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## THOUGHTS ON THE SYMBOLISM AND ORIGIN OF APOLLO'S FIGHT AGAINST THE PYTHIAN SNAKE

**ABSTRACT:** The following paper deals with the mythological story about Apollo's fight against a she-snake at Pytho, where he eventually builds a sanctuary – the Delphic Oracle. First, it is attempted to decipher the terms Pytho, Delphi and Omphalos. A symbolism revolving around an underlying theme of birth is considered. Then, the stories about Apollo and about Kadmos, as well as a motif in Pherecydes' theogony, and the Anatolian *Illuyanka Myth* are being presented as subjects of a comparative analysis. This leads to the proposal that all four narratives have a common origin in Western Anatolia or Pre-Greek Hellas.

**KEY WORDS:** Apollo, Pytho, Kadmos, Illuyanka, Ophioneus

The myth of Apollo killing the Pythian snake and building the Delphic temple is the main theme in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (HH III). While the myth must be very ancient, the *Hymn* itself could have a tradition reaching as far back as the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, but is probable to have come down to us in the form we know today from a version going back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>1</sup> The following pages will primarily address the myth, not the hymn, although the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is obviously the most important source for the reviewed story.<sup>2</sup> First, a brief overview

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<sup>1</sup> Richardson 2010: 13–15.

<sup>2</sup> A thorough discussion of the foundation of Apollo's oracle at Delphi as portrayed in the *Hymn* is available in Strolonga 2011.

of the earliest sources of the myth will be presented.<sup>3</sup> Next, a possible, but admittedly speculative symbolism will be considered. (This second section will therefore provide reason for the vague term “thought” in the title.) Finally, a hypothesis on the origin of the myth will be formulated, based on a comparative analysis of related mythological narratives – the Theban Kadmos story, Pherecydes’ theogony and the Anatolian *Illuyanka Myth*. This paper, however, is not meant to close any discussion, either on the symbolism, or on the origins of the myth, or the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. It only presents some considerations that may give some insight to the less understood subtleties of the Apolline myth.

## APOLLO, PYTHO AND DELPHI IN EARLY GREEK LITERATURE

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* focuses for the most part on the story of Apollo’s birth (*HH* III 1–178) and his foundation of the Delphic Oracle (*HH* III 179–387). Apollo passes from Olympus to Tephousa’s spring in Boiotia, where he intends to build his sanctuary, but the nymph sends him away (*HH* III 214–276); he travels on to Phocis and finds a suitable place to erect this temple on the slopes of mount Parnassus, near the town of Krisa (*HH* III 277–299); the spot is described as a κνημὸν πρὸς Ζέφυρον τετραμμένον, αὐτὰρ ὑπερθεὺν πέτρῃ ἐπικρέμαται, κοίλη δ’ ὑποδέδρομε βῆσσα, τρηχεῖ “foothill turned towards the west: a rock hangs over it from above, and a hollow, rugged ravine runs under it”<sup>4</sup> (*HH* III 284–286); close by, a κρήνη καλλίρροος “beautiful-flowing spring” runs (*HH* III 300); as it turns out, the location is being guarded by a δράκαινα “she-snake” (*HH* III 300–309); then Typhon’s birth by Hera is described (*HH* III 310–355); Apollo kills the Pythian she-snake and erects his sanctuary (*HH* 287–300, 356–376). The *Hymn* goes on to explain Apollo’s epitheta Pythian (from the snake’s πυθῶ “rotting” corpse; *HH* III 364–374), Tephusios (from the shrine he founded at Tephousa’s spring; *HH* III 382–387) and Delphic (from the δελφίς “dolphin” he turned into in order to recruit priests for his temple; *HH* III 387–510).

<sup>3</sup> A more detailed discussion of the subject can be found in Gantz 1993: 87–99.

<sup>4</sup> Trans. Evelyn-White.

Not much of the narrative is told in earlier sources. Homer knows ὄσα λάϊνος οὐδὸς ἀφήτορος ἐντὸς ἐέργει Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος Πυθοῖ ἐνι πετρῆεσση “the marble threshold of the Archer Phoebus Apollo encloseth in rocky Pytho”<sup>5</sup> (Hom. *Il.* IX 404–405, cf. Hom. *Od.* VIII 79–81).<sup>6</sup> Therefore, he acknowledges the Apolline cult at Pytho/Delphi. The Boiotians Hesiod and Pindar focus on a Pythian cult stone, which the former describes as the rock Cronus swallowed and spat out (Hes. *Th.* 492–506) and Pindar calls the Omphalos, confirming its location at Pytho/Delphi (Pind. *P.* VIII 59–67). The Theban poet introduces us also to the prehistory of Pytho, according to which it belonged to Ge, before it was claimed by Apollo (Pind. fr. 55;<sup>7</sup> cf. Aes. *Eum.* 1–8; Plut. *De Virt. Mor.* 293c, 241c; Paus. X 5, 5).<sup>8</sup> This information seems crucial to the story, but is never explicitly mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.<sup>9</sup>

## 1. SYMBOLISM: APOLLO AND THE UMBILICAL CORD

The author of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* seems to retell a well-known narrative around Apollo's foundation of the Delphic Oracle. Even though it is sometimes assumed that the *Hymn* consists of two poems,<sup>10</sup> the story's structure is consistent throughout the composition.<sup>11</sup> For example, the Homeric poet gives an account of the birth of Apollo and later thoroughly describes the birth of Typhon; he also opens the storyline revolving around Telphusa and closes it at a later point with the explanation for Apollo's epitheton “Telphusios”; moreover, he uses a particular symbolic language. A brief discussion of the critical terms and passages of the Delphic myth will shed some light on the inherent symbolism:

**The Rocky Depths:** The toponym Πυθώ(ν) and the adjective πετρῆεις are coupled twice in the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* II 519, IX 405) and twice in the *Hymn* (*HH* III 183, 390), which suggests some kind of

<sup>5</sup> Trans. Murray.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *HH* III 294–299.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also Pind. *P.* IV 75, VI 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also Aristonoos' *Paeon to Apollo*.

<sup>9</sup> On the prehistory of the historic Delphic sight see Scott 2014: 31–50.

<sup>10</sup> A discussion on the *Hymn*'s unity is available in Chappell 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Richardson 2010: 10.

tradition surrounding the couplet. The description of Pytho's πέτρα "rock" and βήσσα "ravine" in *HH* III 284–285 confirms the adjective πετρήεις "rocky" has been chosen consciously for Pytho, as the place we are dealing with here, is a (probably impressive) geological formation. Further, in the same passage, the term κοῖλος "hollow" enforces the picture of a deep gorge cut in rock. Therefore, the toponym Πυθῶ(v) is probable to derive from the PIE root *\*d<sup>h</sup>ewb-* "depths, hollow, deep, bottom"<sup>12</sup> (not from πυθῶ "rotting", as suggested in the *Hymn*).

**Giving Birth:** The *Hymn* hails Leto as the mother of Apollo and then goes on to give an account of his birth by her (*HH* III 25–27, 89–125). Later, when its author introduces us to the she-snake that is confronted by Apollo, the birth of Typhon is revealed (*HH* III 305–355). This account obviously does not have too much relevance to Apollo's snake-slaying, except for making Apollo's opponent more dangerous due to its relation to the well-known Theogonic usurper Typhon. It also might not be unimportant that Typhon's birth is procured by Ge, as indicated by Hera's repeated prayer to her (*HH* III 332–342). Bearing in mind the tradition around Ge having inhabited Pytho before Apollo, perhaps Ge's role in bringing forth Typhon was connected to the existence of the Pythian she-snake. Unfortunately, the text does not state this explicitly. Nevertheless, there might have been a traditional or contextual relation between Ge and the she-snake. According to local legend, as written down by Pausanias (Paus. X 6, 6), the she-snake was in fact posted in the Pythian realm by Ge, whom therefore we should presume to be her mother.

**The Navel:** The term ὀμφαλός "navel, umbilicus" in relation to a cult object in Delphi/Pytho appears for the first time in Pindar's poems. In his *Fourth Pythian Ode* he calls it μέσον ὀμφαλὸν εὐδένδροιο μητέρος "central navel of (the) well-treed mother (Earth)" (Pind. *P.* IV 74).<sup>13</sup> This Navel was a cult stone;<sup>14</sup> and while Hesiod apparently was aware of this Pythian object, by his time it might yet not have been known by the name of ὀμφαλός (Hes. *Th.* 497–500). Iconographic sources suggest that Apollo's conquest of Pytho/Delphi was also connected to the Omphalos, as they show Apollo seated on this cult stone (cf. BM<sup>15</sup> 1859,

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Watkins 1995: 460–462; Ringe 2006: 62, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Pind. *Paean* 6 15–18; Strabo IX 3, 6; Paus. X 16, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Middleton 1888.

<sup>15</sup> BM = British Museum.

1219.15; WSM<sup>16</sup> 1603). However curiously, the *Hymn* does not mention the Navel.

**The Womb:** At some point in history, Pytho got renamed and took the name Delphi. It is hard to say when exactly this may have happened. The *Hymn* explains Pytho's new name with Apollo's metamorphosis into a dolphin, but given the original toponym was Πυθῶ "Depths", and the *Hymn*'s focusing on giving birth, it is far more likely that the place name Δελφοί actually goes back to δελφύς "womb".<sup>17</sup> The organ – hidden deep within the female body – would then appear to constitute a metaphor that is enforced by the image of a "hollow ravine" and that could symbolically represent the vagina.<sup>18</sup>

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Bearing in mind the discussion above, I would like to propose rephrasing the narrative of the *Hymn* as follows. The deep, rocky formation that was called "Depths" was renamed into "Womb". It was home to the "Navel" and belonged to a "mother", the goddess Ge. In the *Hymn*, Ge procured a snake-like monster, Typhon, to be born by Hera. The foster mother of Typhon, another snake, lived at a spring nearby. Apollo killed it and established his cult centre by building a temple. On the grounds of these assembled nuances, the symbolic language appears to equate the temple with the cult object – the "Navel". Just as the *Hymn* does not spell out Ge's presence in Pytho, it also omits the Omphalos cult. Nevertheless, a cult is initiated and a holy object – the temple – is placed in Pytho. Therefore, it seems as if the *Hymn* was trying to obscure an older cultic tradition. Doing so, it also blurs the symbols within the narrative. It may be that the key terms – Πυθῶ(v), Δελφοί and Ὀμφαλός – were meant to represent some more sublime concept that was lost during the evolution of the myth. Certainly, the characters Ge and the she-snake would have been crucial, as well. The nomina Pytho/Depth and Ge/Earth probably allude to the chthonic aspects of Mother Earth on the one side, while on the other referring to its fertility. This is made apprehensible by the description of Typhon's birth by Hera. Thence also Delphi and

<sup>16</sup> WSM = Western Seleucid Mints, cf. Newell 1941.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Beekes 2010: 313–314.

<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the "rock hanging over it from above" is meant to describe the clitoris.

Omphalos fit quite well into this symbolic language as the anatomical terms “womb” and “navel”. Following this line of thinking, one might wonder whether the snake perhaps had a symbolic meaning of its own. Killed by Apollo, it was replaced by the local cult object which, in the *Hymn*, is Apollo’s temple,<sup>19</sup> but according to the assumed older tradition should be the Omphalos. Thus the slaughtered snake and its replacement by the Omphalos could be interpreted as the cutting of an umbilical cord and its knotting into a navel. This idea might become more graspable, if we remember Diodorus’ account of how the original Omphalos has come into being:

Diod. V 70, 4: when he (Zeus) was being carried away, while still an infant, by the Curetes, they say that the umbilical cord fell from him near the river known as Triton, and that this spot has been made sacred and has been called Omphalos after that incident, while in like manner the plain about it is known as Omphaleium.<sup>20</sup>

Obviously, the interpretation of the snake and new Pythian cult centre as the pair of umbilical cord and navel is not easy to uphold if one would not accept the adduced etymology for the toponym “Pytho” or the emphasis on birth, navel and womb in the Apolline snake-slaughter narrative. Nonetheless, the appearance of Mother Earth, Delphi and Omphalos in one mythic spot in Phocis is very much suggestive.

## 2. ORIGIN: PRE-GREEK/ANATOLIAN PROVENANCE OF APOLLO’S FIGHT AGAINST THE SNAKE

Apart from Apollo’s Western Anatolian provenance,<sup>21</sup> it has been suggested that the oronym Παρνασσός “Parnassos” could derive from

<sup>19</sup> According to Varro *Ling.* VII 17 the Greeks believed the Omphalos was the tomb of the Pythian she-snake.

<sup>20</sup> Trans. Oldfather.

<sup>21</sup> Beekes 2003. For different approaches to the etymology of Apollo’s name cf. Rosól 2007.

Anatolian terms for “abode, temple, house”, such as the Hittite *parna-*.<sup>22</sup> Similar ties with Anatolia can be postulated for another well-known Greek myth that revolves around the act of slaying a snake in the vicinity of a spring, and the erection of a building – the Theban Kadmos myth.<sup>23</sup> The protagonist’s name seems to go back to an either Pre-Greek, or Anatolian tradition.<sup>24</sup> Etymologically relevant are, above all, two Carian toponyms – a mountain and a river, both named Κάδμος.<sup>25</sup> Worth mentioning is also the name of the originally Karian settlement Priene, which according to Strabo was by some called Κάδμη “Kadme” (Strab. XIV 1, 12);<sup>26</sup> and apparently already Hellanikos was conscious of that (BNJ 4 F 101). While the cluster -δμ- is rare in Greek, it is regularly found in Helladic and Anatolian topo- and andronyms, and could be therefore Pre-Greek.<sup>27</sup> One could also consider whether the Cretan gloss κάδμος:

<sup>22</sup> Palmer 1965: 30; 343; 348; Finkelberg 2005: 5; Bernal 2006: 496–497; *contra* Beekes 2010: 1153; cf. Fowler 2013: 120–121.

<sup>23</sup> An insightful discussion of this myth can be consulted in Kühr 2006: 106–114.

<sup>24</sup> Beekes 2004a: 171–173; Beekes 2004b: 465–468; 2010: 613–614; Fowler 2013: 41, n. 147; most recently, the *status quaestionis* has been summarized by Ian Rutherford (2020: 188–189). For another plausible hypothesis, see Palaima 2011: 61–62. It is also possible that the Greek andronym Κάδμος has a direct cognate in the Luwian andronym Katamuwa, attested in Aramaic-Phoenician script as KTMW on a stele from Sam’al dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE (cf. Herrmann 2014). The term *muwa* “strength” appears commonly in Luwian names; the first part *kat(t)a-*, if Luwian/Anatolian means “with; below”, but otherwise could be a Hattic theophoric element, deriving from *katte* “king”, a common epithet for deities. I would like to (tentatively) propose that the mythic Theban founding figure Kadmos was at some point conflated with the figure of a historic king KTMW/Katamuwa who was literate in Aramaic-Phoenician and perhaps somehow politically tied to the Greeks in Asia Minor. Due to his similar name (the vocalized consonants KTMW could very well be read \*Katmos) and literacy, he could have provided the historic impulse for the mythic Theban Kadmos to be accounted with introducing the North-West Semitic script to Greece. Perhaps the *Suda* points to such a scenario by attributing the introduction of the alphabet to the mythic Theban “Phoenician” Kadmos (*Suda* κ 21) on the one hand, but at the same time also to a historic (?) “Milesian” Kadmos who wrote a book on the history of Miletus.

<sup>25</sup> Beekes 2004a: 172.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Herda 2006: 77–78 on the view that the alternate toponym has in fact arisen due to Boiotian colonisators re-naming the place after the Theban acropolis.

<sup>27</sup> Beekes 2004a: 172–173.

δόρυ· λόφος· ἀσπίς· Κρήτες (Hsch. κ 61) is related,<sup>28</sup> as there is a good chance that Cretan hieroglyphs and Anatolian hieroglyphs, predating the Linear A script, have a common origin.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the Theban hill, the Kadmeia, could have gotten its name not from Kadmos, but from a Pre-Greek or Anatolian toponym.

On a narrative level, the stories about Apollo and Kadmos find close parallels with the Anatolian *Illuyanka Myth*.<sup>30</sup> Common features include most obviously snake-slaying and the erection of a building near a river or spring. But there are further affinities that need to be considered. The Anatolian myth is attested in two different version within one single composition (CTH<sup>31</sup> 321). The narratives speak of a <sup>MUŠ</sup>*illuyanka* “snake” who battles a storm god. The snake is said to have come onto the surface from underground, and out of a *ḫatteššar* “pit, hole” (CTH 321 §§ 9, 11). The first battle against the storm god is won by the serpentine opponent, but eventually the snake gets defeated. Both versions of this story suggest that the storm god’s victory is only possible due to a covenant between gods and men which is expressed in terms of wedding ceremonies (CTH 321 §§ 8–11, 22–25). In the aftermath of the struggle with Illuyanka, a new god, Zaliyanu, takes over the Anatolian pantheon (CTH 321 § 18) and kingship amongst men is established.<sup>32</sup>

The three narratives about Apollo, Kadmos and Illuyanka, are probably related to a storyline from Pherecydes’ theogony, which accounts the marriage of Zas to Chthonie, the appearance of a snake-monster, Ophioneus, and its fight against Κρόνος “Kronos”. It is said that Chthonie turns into Γῆ “Ge”, after being wedded to Ζάς “Zas” (= Zeus), but thereafter assumes the part of the female element within the primeval divine couple, which in return makes the direct counterpart of Zeus’s wife

<sup>28</sup> Schachter 2016: 34; who counted several toponyms in Boiotia that seem to attest the habit of naming places according to their similarity in shape with military paraphernalia: “at Argos we find Aspis, and, in Boiotia itself, Akontion at Orchomenos, and Kerykion at Tanagra”.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Woudhuizen 2016. Creto-Anatolian relations could in fact reach back to the Minoan era (cf. Georgakopoulos 2012: 140–143; Taracha 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Consult Bachvarova 2016: 243–261 for a discussion of Apollo as a vector for transmission of cult and some snake-slaying myths in festival settings.

<sup>31</sup> CTH = *Catalogue des textes hittites*; cf. Laroche 1971.

<sup>32</sup> Hutter 1997: 80; Gilan 2011: 108; Gilan 2013: 109; Della Casa 2020: 225–226.



Hera.<sup>33</sup> As Pherecydes' theogony does in some aspects resemble the one we know from Hesiod, it can be assumed *per analogiam* that Chthonie is the goddess who gave birth to the usurping Ophioneus, just as Gaia (Hes. *Th.* 820–822) or Hera (*HH* III 305–355) gave birth to Typhon, according to the respective tradition.<sup>34</sup> Origen (*Contra Celsum* VI 42 = Pherec. fr. 78 Schibli) stated that the battle between Kronos and Ophioneus in Pherecydes' account is one to gain the kingship in heaven, and that it takes place on the banks of the primeval waters Ωγενοϛ “Ogenos” (= Oceanos). Pherecydes' work is lost and therefore only incompletely known to us, but it is safe to say that Zeus must have arisen as the final chief god of the Greek pantheon.

Marin L. West has discussed some possible Anatolian connections of Pherecydes, arguing that the theonym *Zas* is the effect of Pherecydes' intention to join the theologies of Greek Zeus and Anatolian Sandon.<sup>35</sup> This seems not only very plausible, but will also help to understand the references to Chthonie/Ge/Hera as Ophioneus' mother and the vicinity of the cosmic stream Ogenos/Okeanos during the serpent's fight against Kronos.

The following set of distinctive parallels will allow to draw a preliminary conclusion regarding the origin of all above mentioned narratives:

**The nameless snake:** As mentioned before, Apollo's opponent is a δράκαινα “she-snake”. Kadmos fights an ὄφιϛ “snake, serpent” (FGrHist 3 F 22a) or a δράκων “snake” (FGrHist 4 F 51), while Kronos battles Ὀφιονεύϛ “Ophioneus”, whose name literally means “snake-man”. Also the Hittite term <sup>MUS</sup>*illuyanka-* means simply “snake, serpent”.<sup>36</sup> All these are nameless reptiles and differ in this regard from other similar mythical Greek monsters, such as Typhon, Ladon or Hydra. From Calvert Watkins' thorough analysis of Indo-European narratives about dragon-slayers, we can deduce that the namelessness of these

<sup>33</sup> Schibli 1990: 61–89.

<sup>34</sup> Schibli 1990: 93.

<sup>35</sup> West 1971: 51–52. If West is right to point out that Ogenos is connected to an Aramaic term (West 1971:50), South Anatolia and North-West Levant are the most probable areas for Pherecydes to have picked up both foreign-sounding names, *Zas* and Ogenos.

<sup>36</sup> Klockhorst 2008: 384; cf. Katz 1998: 317–334.

mythic serpents is a distinctive marker and fits into a well-documented tradition.<sup>37</sup>

**Bodies of running water:** The narratives about Apollo, Kadmos, Illuyanka and Ophioneus all take place near to a body of running water. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* calls it κρήνη καλλίρροος “sweet flowing spring”; the Kadmos story mentions an Ἀρητιὰς κρήνη “spring of Ares” (FGrHist 4 F 51), which is in later tradition identified with the Dirce spring (Nonn. *Dion.* II 670; IV 356; 393–405; VIII 235–246; XL 140–142); Pherecydes’ theogony relates the snake-slaying in a cosmological context, therefore the body of flowing water, Ogenos, is the primeval river Oceanus.<sup>38</sup> The Hittite terminology used in the *Illuyanka Myth* is tricky, but it has been convincingly interpreted that *hunhuwanaš*, a critical term mentioned at end of the story, when Illuyanka is defeated, means “watery abyss, river”.<sup>39</sup>

**The chthonic realm:** Our understanding of Pherecydes’ theogonic narrative is that Χθονίη “Chthonie”, literally “(female) ground, soil”, bore Ophioneus, in analogy to Ge/Hera bearing Typhon. Therefore, the snake’s provenance in Pherecydes’ account is clearly chthonic. The same applies to Illuyanka, who is said to have come from below the earth (CTH 321 §§ 9, 11). This circumstance has been interpreted as referring to the so-called Dark Earth, the Anatolian netherworld, where gods, chthonic powers and the dead reside.<sup>40</sup> Less direct is the narrative about Apollo, but as we have seen above, the toponym Pytho does seem to allude to the depth of a rocky formation situated in a region that is inhabited by the Pythian she-snake. We can make the same connection for the Theban snake, but it is quite late: Euripides calls it δράκων ὁ γηγενής “the earthborn snake” (Eur. *Phoen.* 931, 935). It has been argued that

<sup>37</sup> Watkins 1995: 297–372.

<sup>38</sup> Presumably, Ophioneus is even meant to represent the element water, i.e. Ogen (cf. Schibli 1990: 47.).

<sup>39</sup> Beckman 1982: 21–23.

<sup>40</sup> Della Casa 2020: 221–224. The term *hatteššar* “pit, hole” used to describe Illuyanka’s gateway into the Anatolian land, appears also in Hittite necromantic rituals. Such pits were dug for example on river banks, as it was believed that large bodies of water are connected to the netherworld (cf. Collins 2002). Thus, the *Illuyanka Myth* makes it clear that the opponent of the storm god has a chthonic provenance.

this alludes to it being Gaia's child.<sup>41</sup> In connection with this claim is another hint from the Kadmos myth which suggests that evil is lurking below the Boiotian soil – the Σπαρτοί “Spartoi” growing out of the earth. The oldest authority on the subject is Pherecydes (FGrHist 3 F 22a). According to him, amongst these earthborn, one is said to be called Χθονίος „Chthonios”, literally “chthonic (one)”, another one is Οὐδαίος “Udaios”, from οὐδας “ground, surface of the earth”; moreover, there is Ἐχίων “Echion”, literally “viper-like”, who calls into mind the serpentine man Ophioneus born by Ge. The remaining two Spartoi are called Πέλωρος “Peloros”, literally “monster”, and Ὑπερήνωρος “Hyperenoros”, literally “Overbearing”. Since all of them have grown out of the serpent's teeth, they certainly can be viewed as personified attributes of the monster itself. Although this might be coincidence, all their names are certainly fitting to describe the monstrous serpent that inhabited the Theban realm before Kadmos' arrival.

**The erection of a socially important building:** After the snakes' deaths, Apollo, Kadmos and the gods in the *Illuyanka Myth* all construct buildings near the battle sight. Apollo founds the Delphic Oracle, Kadmos builds the Kadmean citadel and Inara settles a human in a newly built house near the *hunhuwanaš* (CTH 321 CTH 321 §17). As the Anatolian narrative reveals, this building is meant to take the function of a guarding place at the spot – the *hateššar* and *hunhuwanaš* – where Illuyanka had emerged. It is supposed to make sure that no other monster crosses over from the other realm onto the world.<sup>42</sup> Although the stories of Apollo and Kadmos do not say this explicitly, it might also be true for the Delphic Oracle as well as for the Kadmeia. In fact, a hint of further dangers on the spot where the Theban snake was killed is provided by the Spartoi.

There are further parallels to consider. The central parts in the narratives about Illuyanka, Ophioneus and Kadmos are devoted to wedding ceremonies. They play an important role in the establishment of peace within the respective realm, after the snakes have disrupted the previous order. It is obvious that all monsters introduce chaos: Illuyanka usurps the storm god's authority; the chthonic Ophioneus threatens to take over

<sup>41</sup> Tufano 2019: 112 with n. 374.

<sup>42</sup> Della Casa 2020: 220–226.

the pantheon; and the snake of Ares symbolizes the god's destructive nature which stands in opposition to Kadmos' wife Harmonia, literally "order, covenant".<sup>43</sup> These myths – each, however, to a different extent – have a cosmogonic agenda, which is also graspable by the fact that they produce guardianship over the reestablished (mirco-)cosmic order. Hence all of them speak about kingship: in the *Illuyanka Myth* Inara passes authority to a human king (CTH 321 § 17),<sup>44</sup> while Zaliyanu becomes the new leader of the Anatolian pantheon; according to the Greek theogony, Zeus/Zas becomes the chief god of the pantheon; in Thebes, kingship is given to Kadmos by Aphrodite (Apollod. III 25). Moreover, it should be noted that in the stories of Illuyanka, Kadmos and Apollo, power is passed on to humans. Clearly, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* does not establish kingship, but introducing priesthood into Apollo's temple can be considered to have the same symbolic significance.

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The discussed parallels are intriguing, but they certainly do not show enough similarity to suggest any direct connections between the literary sources telling these stories. It is more plausible to consider a common origin by drawing on Watkins' conclusion regarding Indo-European dragon-slayer narratives. Taking the etymological considerations regarding Mount Parnassos, Kadmos and Zas into the equation, one might look upon the distribution of these myths from Phocis and Boiotia in Hellas to Anatolia, and wonder how they historically relate to one another. It is likely, in my opinion, that our narratives evolved separately out of a common template myth that Helladic and (Western) Anatolian societies shared, before Mycenaean-Hittite relations flourished in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. This template must have been formulated in an Indo-European literary context (as shown by Watkins), but in close relation to a Pre-Greek or (Western) Anatolian people that provided topo- (Pytho, Parnassus, Kadmeia) and/or andronyms (Apollo, Kadmos, Zas). As the concept of the Hittite Dark Earth, connected through bodies of flowing

<sup>43</sup> Note the antithesis in Hes. *Th.* 933–937: "Also Cytherea bore to Ares the shield-piercer Panic and Fear, terrible gods who drive in disorder the close ranks of men in numbing war, with the help of Ares, sacker of towns; and Harmonia whom high-spirited Kadmos made his wife" (Trans. Evelyn-White).

<sup>44</sup> Gilan 2011: 100.

water to the world above, is more elaborate in the Anatolian mythology, while it is only elusively present in the Greek narratives, a (Western) Anatolian provenance of the template myth seems plausible.

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