



‘Silver’: A Hurrian Phaethon

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Abstract

It is proposed that the story of the Hurrian deity ‘Silver’, as portrayed in the Late Bronze Age *Song of Silver*, is a plausible precursor to the classical myth of Phaethon. Shared motifs include the teasing of the young hero, the revelation by his mother of his father’s divine identity, a temporary assumption of power in heaven, a clash with the god of thunder, a disastrous episode involving the Sun and the Moon, and an etymology meaning ‘radiance’. As the Phaethon myth also seems to contain Semitic elements, it is argued that the source of the classical story was the region of northern Phoenicia to Cilicia, or Cyprus.

Keywords

comparative mythology, catastrophe, Phaethon, Hurrian, Sun

1. Introduction

The most detailed account of the Greek myth of Phaethon comes from the *Metamorphoses* (1. 750–2. 400) of the Roman poet Ovid (completed by 8 CE). Despite the late date of this composition, it was appreciated long ago by Sir James Frazer (1921, 394) that

... it is probable that Ovid drew the main pattern of his narrative from Greek originals, though doubtless many of the picturesque particulars with which he embellished it are due to the poet’s own imagination. But the more we compare the *Metamorphoses* with the parallel stories in extant Greek literature, the more, I think, we shall be inclined to admire the poet’s learning and the fidelity with which he followed his sources, always however embroidering their usually plain substance with the many coloured threads of his exuberant fantasy.

Indeed, it is now agreed that the major motifs in Ovid’s story of Phaethon are paralleled in much earlier Greek writings, particularly in the surviving

fragments of a drama by Euripides called *Phaethon*,¹ as conveniently summarised by Gantz (1993, 33):

To all this the *Metamorphoses* has little new to add: as in Euripides Phaethon is brought up by Merops and Klymene in Aithiopia, and sent by his mother to Helios when her claim that he is the god's son is disputed (*Met* 1. 750–2. 400). Helios' rash promise of anything the boy wants leads to Phaethon's (solo) journey, a scorched Gaia's appeal to Zeus and the reluctant hurling of the thunderbolt.

One motif exclusively preserved in Ovid, lacking any precedents in the extant Greek versions, is the teasing of Phaethon by his peer Epaphus about his parenthood, and Phaethon's petulant reaction: "When this Phaëthon was once speaking proudly, and refused to give way to him, boasting that Phoebus was his father, the grandson of Inachus rebelled and said: 'You are a fool to believe all your mother tells you, and are swelled up with false notions about your father.' Phaëthon grew red with rage, but repressed his anger through very shame and carried Epaphus' insulting taunt straight to his mother, Clymene" (1. 751–756, tr. Miller 1999, 54–55). The latter then mitigated Phaethon's anxiety, assuring him that "you are sprung from the Sun, that being whom you behold, that being who sways the world" (1. 770–771, tr. Miller 1999, 56–57).

2. Parallels between Phaethon and the God Silver

It is possible that the teasing of the 'fatherless' young Phaethon was taken by Ovid from Euripides' *Phaethon*. The antiquity of the motif (surely a common one) is demonstrated, by an Egyptian parallel from the New Kingdom period in the story *The Blinding of Truth by Falsehood*: "His (school)mates said to him: Whose son are you? You don't have a father. And they would revile him and mock him: Truly, you don't have a father" (Wente 1973, 129). The rest of the Egyptian tale does not, however, bear any resemblance to the Phaethon myth. The motif also occurs in the Hurrian *Song of Silver*, preserved in a Hittite version from the archive at Boğazköy (Ḫattuša),² and it is on this parallel

¹ For text and translation of the fragments of Euripides' *Phaethon*, see Kannicht 2004, 798–826; Collard *et alii* 1997, 195–239; Diggle 1970.

² HFAC 12 i; KUB 33.91, 115; KUB 36.18 + 18a, 19; KBo 22.80, 82; KBo 26.107, 146; KUB 17.4—ed. Hoffner 1988. We follow the translation of Hoffner (1998) here. Those of Haas 2006, 148–151 and Ünal 1994, 856–857 follow Hoffner's edition and agree on the essential interpretation with few differences (see note 7 below). Hoffner identifies the *Song of Silver* as part of the Kumarbi Cycle of Songs, but Polvani (2008, 622) has warned against such an assumption. See however Archi (2009, 211): "Discussion of whether or not a song belongs to the Kumarbi

that we should place the greatest emphasis, as this text will prove to have much else in common with the story of Phaethon. The protagonist of this story is *Ušhune* or “Silver”:

It is Silver the Fine [...] whom I sing. Wise men [told (?) me [the...of] the fatherless [boy (?)]. It did not exist. Long ago Silver's [...] had disappeared (?). And his... they do not know...

Silver [struck] an orphan boy [with] a stick. The orphan boy spoke an evil word against Silver: ‘My Silver, why [are you hitting us]? Why are you striking us? You are an orphan like us.’ [Now when Silver heard these words], he began to weep. Weeping, Silver went into his house. Silver began to repeat the words to his mother: ‘The boys I struck down in front of the gate are defying me. I struck a boy with a stick, and he spoke an [evil] word back to me. Hear, O my mother, the words which the orphan boy said to me: ‘Why are you hitting [us? Why are you striking] us? [You are an orphan like us.]’ (Frs. 1. 2; 3. 2–3, tr. Hoffner 1998, 48–49)

As Hoffner (1998, 48) explains, the insult hurled at Silver, *wannumiyas* DUMU, is usually translated by Hittitologists as ‘orphan’, but is better read as “a child whose father is dead or missing... since Silver’s mother is still with him, he is not an orphan in the usual sense. There is just a hint that his fatherless condition could be regarded as shameful.” Kloekhorst (2008, 956–957 s. v. ‘*uannum(m)iia-*’) accordingly defines *uannum(m)iia-* as “orphaned (child), widowed (woman)”, citing Hoffner’s opinion that “*uannum(m)iiaš* MUNUS and *uannum(m)iiaš* DUMU denote ‘women and children who are without husbands and fathers either because he has died or because he has abandoned them’.” Bearing this in mind, the episode offers a striking analogy to the classical scene in which Phaethon, whose father is alive but absent, is taunted by Epaphus. The parallel with this episode in Ovid is completed by the fact that the boy saying ‘the evil word’ is apparently a friend: “He addresses Silver as ‘My Silver’, which seems friendly” (Hoffner 1998, 150). The comparison lays to rest Diggle’s charge (1970, 182–183) that the bullying episode in Ovid “is unique” and that it was “probably his own invention”.

As the narrative unfolds, the parallels between the Phaethon and Silver stories continue. As in the case of Phaethon, Silver’s mother goes on to explain that the youngster’s father is divine. In Phaethon’s case, this was the Sun-god Phoebus; in Silver’s, it was the former king of heaven, Kumarbi:

Cycle responds only to our own hermeneutical needs.” In this paper we continue to use the term ‘Kumarbi Cycle’ in a loose sense—including all those Songs of the same genre that describe the successive efforts of Kumarbi and his progeny to disrupt the rule of Tešub.

[His mother (?)] took the stick away from [him... His mother] turned around [and] began to reply [to Silver, her son]: ‘Do [not hit me], O Silver! Do not strike me! The city (?) [you inquire about] I will tell/describe it to you. [Your father (?) is Kumarbi], the Father of the city Urkes. [He...s], and he resides in Urkes... Your brother is Tešub. He is king in heaven. And he is king in the land. Your sister is Sauska, and she is queen in Nineveh. You must [not] fear any [other god]; only one deity [must you fear]. He (i. e., Kumarbi) stirs up (?) the enemy land(s), and the wild animals. From top to bottom [he...s]. From bottom to top [he...s.]’ Silver] listened to his mother’s words. (Fr. 4. 1, tr. Hoffner 1998, 49)

In both traditions, the impetuous youth now goes in search of his father. In Euripides’ play, Phaethon did so by travelling to the land of the sunrise which bordered on his Ethiopian home.³ As for Silver:

He set out for Urkes. He arrived in Urkes, but he did not find [Kumarbi] in his house. He (Kumarbi) had gone to roam the land(s). He wanders about up (?) in the mountains. (Fr. 4.1, tr. Hoffner 1998, 49)

The implication is that Silver went up the mountains in pursuit of his father. Likewise, in Ovid’s account, Phaethon ascended to a “high dwelling” (*arx*), that he could only reach by climbing “the steep path which leads thither” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2. 19–20, 33, tr. Miller 1999, 60–63), in order to find Phoebus.⁴

In the Greek account, Phaethon soon finds his father. An episode in which Silver finds his father and speaks with him is missing from our fragmentary text, but can reasonably be assumed. Whatever the case, Silver then appears to become king of the gods (Hoffner 1998, 49). Despite Polvani’s assertion that the text does not give “testimony of any kingship” (Polvani 2008, 622), this can be inferred from the text (Fr. 2A iii = 5.1), in which Tešub is warned by his brother that someone has become king (LUGAL-*u-ez-zi-it-ta-at*). This is confirmed by a fragment of an extraordinary Hurrian-Hittite ritual text (KUB 27. 38 Rs. iv 19–21, eds. Haas & Wegner 1988, 389, with 25–26), in which Silver is mentioned in a list of legendary kings (^m*ušhune ewe,r=ni šarr(i)=a uštāe [hur]-ad hurri*). Here we seem to have a ‘Euhemeristic’ take on the theme of heavenly challengers to the rule of Tešub, as the list continues with a king ‘raised up by Kumarbi’ (*[wu]_ad=t=il=ae?* ^D*kumarwe_e=ne=š šarr(i)=a*) called

³ Euripides’ *Phaethon* takes place before the palace of Phaethon’s assumed father—Merops, king of Ethiopia, “at the eastern edge of the world bounded by the river Oceanus (109), close to the house and stables from which Helios the sun-god daily drives his chariot across the heaven”, Collard *et alii* 1997, 196; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1. 776.

⁴ Compare Kugler (1927, 4): “...so führt der Weg zur Sonne scheinbar bergan (*acclivo limite* 19)...”

Ḫidam, who is clearly the Ḫedammu, son of Kumarbi, known from another song of the ‘Kumarbi Cycle’ (Houwink ten Cate 1992, 111; Wilhelm 2003, 393–395; Haas 2006, 148; superseding de Martino 1993, 129). We conclude with Houwink ten Cate (1992, 114, cf. 110–111): “There can be no doubt that Silver first won and later lost the position of king in heaven.”

Silver’s rule was evidently despotic, as he “[drives (?)] all the deities with a goad (?) of pistachio wood.” (Fr. 5. 1, tr. Hoffner 1998, 50) Phaethon, of course, did not seize kingship of the gods, yet tantalising hints indicate that he may have been portrayed as a much more seditious character in pre-Ovidian tradition. His brief occupancy of the chariot of the chief luminary of the heavens counts as an act of supreme hubris and, perhaps more tellingly, “Phaethon stole the chariot of the sun without his father’s consent, a clear act of rebellion”, in “Aeschylus’ lost play, the *Heliades*, and perhaps also in a lost work of Hesiod” (Forsyth 1987, 132).⁵ A version of the myth recorded by Hyginus (*Fabulae*, 152A, tr. Grant 1960, 123–124),⁶ in which the youngster “secretly mounted his father’s car”, prompted Diggle (1970, 20–21 and note 1) to conclude that a more aggressive Phaethon is depicted here than in the usual tradition:

Phaethon’s aspiration to drive the chariot of the Sun may be construed as an act of audacity and presumption equally vexatious to the gods as the threats of their better known antagonists... The Phaethon who appropriates the Sun-god’s chariot to his own use without the permission of his father is a far more formidable figure than the Phaethon whose request to drive the chariot is chiefly a means of testing his father’s promise... If Phaethon was represented as an impious braggart (in the original of 152A) we can see why it was necessary that he should be struck by the thunderbolt even after his fall.

Indeed, it begins to look as if, in an earlier version of the story, Phaethon’s diversion of the ordinary course of the Sun was motivated by a desire to attack the stronghold of the ruler of the gods. In both cases, the protagonist comes into conflict with the legitimate king of heaven, Zeus/Jupiter or his equivalent the storm-god Tešub. In both cases, the dismay of the storm-god’s brother

⁵ Pausanias 1.3.1 refers to the story of a (possibly related) Phaethon given in Hesiod’s *Catalogues of Women and Eoiae*. For evidence that Hesiod was familiar with the myth of Phaethon’s fall, see van der Sluijs 2008, 222–225. We have been unable to verify the claim (Diggle 1970, 30; repeated in Forsyth) that theft is referred to in a fragment of Aeschylus’ play.

⁶ Hyginus’ second account (154, trans. Grant 1960, 124–125) depicts a less mischievous Phaethon: “Phaethon, son of Clymenus, son of Sol, and the nymph Merope, who, as we have heard, was an Oceanid, upon being told by his father that his grandfather was Sol, put to bad use the chariot he asked for.” Compare Grant (1960, 124–125): “Most writers do not say that Phaethon mounted the chariot secretly”.

prompts a request for the storm-god to bring down the upstart by using his thunderbolts. In Ovid's account (2. 279–280, 290–292, tr. Miller 1999, 78–81), it is Neptune, Jupiter's brother, whose suffering from the heat inspires Tellus' (Gaia's) desperate plea: "... why, O king of all the gods, are thy lightnings idle? ... grant that I have deserved destruction, what has the sea, what has thy brother done? Why are the waters which fell to him by the third lot so shrunken, and so much further from the sky?" Her request is met, and Jupiter brings down the mock Sun Phaethon with a thunderbolt. Likewise, in the *Song of Silver* (Fr. 2A iii = 5.1), Tešub is implored by his vizier, evidently his brother Tašmišu, with words beginning KAxiM-*an-na-wa-at-ta* Ū-U[L'...] (Hoffner 1988, 155), which Hoffner (1998, 50) translates as: "[Is it] not [possible (?)] for you to thunder?"⁷

It is fair to assume that Tešub eventually unleashed his thunder against the usurper, because Silver's term as heavenly ruler ended and, as the introduction to the *Song* notes, he is no longer worshipped despite his former splendour. Hoffner (1998, 48) opines that the complete text will have included an account of Silver's demotion, in accordance with the general pattern of the Kumarbi cycle (Hoffner 1998, 48).

Phaethon's misuse of his father's chariot effectively led to the 'Sun' crashing down to earth. The surviving fragments of the *Song*, too, show that Silver's rebellion was thought to have changed the normal course of the Sun:

Silver [seized (?)] power with his hands. Silver seized the spear. He dragged the Sun and Moon down from heaven. The Sun and the Moon did reverence. They bowed to Silver. The Sun and the Moon began to speak to Silver: '[O Silver, our lord], do not strike/kill us! We are the luminaries [of heaven] and [earth]. We are the torches of what [lands] you [govern]. If you strike/kill us, you will proceed to govern the dark lands personally.' [His] soul within [him was filled with] love. [He had] pity on [...]. (Fr. 7. 2–3, tr. Hoffner 1998, 50)

Three apparent differences between the Greek and the Hurrian traditions are that Phaethon was portrayed as a temporary embodiment of the Sun, whereas the fragments we possess do not immediately suggest a solar aspect for Silver; that Phaethon's error caused a universal conflagration, whereas Silver's

⁷ The comparison does not hold on some alternative translations of this fragmentary line, according to which Silver's reign precludes the god from using his thunder: "[It will] not [happen (?)] for you to thunder." (Hoffner 1988, 156); "[Du wirst] nicht donnern [können]." (Ünal 1994, 857); "[Es ist] dir nich[t (mehr) möglich], ein Gewitter hervorzurufen..." (Haas 2006, 150). Nevertheless, the role of the thunder-god's brother in prompting him to act against the troublemaker is an interesting detail, despite the very different character of Neptune/Poseidon and Tašmišu.

move threatened to engulf the world in darkness; and that Silver brought down not only the Sun, but the Moon as well.⁸ But even these differences need not be absolute. Ovid (2. 329–332, tr. Miller 1999, 82–83) stated that Phaethon's death was followed by a temporary obscuration of the Sun: "The wretched father, sick with grief, hid his face; and, if we are to believe report, one whole day went without the sun. But the burning world gave light, and so even in that disaster was there some service." And in Ovid's narration, the Moon does play a part, expressing consternation that the Sun, which normally orbits above her, is now below her: "The Moon in amazement sees her brother's horses running below her own..." (2. 208–209, tr. Miller 1999, 74–75) Greater involvement of the Moon-goddess in the story is suggested by the earliest known representation of Phaethon's downfall, on an Arretine bowl (Boston 98. 828) from the very early 1st century but thought to be based on "a Hellenistic model" (Chase 1916, 73; Pl. XIV–XV). This shows Apollo/Helios trying to rein in the horses of the Sun-chariot as Phaethon falls; on the other side is Artemis, aiming her bow at Phaethon, "as if she had taken an active part in his destruction" (Gantz 1993, 34). Clearly, the pair represent the Sun and Moon as antagonists of Phaethon. Moreover, an obscure Euhemeristic tradition recorded by Diodorus of Sicily (3. 57. 4–8) features Helios and Selenē as two mortal children who lent their names to the Sun and the Moon after Helios had been cast into the river Eridanus and Selenē had thrown herself down from the roof in agony. As indicated by the role of the Eridanus, this must be a parallel to the myth of Phaethon, in which the Sun and the Moon both come down—as in the case of Silver. Finally, in both cases the disturbance is of cataclysmic proportions, as Haas (2006, 150) underscored in the case of the Hurrian version: "Da der Mond die Zeitrechnung bestimmt und die Sonne den Tag von der Nacht scheidet, steht die Welt in Gefahr, in das zeitlose und finstere Chaos zu stürzen."

In short, both accounts clearly describe a catastrophic interruption in the natural order of things, in which a youthful rebel was instrumental in threatening the power of the Sun and bringing it down.

Finally, the names of the two figures are surely conversant. Silver's name, *KU.BABBAR*, the Hurrian form of was apparently *Ušhune*, the Hittite "*Ḫarkiyanza-s* (Hoffner 1988, 163–164, from the Proto-Indo-European root **h₂erǵ-*, 'to be glittering, white', cf. Sanskrit *árjunah*, 'bright, white', Latin *argentum*, 'silver', Greek *argós*, 'white, etc.'), implies a white radiance. This

⁸ A possible Hattic variation on this myth is the fall of the Moon-god, from the sky: "[The Moon God] fell from the sky and fell upon the gate complex, [but] no one saw him." *The Moon that Fell from Heaven*, §§6–13 or C. ii. 10–16, A ii. 15–32, trans. Hoffner 1998, 34–36.

compares to Phaethon's name, which literally means 'shining, brightness'.⁹ The 'brightness' expressed etymologically in Phaethon's name is readily understood in terms of a radiant celestial object (Reckford 1972, 427, note 23; Forsyth 1987, 133). More specifically, an early tradition appears to have identified Phaethon with the planet Venus. During the Hellenistic era, astronomers agreed to call the planet Jupiter 'Phaethon', although a few dissenting sources identified Saturn as such (for references, see conveniently van der Sluijs 2006, 71; 2008; James and van der Sluijs 2008, 69 & note 31). Whether the Hurrians gave Silver a celestial identity is unknown. Certainly, Bossert (1944, 207; cf. Otten 1959, 32) proposed to read the name of deity number 31 on the frieze of the Hurrian pantheon at Yazılıkaya ideographically as respectively 'Silver' or 'pure bright'—while the wings attached to this god may suggest an astral, if not a specifically planetary significance.¹⁰ At any rate, it is worth entertaining Haas' suspicion (2006, 151, expanding on Hoffner 1988, 161) that "daß Silber auf Grund seines Glanzes glaubt, den Kosmos aus eigener Kraft erleuchten zu können." If correct, this undergirds the analogy with Phaethon's failed performance as a 'mock Sun'.

3. Levantine Connections

The parallels listed between the Phaethon and Silver stories are too close to avoid the conclusion that the two characters are related. In particular, the nexus of motifs involving a boy hero being teased for having no father, learning from his mother that his father is a mighty sky being, setting off to find him and then proceeding to disrupt the natural cosmic order seems too specific to have arisen independently in two cultures of the ancient Eastern Mediterranean

⁹ Greek Φαέθων *Phaéthōn* is a present participle with *th*-suffix, based on a thematic aorist *pháe-*, 'to light up, radiate, be bright'. From the same stem were derived the verb *phaeinō*, 'to gleam', the noun *pháos*, 'light', later contracted in Attic to *phōs*, and many other words, Frisk 1957, 989–991 s. v. 'φάος'; Chantraine 1984, 1168–1170 s. v. 'φάε'; and Rix 2001, 68–69 s. v. 'b'eh₂' and Pokorny 1959, 104–105 s. v. 'bhā-, bhō-, bhə' for Indo-European parallels. Nonnus (*Dionysiaca*, 38. 142–144, trans. Rouse 1998, 102–103) devised an obvious play on the name when he related that Phaethon was *phaesphóron*, "brilliant with light", upon his birth: "Then Clymene's womb swelled in that fruitful union, and when the birth ripened she brought forth a baby son divine and brilliant with light."

¹⁰ The only other deities on the frieze with wings are planets (in the ancient sense): Šaušga (no. 38), Hurrian equivalent of the Mesopotamian Venus-goddess Ištar; Kušuh the Moon-god (no. 35); and Šimige the Sun-god (no. 34), the latter being surmounted by a winged Sun-disk. Were the new reading of the hieroglyphs proposed by Masson (1981, 21–23) correct, the name would not include an ideogram for a silver bar at all. However, Hittitologists (e.g. Gurney & Hawkins 1982; Alexander 1986, 157) have vociferously criticised both Masson's methodology and readings.

basin. Yet while diffusion of the tale to Greece, ultimately from a Hurrian source, seems more than likely, we should also bear in mind another acknowledged possible source of the Phaethon story, from Phoenicia—the story of *Hēlēl ben-Šaḥar*, the ‘son of Dawn’, who according to *Isaiah* (14. 12–16) met his fate after a hubristic bid for kingship of heaven. Isaiah addressed Hēlēl as a mythical character who attempted to overthrow the regime of the sky-god ‘Elyōn on the pinnacle of Mount Šāphōn, but failed miserably and was hurled into the underworld. It is now generally believed that Isaiah’s source was a Canaanite-Ugaritic rather than a Babylonian myth, as had initially been considered (see Grelot 1956, 19; Day 2000, 170), but a precise analogue has not yet been forthcoming. The most likely parallel to the story of Hēlēl in Ugaritic literature is the myth of the rebellion of ‘Aṭtar.¹¹ The extant fragments (*The Ba’lu Myth*, CTA. 6. I. 53–65, tr. Pardee 1997, 269) tell how ‘Aṭtar, upon the death of Ba’lu, attempted to seize the empty throne with the help of the goddess ‘Aṭiratu of the Sea, but was too small and abdicated voluntarily. There is no need to repeat the various arguments advanced for and against a comparison of Hēlēl with ‘Aṭtar,¹² and of both with Phaethon.¹³

As the Greek story of Phaethon seems to reflect motifs from both the Hurrian *Song of Silver* and the Canaanite tale of ‘Aṭtar/Hēlēl, this should provide a clue to the region in which Greeks learnt the story. On the one hand, the Hurrians localised at least some of the *Silver* story in the region around Urkeš in northern Mesopotamia, the only placename mentioned, and Buccellati & Kelly-Buccellati (2009, 67–69) have argued that the mountains that Silver wandered in search of his father would have been the range north of Iraq; this tallies with Singer’s attractive suggestion (2002) that the Mount Kanzura or Kandurna mentioned in the *Song of Ullikummi* as the mountain of the divine assembly was the fortified rock on the shore of Lake Van, or Haas’ (1980, 101, 104) identification of it with Tendürek Dağı, to the northeast of the lake. On the other hand, both the *Ullikummi* and *Hedammu* parts of the Cycle involve Syrian locales: in the *Song of Ullikummi*, Tešub has his seat at Mount Ḥazzi

¹¹ For an argument that Isaiah’s Hēlēl was the elusive god *Hll* mentioned in Ugaritic texts, see van der Sluijs 2009.

¹² Heiser 2001; Day 2000, 167–175; Spronk 1998, 718; Page 1996, 139–140; Watson 1995; Smith 1994, 240–250; Gallagher 1994; Oldenburg 1969, 42, 104; 1970, 206–207; Albright 1968, 187 note 3; Astour 1965, 269, 270 note 1; Grelot 1956, 22–24.

¹³ Gunkel (1895, 133–134) was perhaps the first to propose a relationship between Hēlēl and Phaethon, followed by Grelot (1956, 30, 38) with inclusion of ‘Aṭtar, but excluding the Ugaritic *Hll*; cf. Schmidt 1951, 167; Loretz 1976, 133; Forsyth 1987, 126–139; Watson 1995, 747. Astour (1965, 268–269, 273; cf. West 1997, 476), while rejecting the parallel with ‘Aṭtar, was adamant that the name, image, and myth of Phaethon all trace back to West Semitic mythology. McKay (1970, 453–456) argued the reverse, that the myth of Hēlēl was based on that of Phaethon.

(identified as Casius) near Ugarit and Hedammu is a sea-monster, while the Sea—which certainly refers to the Mediterranean Sea—plays a role in supporting Kumarbi's schemes (see Archi 2009, 215). The wide range of these locales was seen by Güterbock (1946, 100) simply as reflecting the geographical scope of Hurrian culture. Others, such as Haas (1980, 98, 100, 104; cf. Singer 2002, 130) have suggested that while the stories were originally set in the region between Urkeš and Lake Van, they were subsequently localised westwards to the area of the Syrian coast. Thus, Archi (2009, 215) has argued that, while the songs of *Silver* and *Ullikummi* refer to Urkeš as the residence of Kumarbi, this merely shows that “Hurrians of Syria retained the memory of one of their first capitals (23rd century), and that Kumarbi had an important cultic centre there...” Archi (2009, 218) further suggested that another part of the Cycle, the *Song of KAL/LAMMA*, was composed by the bards of Carchemish in northern Syria in order to honour a local deity.

The questions raised by such suggestions may be intractable and will surely bear much further discussion. What is important to note in this context is that while there are no extant copies of the ‘Kumarbi Cycle’ from the archive of Ugarit (as preserved) or from Carchemish (where no literary archive was found), there is agreement that some version of the Songs in question would have been familiar at such Syrian centres at least in oral form. Given the parallels between the Greek Phaethon and both the Hurrian *Silver* and the Canaanite *ʿAṭtar/Hêlêl*, it is reasonable to suggest that the Greek story was borrowed from a region where Hurrian and Canaanite cultures mingled, such as Cilicia and/or the neighbouring coast of Syria and northern Phoenicia. Beginning with Güterbock's (1948, 133) opinion that “these myths reached the Greeks by way of Phoenicia” although “the Phoenicians... were merely the intermediaries between the Hurrians and the Greeks”, this region has long been fingered as a conduit for oriental ideas into Greek tradition (Walcot 1966, 19–20, 53–54, 120–121; Barnett 1968, 152; Penglase 1994, 96; West 1997, 2–4).

Precisely such a provenance for the Phaethon story is suggested by some interesting details in the genealogy given for a Phaethon, grandson of Eōs (Dawn), who is arguably identical to the Phaethon that rode the chariot (van der Sluijs 2008). Although many located Phaethon in ‘Ethiopia’,¹⁴ in this case a generalised term for the East and the land of the rising Sun rather than Africa *per se*, this genealogical account associates his family precisely with the region under discussion:

¹⁴ In addition to the references given above, Chares of Mytilene (Fr. 3, apud Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 37. 11. 32–33) located Phaethon's tomb in an Ethiopian temple of Ammon. Moreover, Hesiod's introduction of “bronze-helmeted Memnon, the king of the Ethiopians” (*Theogony* 984–985, trans. Most 2006, 80–83) as the step-brother of Phaethon implies a general ‘family relationship’ to Ethiopia.

... Cephalus, whom Dawn loved and carried off, and consorting with him in Syria bore a son Tithonus, who had a son Phaethon, who had a son Astynous, who had a son Sandocus, who passed from Syria to Cilicia and founded a city Celenderis, and having married Pharnace, daughter of Megassares, king of Hyria, begat Cinyras. This Cinyras in Cyprus, whither he had come with some people, founded Paphos; and having there married Metharme, daughter of Pygmalion, king of Cyprus, he begat Oxyporus and Adonis... (Apollodorus, *Library* 3. 14. 3, tr. Frazer 1921, 82–83)

‘Sandocus’ may be based on the West Semitic root צדק *Ṣdq*, ‘righteous’, known from the Hebrew priestly title צדִּיק *Ṣādōq*, which is sometimes rendered *Saddouk* with long *d* in Greek,¹⁵ and a Ugaritic deity of ‘righteousness’ (Astour 1966, 282; Baumgarten 1981, 175 and n. 198). The latter is reflected in the culture-hero Sydyk in Sanchuniathon’s *History*, as relayed by Philo of Byblos (Fr. 809: 7—Baumgarten 1981, 143), who explained the name as meaning ‘righteousness’ (*dikaion*). In this context, it is interesting to note that the Babylonian equivalent (*Kittum*) of the West Semitic *Ṣdq* had conspicuous solar associations (Baumgarten 1981, 176), cf. the *šēmēš ṣadāqāh* or ‘sun of righteousness’ in *Malachi* 3. 20.

It may thus be significant that both Syria and Cilicia, long considered as ‘source’ areas for the raw material used by Hesiod and others, figure in this genealogy for Phaethon. But the family connections also feature Cyprus, adjacent to both, where Semitic, Hurrian, Hittite and Greek cultures intermingled since the Late Bronze Age. The Kinyras of Apollodorus’ Phaethon genealogy was known as a legendary king of Cyprus since the time of Homer (*Iliad* 11. 19–23). His name is the undisputed Greek equivalent of that of the Ugaritic deity Kinnār, the ‘lyre’ (Albright 1968, 144 and note 91; Franklin 2006, 384–387). Numerous passages link Kinyras with the Paphian cult of Aphrodite (see Franklin 2006, 380), a deity who not only acts as the lover of his son, Adonis, but also as the abductor of Phaethon, son of Cephalus and Eōs, in Hesiod’s tale (*Theogony* 986–991—see van der Sluijs 2008, 219–221). Famously, the Greek cult of Aphrodite appears to have been partly borrowed from a Cypriotised version of the Canaanite/Phoenician Astarte.¹⁶ This relatively clear case aside, the paucity of intelligible Bronze and Early Iron Age inscriptions permits little insight into Cypriot cult and literature during these

¹⁵ The dissimilation of the consonant cluster through nasalisation, as required for *Sándokos*, is not out of the ordinary in the northwest Semitic language group, being demonstrably systematic and productive in Imperial Aramaic (c. 600–c. 200 BCE; Garr 2007) and with possible examples in Punic (K. Jongeling, personal communication 17th December 2007).

¹⁶ A connection between Aphrodite and Cyprus is explicitly stated as early as Homer (*Iliad* 5.330; *Odyssey* 8.362) and Hesiod (*Theogony* 191–199); Herodotus (1. 105) and Pausanias (1. 14.7) related traditions linking the Aphrodite cults of Cythera, Cyprus, Ashkelon and the “Assyrians”.

periods. We have nothing like the rich archives of Ḫattuša/Boğazköy, provenance of the fragmentary *Song of Silver*, or Ugarit/Ras Shamra, where the Ba'lu cycle, including the story of 'Aṭtar, was found. But it would be wrong to overlook Cyprus, on *e silentio* grounds, when considering the transmission of Near Eastern stories to the Greek world—particularly, for reasons we have seen, in the case of the Phaethon myth.

4. Conclusion

There is an attractive pattern of correspondences between the well-known Greek myth of Phaethon and the Hurrian myth of Silver. The comparison of these sheds fresh light on some hitherto obscure aspects of Phaethon's story. The curious motif of the bullying of Phaethon, for instance, far from being a fabrication of Ovid's making, may now be claimed to reach beyond a suspected origin in Euripides' play to a plausible Near Eastern source. If this and other traits of the classical myth of Phaethon originated in the Near East, their transmission to the Hellenic world would fit into the wider framework of apparent Greek borrowings from oriental mythology. The Greek story looks like an amalgam of various strands of mythology drawn from a culturally diverse area focussed on northern Syria, Cilicia and Cyprus.

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