

Yam

I. Introduction. *Levantine god.* In Ugaritic texts Y. is referred to as a personified deity (→DDD 739f). Y.'s hydro affinity is not only indicated by his name, *ym* "sea" (as personal name already attested in Mari; DURAND 1993: 57f), but also by his epithet *ṭṭ nhr* "Judge River (Nahar)." The impersonal sea as mythological chaos power is first mentioned in the 18th cent. Amorite text A.1968, in the "proto-Ugaritic" theme of the conflict of the →storm god against the sea, referring to the former as →Hadad of Aleppo and the latter by the Akk. term *têmtum* "vast expansion of water" (DURAND 1993: 43–45, 58; see also *KTU* 1.2 iv:3 [bym]).

Ugaritic texts suggest the ophidian nature of Y., which is not only identified with the sea (*KTU* 1.6 iv:51; see also Isa 27:1) but also with the sea monster Tunnanu (*tnn*; →Tannin; *KTU* 1.83:4–12; PITARD 1998: 279; see also Ps 74:13). The close relationship between Y. and Tunnanu is most likely also indicated in *KTU* 1.3 iii:39–42, where →Anat claims to have killed Y.=Nahar=Tunnanu (see PITARD 1998: 280) and the "twisting serpent, *šlyṭ*/the Mighty One (?) with the seven heads." Whether the latter should also be identified with Y. or regarded as a separate being is unclear. In *KTU* 1.5 i:1–3 (see also Isa 27:1) the "twisting serpent" has lost any distinct nature and has become the epithet of *ltn* (*lītānu* > *liwyātān* →Leviathan; see also Ps 74:14), the monster killed by →Baal. Although *ltn* is not directly equated with Y., Baal's conflict with serpentine *ltn* parallels his struggle with Tunnanu (see *KTU* 1.82:1). Since Tunnanu can be directly associated with Y., both conflicts seem to reflect Baal's fight with his main opponent at Ugarit, the god Y. (*KTU* 1.2 iv:8–27; Anat's claim in *KTU* 1.3 to have killed Y.=Nahar=Tannin is generally interpreted as support of Baal in his battle against Y. [contra BINGER 1992]). The serpentlike nature of Y. is also indirectly attested by the fact that in a Ugaritic polyglot vocabulary (NOUGAYROL et al. 1968: 240f) Tunnanu corresponds with the Sumerian ideogram MUŠ "serpent" and the Akkadian *bašmu* (→Bashmu) or *šēru*. This corresponds with the Hittite myth of Illuyanka, in which the sea is equated with the serpent battling the storm god (ConScr 1.56 A iii 20'–24').

From an iconographic perspective the struggling of the Levantine storm god with the serpent therefore serves as a starting point for the visual identification of Y.

Three iconographic studies have been devoted to Y. E. WILLIAMS-FORTE (1983: 32–38) attempted to prove that the serpent which Baal is fighting should be identified with →Mot instead of Y. However, her suggestion did not find general support (LAMBERT 1985: 444; KEEL 1986: 308–310).

P. MATTHIAE argued that a particular winged god on Old Syrian cylinder seals should be equated with Y. However, the tendency to read the Ugaritic mythical texts into iconographic representations is problematic (e.g., MATTHIAE detects Y.'s arrogance toward →El in a turned shoulder, depicted on a particular cylinder seal [MATTHIAE 1992: 176]). The argument that the tilted style of a particular seal (DELAPORTE 1910: pl. 32:490) indicates the "situation of conflict" (MATTHIAE 1992: 173) between Baal and Y. is also questionable. According to MATTHIAE, "one of the apparently less comprehensible figurative aspects of Y.'s iconography in the cylinder seals is his winged nature" (1992: 176). In fact, the wings are a major obstacle to the identification with Y.

An essay on representations of serpents from Palestine/Syria by O. KEEL provides a helpful overview of the serpent motif from an ancient Near Eastern background; of particular interest is the section on the storm god and the serpent on Old Syrian cylinder seals (1992: 212–215).

II. Typology

II.1. Phenotypes

A. THERIOMORPHIC 1. SERPENT 1.1. Killed with a long spear (1–2, →Baal 16–17) 1.2. Killed with a sword (→Baal 6–7) B. NATURAL PHENOMENON POSSIBLE

A. Theriomorphic

1. Serpent

1.1. Killed with a long spear. The winged Levantine →storm god →Baal is depicted on a scarab from Tell el-Far'ah (South) (→Baal 16*–17) as spearing the body of the Asiatic horned serpent in Egyptian style (KEEL 1990: figs. 89, 94, 95; LEIBOVITCH 1944: fig. 11), holding its neck with the other hand and stepping on its tail/body. These features are also seen in the combat of the Syrian storm god with the →serpent, although with some differences. The close identity of Baal with →Seth is indicated when the latter likewise kills the horned serpent in the same manner and not →Apophis, as would be expected (1*–2).

1.2. Killed with a sword. In Egypto-Palestinian Seth-Baal tradition, as on a scarab from Lachish (→Baal 6*–7), Y. is depicted as a horned serpent being

killed with a sword by the Levantine storm god.

B. Natural phenomenon: Possible.

The wavy band in the upper pedestal and the wavy line in the lower pedestal of the so-called Baal stela (→**Baal 1***) are commonly interpreted as stylized →mountains (see SCHAEFFER 1949: 129; CORNELIUS 1994: 136 n. 1). However, BÖRKER-KLÄHN (1982: 239) and FENTON (1996: 52) pointed out that these wavy features have nothing in common with the scaly depictions of mountains in the ancient Near East. KAISER (1962: 73 with n. 296) noted that the undulation on the lower part of the wavy band of the upper pedestal rules out an interpretation of mountains. YON (1991: 298) identified the wavy band as mountains and the wavy line as water, while WILLIAMS-FORTE 1983: 30 suggested that the two wavy symbols could also be serpents. For FENTON a serpentine interpretation of the upper wavy band is unconvincing, citing the “most un-serpentine” (1996: 57) head and dismissing the proposed serpent as a product of the imagination.

Most likely the wavy symbols are to be interpreted as water. Their role on the Baal stela cannot be interpreted clearly due to the lack of unique functional markers (see DURAND 1993: 56). PARROT (1957: 54f) suggested a literal identification with the Orontes and Litani rivers. YON (1991: 298) associated the wavy symbols with Baal as god of fertility by referring to *KTU* 1.101:1–2 (see PARDEE 1988: 132–134), as did HILLMANN (1965: 49) in interpreting them as “Baalistic water,” which promises fertility. Other options include a reference to the subdued god Y. (see CASSUTO 1954: col. 284; BORDREUIL/PARDEE 1993: 68) or, more generally, the chaotic powers of water (see also in this connection the undulating serpent in UEHLINGER 1990: 516, fig. 1).

A large decorated lapis lazuli cylinder (*kunukku*) from the treasury find at the Esagil, →Marduk’s temple at Babylon, dating to the mid-9th cent. (WETZEL et al. 1957: 37, pl. 43f) represents a counterpart to the iconographic topic under discussion here. LAMBERT (1985a: 90) suggested that the wavy lines below the →*mushhushshu* and standing Marduk (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marduk>) allude to “his [Marduk’s] victory over the Sea (Tiāmat).” By referring to the *victory* over the sea, LAMBERT avoided an outright personification of the wavy lines with →Tiamat since their semantic field cannot be narrowed down only to the deity.

II.2. Standard associations

1. Associated with deities/demons

1.2. **Baal.** Representations of Y. with the Levantine storm god →Baal are few. Only Egyptianized Sethian Baal is depicted as spearing the horned serpent (→**Baal 16*–17**) or killing it with a sword (→**Baal 6*–7**).

1.3. **Seth.** In identical pose as Sethian Baal, →Seth is spearing Y. as indicated by the horns on the animal’s head (**3*–4**).

III. Sources

Representations of Y. as serpent are restricted to seals from the Southern Levant (Tell el-Far‘ah [South]: →**Baal 16***; Tell eš-Šafi: **2**; Lachish: →**Baal 6***; Tell Deir ‘Alla: →**Baal 7**) dating to the 13th–11th cent.

IV. Conclusion. The Ugaritic texts and the related iconographic tradition suggest that Y. was visualized as a serpent. Indications that Y. could also have been represented symbolically as water are inconclusive (see § II.1.B). Against the background of the well-known struggle between Y. and Baal of the Ugaritic texts, it is somewhat surprising that this mythonem is only known iconographically from Egyptian-influenced scarabs of the mid-13th–11th cent. from the Southern Levant (→**Baal 6*–7, 16*–17**). Not surprisingly, Seth can therefore also be represented as killing the Asiatic horned serpent instead of the Egyptian Apophis serpent (**1*–2**), since there is considerable overlap between the two in this period. The dependency of the Ugaritic conflict between the storm god and the sea on older Syrian traditions is evidenced by literary hints, but also by iconographic representations of the Syrian storm god Hadad fighting a serpent, although there is variation in the killing of the serpent.

V. Catalogue

- 1*** Scarab, enstatite, 20.4 x 15.2 x 8.8 mm, 1250–1000, Brussels, Musées Royaux, E 7036b. KEEL 1990: 309f, pl. 17:4
2 Cylinder seal, steatite, 25 x 5 mm, Tell eš-Šafi, c. 1300–1100. GIVEON 1978: 97f with fig. 49; KEEL 1990: 310f with fig. 82

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