eat his children; they are inside him through Anu's sperm, which Kumarbi got inside by swallowing Anu's genitals. In the *Song of Going Forth*, full-grown deities are inside another deity only once, while in the *Theogony* this happens three times.

The most striking is the presence of not three but four divine kings in the *Song of Going Forth*. The first, however, Alalu, is a special case. He was a Mesopotamian agricultural deity, who may have evolved out of what was originally a harvest song.[23] This background connects well with Alalu's flight to the earth after his defeat by Anu in the *Song of Going Forth* (lines i 12–15). But while references to singing the Alalu song developed into symbolizing prosperity, as a deity he remained a minor figure. Why would he feature as a former king of the gods?

In an attempt to explain this, first, it may be noted that the succession of Alalu proceeds and is told in the exact same way as that of Anu by Kumarbi (i 7–25), except that it has been stripped of any further events, such as the castration. Furthermore, in Old and Middle Babylonian genealogical lists of the

[22] For a discussion of how poets in this period worked in an environment of story-telling in which multiple variants of similar themes and motifs existed—with the audience aware of this—in which context the poet would make his own compositional and conceptual choices, see J. Haubold, "Greek Epic: A Near Eastern Genre?" *PCPS* 48 (2002) 1–19; similarly also López-Ruiz, *When the Gods*, esp. 171–182.

[23] See *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* A 1 (1964) 328–329 s.v. "alāla."

ancestors of the god of heaven (i.e. Anu), Alalu is named at or near the end. He was thus relatively close to Anu.[24] Finally, Alalu was often included among the Hurrian and Hittite primeval gods.

Considered together, this suggests that, in the *Song of Going Forth*, a god was added to an original list of three kings, for the purpose of creating a link between the primeval gods—who are called upon to listen in lines i 1–7 of the song—and the first king, Anu. For this, the basics of the description of Anu's kingship were copied. The choice for Alalu specifically may then be explained by his proximity to Anu, although it may also have had to do with a desire to get a sequence earth-god (Alalu), sky-god (Anu), earth-god (Kumarbi), sky-god (the storm-god). Either way, this suggests that Alalu had not been a fixed element in the tradition of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme to which the *Song of Going Forth* was connected. Consequently, he may not have featured in every version of the story, or may have been considered redundant and omitted upon transmission of the song to another area, together with the opening invocation of the primeval gods.[25]

To focus on the comparison between the sequences Anu/ Kumarbi/storm-god and Ouranos/Kronos/Zeus, it is not difficult to see the motivation behind the changes that were made to the story. Kumarbi is the father of the storm-god, so his equivalent in the Aegean had to be the father of Zeus, Kronos. Subsequently, the elements of Kumarbi having children inside him and eating children were combined into Kronos having children inside him *because* he ate them. This

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[24] V. Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (Leiden 1994) 107–111; Lambert, in *Imagining Creation* 26–32. For the link between Alalu and Anu, see already E. A. Speiser, "An Intrusive Hurro-Hittite Myth," *JAOS* 62 (1942) 98–102, at 99–100; Güterbock, *Kumarbi* 86, 106.

[25] Nothing can be gained from a comparison of Alalu and Chaos. There are no similarities between their characteristics as deities or their roles in the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony*. All they have in common is that both appear at the beginning of a theogonic account.

considerably streamlines the story, though the change may also have been motivated by the desire not to let Kronos swallow someone's genitals, if this narrative element was considered inappropriate in the Aegean. One way or another, the motif of the stone-substitute was retained.

The remark that Zeus later set up the stone in Delphi (496–500) probably was a secondary addition. The stone appears in visual art a few times, but always in connection with the *Theogony*. Except in Delphi, it never features in ritual or cult.[26] Little is known about the function of the stone in Delphi. Pausanias (10.24.6) says that it stood just outside the temple of Apollo, near the grave of Neoptolemus. This means that it was not the same stone as the omphalos, which was located inside the temple.[27] Pausanias mentions that people from Delphi poured olive oil over this stone every day, and placed un-worked wool on it during feasts. Why this was done is not known; but it clearly does not relate to the *Theogony*. Thus, it seems that the Delphic connection was superimposed on two elements—the stone in the story and the stone in Delphi—that had not been related originally.

After the adaptation of the story of Kumarbi/Kronos and his children, the relevant events were copied to Ouranos and Zeus, in order for the poem to be able to demonstrate the difference between the three kings in heaven. Ouranos, in name the literal equivalent of Anu, had to perform worse than Kronos. Therefore, he was made to hide his children inside Gaia, their mother, a most ineffective way to get rid of them. For Ouranos' defeat by Kronos, the motif of the castration of Anu by Ku-marbi was retained.

[26] M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 303; T. H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (London 1991) 70; C. Auffarth, "Omphalos," *Der Neue Pauly* 8 (2000) 1201–1202; R. Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London 2004) 68, 145–146.

[27] See also C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *'Reading' Greek Literature: Texts and Images, Rituals and Myths* (Oxford 1991) 226–227, 235–236; Auffarth, *Der Neue Pauly* 8 (2000) 1201–1202.

In general, the motif of the violent separation of heaven and earth is found all over the world.[28] From that point of view, it may seem likely that the castration motif had been known to people of the Aegean already before the transmission of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears the *Song of Going Forth*. However, although castration was not unheard of in Aegean religion in general,[29] Ouranos is the only deity to suffer this fate. His story was not told often: in the Archaic and Classical Periods, it reappears only in the Derveni papyrus, and it never features in visual art.[30] Consequently, it is also possible that the castration motif appeared in the Aegean for the first time in the context of a version of the *Theogony*.

As the ruling god in contemporary times, Zeus had to appear superior to his predecessors. Therefore, he could not hide his children in their mother or himself, but was made to eat the mother, Metis, to prevent his potential successor from being born at all. A monster had to be added for Zeus to be able to demonstrate his prowess in battle as a ruler. This became Typhoeus.

Two remarks may be added concerning Typhoeus. First, his story, too, has often been said to have originated in south-western Asian traditions.[31] But as none of these traditions

[28] See W. Staudacher, *Die Trennung von Himmel und Erde: ein vorgriechischer Schöpfungsmythus bei Hesiod und den Orphikern* (Tübingen 1942); K. Numazawa, "The Cultural-Historical Background of Myths on the Separation of Sky and Earth," in A. Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley 1984) 182–192, with further references.

[29] See e.g. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1985) 155.

[30] Carpenter, *Art and Myth* 69; Tram Tan Tinh, "Ouranos," *LIMC* 7.1 (1994) 132–136, at 133.

[31] E.g. P. W. Haider, "Von Baal Zaphon zu Zeus und Typhon: zum Transfer mythischer Bilder aus dem vorderorientalischen Raum in die archaisch-griechische Welt," in R. Rollinger (ed.), *Von Sumer bis Homer: Festschrift für Manfred Schretter* (Münster 2005) 303–337; R. Lane Fox, *Travelling Heroes: Greeks and their Myths in the Epic Age of Homer* (London 2008) 295–318, both with further references.

feature in what remains of the *Song of Going Forth*, this does not affect the present discussion. Second, the Typhoeus episode in the *Theogony* has repeatedly been called redundant, an unsuccessful attempt to outdo the Titanomachy and thus heap even more praise on Zeus.[32] But upon consideration of this episode in the context of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in the *Theogony*, it rather seems to have been an integral part of the poem. Without it, the comparison between Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus would have been incomplete.[33]

Finally, the present approach sheds new light on the treatment of the birth of Athena in the *Theogony*. The story of her appearance out of the head of Zeus was a popular theme in Aegean mythology.[34] But in the Metis episode of the *Theogony* (886–900), although Athena is mentioned as the first of two children that Metis was about to give birth to when Zeus devoured her (the other one would have been a boy, and Zeus's challenger), the story of Athena's actual birth is left out. It appears shortly afterwards, at 924–926; but this is a brief remark, in which Metis receives no mention, and Athena is referred to only by her epithet Tritogeneia. These narrative choices seem surprising at first sight; but they make good sense in the context of the comparison between the rules of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus. Had the story of the birth of Athena been included in the Metis episode, then Zeus's solution to the problem of fathering a future challenger to the throne would have

[32] E.g. G. S. Kirk, "The Structure and Aim of the *Theogony*," in O. Reverdin (ed.), *Hésiode et son influence* (Geneva 1962) 63–95, at 74–75; F. Solmsen, "The Earliest Stages in the History of Hesiod's Text," *HSCP* 86 (1982) 1–31, at 11–12.

[33] Considering the Typhoeus episode as an integral part of the *Theogony* is also argued for—albeit on different grounds—by H. Schwabl, *Hesiods Theogonie: Eine Unitarische Analyse* (Vienna 1966) 106–123; R. Hamilton, *The Architecture of Hesiodic Poetry* (Baltimore 1989) 26–29; F. Blaise, "L'épisode de Typhée dans la *Théogonie* d'Hésiode (v. 820–885): la stabilisation du monde," *REG* 105 (1992) 349–370.

[34] See e.g. H. Cassimatis, "Athena," *LIMC* 3.1 (1984) 985–990; Carpenter, *Art and Myth* 71; Hard, *Greek Mythology* 77–78.

appeared less definitive. By creating the impression that Metis did not produce any offspring at all, while Zeus brought forth a powerful goddess all on his own, the image of Zeus's magnificence is once more confirmed.[35]

Athena is not the only one who was born out of the head of her father: the same happens to the deity referred to as ᴰKA.ZAL in the *Song of Going Forth* (ii 36–38).[36] Considering the popularity of the story of Athena's birth in the Aegean, it is possible that this motif had long been known there already, and was included in the *Theogony* because of its popularity. Again, however, it would be very coincidental indeed if two stories— the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony*—that are seen to have been connected historically featured such a striking motif independently of each other. Instead, the connection of the birth motif to Athena in the *Theogony* may more likely have resulted from a wish to retain this rather spectacular narrative element. But as there was no place for it in the birth stories of Kronos or Zeus, it had to be transferred to that of Athena. The widespread popularity of this motif in the Aegean in that case may have been the result of its memorable character.

5. *Conclusion: The importance of external stimuli for our understanding of Aegean culture*

I have tried to demonstrate, first, that of the southwestern Asian texts containing a version of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme similar to that of the Hesiodic *Theogony*, the version of the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Going Forth* is closest, to the point that a historical connection has to be assumed; second, that the specific version of the theme as it appears in the *Theogony* has been included to further emphasize the superiority of Zeus over

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[35] For a discussion of the figure of Metis, see Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence* 57–130.

[36] In cuneiform texts ᴰKA.ZAL appears only here. In my opinion, it is a reference to the storm-god (see the discussion in van Dongen, *External Stimuli* 73–79). As the identification of ᴰKA.ZAL does not influence my current argumentation, however, I will not pursue this point further here.

his predecessors as king of the gods; and third, that comparison of the appearances of the theme in the *Song of Going Forth* and the *Theogony* can improve our understanding of the narrative choices that have been made in the process of composition of the theme as it appears in the extant version of the *Theogony*.

A more general point can be made. To some degree, studies on the transmission of cultural elements from southwestern Asia and the eastern Mediterranean often resemble catalogues. Similarities are listed and described, often in large quantities; but, as scholars have noted before, the question of what the existence of these similarities might mean for our understanding of the ancient Aegean (apart from the fact that it was apparently involved in cultural interaction) is little investigated.[37] Consequently, it often remains unclear whether in this context we are talking about random embellishments that had little or no 'real' impact on Aegean culture; or whether Aegean culture as we know it was shaped to a significant degree by cultural elements taken over from elsewhere.

Exceptions do exist, especially among archaeological papers; but in other disciplines it is seldom investigated how and to what effect the cultural element under discussion was embedded in its new context.[38] Nonetheless, in my expectation, if

[37] See Mondi, in *Approaches* 144–145; R. Osborne, "A la grecque," *JMA* 6 (1993) 231–237; S. Halliwell, "Subject Reviews: Greek Literature," *G&R* 45 (1998) 235–238, at 235; Haubold, *PCPS* 48 (2002) 1–3; W. Allan, "Divine Justice and Cosmic Order in Early Greek Epic," *JHS* 126 (2006) 1–35, at 30–31.

[38] I know of six purely methodological studies: A. Bernabé, "Influences orientales dans la littérature grecque: quelques réflections de méthode," *Kernos* 8 (1995) 9–22, at 16–17; H. Attoura, "Aspekte der Akkulturation," in H. Blum et al. (eds.), *Brückenland Anatolien? Ursachen, Extensität und Modi des Kulturaustausches zwischen Anatolien und seinen Nachbarn* (Tübingen 2002) 19–33; H. Blum, "Überlegungen zum Thema 'Akkulturation,'" in *Brückenland* 1–17; A. Gilan, "Überlegungen zu 'Kultur' und 'Außenwirkung,'" in M. Novák et al. (eds.), *Die Außenwirkung des späthethitischen Kulturraumes* (Münster 2004) 9–27, at 19–24; E. van Dongen, "The Study of Near Eastern Influences on Greece: Towards the Point," *Kaskal* 5 (2008) 233–250, at 243–246; C. Ulf, "Rethinking Cultural Contact in the Ancient World: An Attempt at

this issue were discussed more, it would be found that cultural elements taken over from elsewhere contributed significantly to the development of Aegean culture; and that the study of them therefore does indeed contribute to our understanding of the ancient Aegean. By the present study of the composition of the 'Kingship in Heaven'-theme as it appears in the *Theogony* in light of its version as known from the *Song of Going Forth*, I hope to have contributed to this scholarly development.[39]

*February, 2011*            Department of World Cultures
                            University of Helsinki
                            PL 59, 00014 Helsingin Yliopisto, Finland
                            erik.vandongen@helsinki.fi

Describing its Complexity Systematically and Explaining its Functioning," *Ancient West & East* 8 (2009) 81–132; and of seven publications that also include case studies: Mondi, in *Approaches* 141–198; Haubold, *PCPS* 48 (2002) 7–17; A. Bernabé, "Hittites and Greeks: Mythical Influences and Methodological Considerations," in R. Rollinger and C. Ulf (eds.), *Griechische Archaik: Interne Entwicklungen – Externe Impulse* (Berlin 2004) 291–310; Allan, *JHS* 126 (2006) at 30–31; Lane Fox, *Travelling Heroes* 295–318; C. Ulf, "Zur Hybridität von Homers *Ilias*, oder: Wie die *Ilias* von Troia nach Ilion kam," in R. Rollinger et al. (eds.), *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt: Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die Vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* (Wiesbaden 2010) 283–322; López-Ruiz, *When the Gods*.