10-1-1987

The Twilight of the Goddess: An Ancient Religious Revolution

John K. Hord

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol16/iss16/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen amatangelo@byu.edu.
In 1951 Professor Henri Frankfort published his address *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions*. Before that date it had been fashionable among scholars of very ancient history to suggest that the occurrence of certain common images among several different religions raised at least the possibility that a single religious substrate lay in back of all or most of them. Since 1951 the idea of a single underlying Old Religion has gone largely into abeyance. Thirty-six years have passed, and this essay proposes that enough new evidence has accumulated for another look at the problem.

In this pursuit the first way station will be a much better chronicled period, because whatever Old Religion may have existed at some prehistoric date, vast changes had occurred by the time the first records were written. This conclusion arises directly from those early records. The details of the pantheons they list change greatly from one to another, so even if one local pantheon represents the original condition, necessarily all the others represent changes. If these changes can be understood, this will cast considerable light on both the original condition and the results. Thus first examination will be made of a period that is already fairly well known, to look for evidence of the nature of these changes.

Two thousand years ago the Mediterranean world and China were both in what is usually considered a fairly high state of civilization, in the Roman Empire in the one, the Han Empire in the other. But this changed, and in the third through the sixth centuries AD around the Mediterranean, the first through the fourth centuries AD in China, there occurred a breakup of empire, reversion to a manorial natural economy, barbarian invasions, and the formation of several syncretic "higher" religions. Such areas as Britain dropped from history almost completely for hundreds of years, and must nowadays be studied by a mixture of legend, archaeology, inference, and an occasional report in
foreign sources. In both areas the result was an age of faith, such that as civilization rebuilt, the nucleus of that reconstruction was a church. In Europe this was the Roman Catholic Church: The European High Middle Ages were built around Church libraries and Church scholars. In Byzantium, Late-Roman Hellenism shared honors with the Christian Fathers; in the dar al-Islam, religious legitimation of foreign ideas sometimes seemed to occur by rubber stamp; in China, religious Buddhism and Taoism were, to say the least, eclectic and flexible, and faced the possibility — but for centuries, only the possibility — of a challenge from a resurgent Confucianism. But the initial primacy of the religious synthesis in all these recoveries is a given. India suffered a similar though less chronicled collapse after the fall of the Gupta Empire and had similar though less chronicled results. Thus history suggests religion to be a competent vehicle whereby long-developed areas can recover from a collapse of civilization.

But these religious civilizations still had enemies with much less sense of religion. In particular each had barbarians on its borders, and in the early encounters between civilizations and barbarism, the barbarians attacked very nearly with impunity. For Westerners, the Scandinavian descents on Europe are the classic example, but Russia, Tibet and Japan engaged in the same piracies with as little successful reprisal by their victims. Thus all four groups were able to form their own complex societies without compulsions from their older and more civilized neighbors. Nevertheless, all four did so essentially by importing wholesale the religious knowledge systems of the older civilizations, taking care to maintain their own local control of the politically important local religious hierarchies but otherwise being remarkably faithful to the originals in their quests for knowledge and civilized status.

This in itself is nothing new. Religion has been proposed to be a civilizing force almost from the moment it became such. But one may equally argue that “religion” cannot be a key to civilization, because supernatural belief of some sort has been characteristic of peoples of very debatably civilized status possibly as long ago as Shanidar Cave. I propose the key to lie in that these medieval churches were all organized religions. One might even call them religions of organization; all of them have displayed a passionate concern with explaining the world around them, organizing it into a coherent whole which each religion both defines and con-
tains. When this kind of religion is imported, the transfer is by no means limited to theology.

However doubtful one may be of the spiritual significance of Christianity in Kievan Russia—for the mass of the population, Christian ritual was evidently but a thin veneer on pagan superstition, while the rulers honored Christian precepts mainly in the breach—there can be no question of the immense cultural influence of the Church. On the material side, Russian architecture was profoundly influenced by Byzantine models; the arts and crafts, largely in the service of the Church, flourished in Kievan Rus after the conversion. In the realm of government, the canon law provided precedents for developing the legislative activity of the Kievan princes. . . . Education, of course, was monopolized by the Church (Clarkson, 1961:35).

And “in the eyes of the Russians themselves the conversion to Christianity made them part of the civilized world” (Vernadsky, 1948:69-71). These churches were influential as formal knowledge systems, contained and validated by religious faith and logic rather than by a geometrically expanding data base but in their own eyes just as presumably universal as non-theist experimental Science. One may appreciate the significance of such systematization simply by considering what would be the state of, say, anthropology or archaeology if they consisted solely of individual data unconnected by any rules of validity or interpretation (and this in spite of the number of books lately bemoaning the lack of general theory in archaeology). Thus to restate a previous conclusion, by the evidence of history formal knowledge systems validated by religion (or, nowadays, not) are provably competent vehicles whereby long-civilized areas can recover from collapse and frontier barbarian areas can be brought within civilization.

But during this conversion process each also, however briefly, showed one particular local emphasis, and Tibet is the only one of the four in which this development may have been imported. Scandinavia evolved a local pantheon with two principal deities, the combined war god, sky god, and deified royal ancestor Odinn and the thunder god Thor, in which Thor was gaining increasing prominence verging on primacy during the Viking era (Jones, 1968:321). Russia not only evolved but formally organized a similar pantheon, with clear primacy assigned to the thunder god Perun—who is not a borrowing of Thor as is sometimes thought, but an old Slavic deity reported in Byzantine sources of the sixth century (Riasanovsky, 1969:26). In Japan the local religion
evolved two principal deities: again a deified royal ancestor, the sun goddess Amaterasu, and the thunder god Susa-no-O (Sansk., 1958:31-33).2

In Tibet matters were more complicated. The native religion Bon as presently known is largely a product of the aristocratic opposition to royalist Buddhism in the eighth and ninth centuries (Hoffmann, 1961:42-44; Lalou, 1957:9, 29), becoming a sort of anti-religious system of magic compared by the Tibetans themselves to Taoism (Ekvall, 1964:34), the principal competitor of Buddhism in China. Presumably it was based on pre-Buddhist Tibetan beliefs, but these are very little known.3 Tibetan Buddhism itself, however, became saturated with thunder symbolism, to the extent of being called Vajrayana (Tib. rDorje thegpa), “thunderbolt vehicle.” The Lord of Thunder rDorje CHang became one of the Tibetan trinity of high gods with the old Buddhist Lord of Mercy and the Lord of Speech (a peculiarly Tibetan concern) (Bell, 1931:30). The Buddhist rosary acquired a thunderbolt annex (Ekvall, 1964:118); many old Tibetan gods joined the Buddhist pantheon simply by saying the word “rDorje” (Tucci, 1980:165-166); “rDorje” became one of the most common Tibetan personal names (Ekvall, 1964:283). It remains an open question how much of this was a Tibetan rather than an Indian development, but certainly in Tibet it found a home.4

Thus examination of the best-chronicled cases in historic times suggests that these frontier barbarian developments have a common tendency toward thunder symbolism, even when large-scale civilized churches already exist.5 Thunder symbolism was also very important to ancient religion. Traditionally this has been interpreted as a somehow natural development away from fertility cults and towards the higher religious truth of a single ruling deity. But the cited medieval developments suggest that some preference for thunder symbolism exists even when the monist religions are already established nearby. The remainder of this essay suggests that the ancient development of thunder symbolism is equally separate from prior theology, and marked not a standardized element of progress but a repeated revolution overturning or greatly modifying the old religions already in place.

Such a proposition requires that two situations have existed at the times of the proposed, so to speak, pagan revolutions. First, the purportedly revolutionary religions at issue must unani-
mously combine thunder symbolism with evidence of frontier barbarian development and rule. Second, if the parallel to the Middle Ages is to hold, the lightly-dismissed ancient "fertility cults" must have been developed civilized religious knowledge systems. These two points will be addressed in that order.

Evaluating the civilizations of the Middle East of 1000 BC and earlier as of the dawns of their historic periods, one finds combined thunder symbolism and barbarian origin as follows:

Greece, ca. 1000 BC, ruling thunder god Zeus, barbarians the Achaian (Guthrie, 1964:36-45; Nilsson, 1932:230).

Anatolia, ca. 1300 BC, ruling thunder god usually called nowadays by the borrowed Hurrian name Teshub, associated with and at times subordinate to a goddess; barbarians the Hittites (Gütermann, 1965:88; Lehmann, 1977:265-267; Macqueen, 1975:119-120).

Egypt, ca. 3000 BC, thunder god Set sharing rulership with pharaoh-deity Horus (Griffiths, 1960:20-24; Shorter, 1937:41); invasions suggested before historic times, possibly at the transition from the Naqada I to the Naqada II period (Baumgartel, 1955:38-50; Emery, 1961:38-40), this probably before 3700 bc (Derricourt 1971:279, 289).

Canaan, ca. 1400 BC, ruling thunder god Baal with other associations as well (see below). Multiple invasions before and after this period.

Mesopotamia, ca. 3000 BC, ruling thunder god Enlil (see below) and there are at least a dozen others. Possible invasion by the Sumerians themselves (this is hotly argued).

India, ca. 1000 BC, ruling thunder god Indra; at least one other, Rudra, also present; invaders the Aryas (Basham, 1954:233-234).

Thus of the six reasonably well-known situations involving ruling thunder gods, at least four certainly followed barbarian invasions and the other two may have.

Two further items are immediately evident. First, in all these instances the frontier barbarians were not just invaders. They were conquerors. This could well be the reason for the greater success of the ancient as compared to the medieval thunder gods. Second, thunder symbolism was only part of the arsenal of these ruling deities. Zeus, Teshub and Set in particular are described as not just thunder but weather gods, and in general the operative
attribute of rulership for this type of god seems to have been control of, specifically, storms. Professor Thorkild Jacobsen suggested in brilliant evocative phrases why a recently barbarian people, much used to war and invasion and only beginning to establish any settled realm, would choose as ruler the master of the terrible swift sword:

As his name En-lil, 'Lord Storm', suggests, he was in a sense the storm itself. As the storm, the undisputed master of all space between heaven and earth, Enlil was palpably the second greatest power of the visible universe, second only to the sky above him.

In the storm he 'reveals' himself. The violence, the force, which fills it and is experienced in it, was the god, was Enlil. It is thus through this storm, through its violence and force, that we must understand the god and his function in the universe.

The city of Ur had long held sway over Babylonia. Then it fell before a merciless attack by Elamitic hordes which swept down upon it from the eastern mountains. The utter destruction of the city was wrought, in our terms, by the barbaric hordes which attacked it. Not so in terms of the Mesopotamian's own understanding of his universe: the wild destructive essence manifest in this attack was Enlil's. The enemy hordes were but a cloak, an outward form under which that essence revealed itself. . . . In the great catastrophes of history, in the crushing blows voted by the assembly of gods, there is Enlil, essence of the storm. He is force, executor of the verdicts of the gods (Jacobsen, 1949:153-155).

If, then, the thunder god, the ruling Storm Lord, is a standard product of barbarian formations on the frontier of or conquering an established civilization, necessarily there were already established civilizations in place before these ancient Storm Lords appeared. Moreover, by parallel with the medieval church-empires, these civilizations should already have had the concept of formal organized religion and its accompanying knowledge system.

Historically and archaeologically there are some well-known hints of this. The Achaians were borderers against Minoan Crete, with its religion of some sort involving a Mother Goddess. The Hittite traditions suggest that these invaders conquered central Anatolia from a people called Hatti, of unstated religious organization. In Canaan at least one site, Byblos, had existed for many centuries before historic times; the foundations of its main temple of the Mother Goddess had been laid by 2800 BC (Jidejian, 1968:15-16). In India the Aryas were invaders of the former Harappan realm, which may also have had a Mother Goddess
religion. And Frankfort's 1951 rebuttal was to refute the idea that many concepts and symbols were widely shared in the ancient world. But the existence of something as complex as a shared organized religion with its own formal knowledge system is something else entirely.

A great deal of this doubt may arise from a point of indoctrination within our own Western civilization. For a Westerner the words "organized religion" and "church" automatically refer to the very highly organized Christian churches. Most religions have achieved much less organization. Take Buddhism: In the course of its first thousand years of development it fragmented into several competing schools, but these continue to be subsumed under the single rubric "Buddhism." On occasion it has had a formal organization and hierarchy, but these seem almost if not entirely the creations of interested secular powers, and are nowhere considered integral to the faith. Buddhism seems to consist of a common origin and a sharing of certain central concepts and associated oldest works, with everything else left to independent development among sometimes quite different civilizations.

It seems probable that a similar situation prevailed in Southwest Asia before the Storm revolutions. Western tradition considers the ancient polytheisms to have been little more than random collections of competing deities, but Frankfort noted long ago in a study of protohistoric kingship that the ancient worldview was actually quite inclusive, in some ways even more so than ours:

If we refer to kingship as a political institution, we assume a point of view which would have been incomprehensible to the ancients. We imply that the human polity can be considered by itself. The ancients, however, experienced life as part of a widely spreading network of communications which reached beyond the local and the national into the hidden depths of nature and the powers that rule nature. The purely secular—insofar as it could be granted to exist at all—was the purely trivial. Whatever was significant was embedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration. This doctrine is valid for the whole of the ancient Near East (Frankfort, 1948:3).

There is also evidence that these ancient Near Eastern religions had a single common origin. Once the Storm associations are deleted from each local religious inventory, not only occasional concepts but even the central symbols of religions all around
Southwest Asia appear to be much the same. Moreover, as with Buddhism, the development of these central symbols can be traced back to a single oldest milieu in which all of them can be found well before their appearance on the historic stage. The choice of central symbols to be investigated was conditioned by the requirement that they be present at the proposed oldest site as a system, indeed as the same system seen in historic times. The site involved is Çatal Hüyük (sometimes Çatalhöyük) in southern Anatolia, which in its excavated part (3% of the whole) existed ca. 6250-5400 bc (Mellaart, 1975:98). Its sculptures and wall paintings show four of the central symbols of later times: the Mother Goddess, the Mother’s Son, the Bull, and the Mountain. The first three show a definitely intertwined group evolving from the earliest known strata; the fourth is present in only one known picture (Mellaart, 1967a:77-203).

Çatal Hüyük itself was the largest known settlement of its times. With its abandonment ca. 5400 bc society so far as is known reverted to much smaller units of population, without the monumental representations found in Çatal Hüyük itself. Religious continuity appears primarily in domestic cults using figurines and bucrania (abbreviated bulls’ heads). In most assemblages and for some time the Son was only rarely represented in his own person, much more often in his alter ego the Bull, such that Cauvin has questioned whether this symbol was established quite as firmly as the others (1972:103-104). But by historic times the complete symbology had spread to Greece in the west, to India in the east, with the first three moving farther west into the Mediterranean as well. There are also suggestions that the megalithic constructions of Iberia and France were involved with a Mother Goddess, but even if so, the other symbols are not known in that context. “Mountain” has as a symbol the problem of being very hard to detect archaeologically, so the following discussion is divided into two units, the group Mother-Son-Bull first and Mountain and its connections afterwards.

The ground will be covered clockwise. The Balkans provide the most hotly disputed evidence, since although there are many figurines and buildings models with bull decorations, there is no agreement on their meaning. Gimbutas interprets them to represent a Mother Goddess mutating into different incarnations, with the male god, possibly ancestral to the Hellenic Kronos, only very
occasionally present. Bucrania are common elements of proposed sanctuaries and building models (Gimbutas, 1974:67-85). The historic Balkans show all three clearly. In Thrace the goddess split into two forms but remained the Goddess; her son-lover was god-king and the bull was his symbol (Fol and Marazov, 1977:21, 147-149). “Great Goddess” figurines, sometimes with bulls’ heads between, are also known from the north Pontic region, especially around the Dnepr, from the fourth or third century BC onwards (Hoddinott, 1981:144). In Crete, the dominant figure was emphatically the Goddess, and the many surviving frescoes show Goddess, Son and Bull along with many other Çatal Hüyük symbols (Alkim, 1968:67-68).

In Anatolia itself the centuries after the fall of Çatal Hüyük show only female figurines of no obvious institutional significance. The northwestern sites seem mostly to be buried under massive erosion deposits, but one, Demirci Hüyük near Eskişehir, shows links both west into the Balkans of the fifth millennium BC and east into Anatolia, and has produced over 300 female “idols” and “an impressive bull’s head, probably belonging to a cult image” (Korfmann, 1976-1979). Beycesultan in southwestern Anatolia of the third millennium BC had a pair of temples, the only ones known from the Anatolian Early Bronze Age, interpreted as being one each for a male and a female divinity (Mellaart, 1966:143). Further east, Kültepe of about 2000 BC had a goddess with consort and child and Bogazköy has yielded molds showing a bearded god and a goddess (Gurney, 1976:190). In historic times all three of the group are clear. Among the Hittites one of the two first-rank deities was a goddess, officially the Sun-Goddess but also called in current literature the Mother Goddess (Macqueen, 1975:119-120; Güterbock, 1965:87-90), the other a god accompanied by two bulls (Gurney, 1977:4). Western Anatolia, the later kingdom of Lydia, seems to have maintained a religious tradition independent of the Hittites, and here the Great Mother continued in unchallenged primacy, with a youthful male consort but with no mention of the bull (Barnett, 1967:8, 21, 25).

In Canaan of the early second millennium BC the central deity was the Mother of Goddess (Jidedian, 1968:11; Drower and Bottero, 1968:34), definitely associated with a young male god (Moscati, 1968:32-33) who may have been her son (Herm, 1975:37). In
the fuller records later in the millennium there are two principal gods, a separate father El, the creator, and son Baal; El was definitely labelled "the Bull" and Baal was frequently portrayed as such (Gaster, 1965:119-122; Gibson, 1977:38, 52, 80, 84; Drower, 1968:25).

In Egypt the earliest evidence possibly indicative of religious practice is the usual figurines, dating possibly to the early fourth millennium BC (Finegan, 1979:166), but their religious association is questioned (Hornung, 1982:102). Probably in the early period the principal deity at least of Upper Egypt was female, only afterwards, male (Baumgartel, 1955:46). By dynastic times, ca. 3000 BC, the first rank of deities did include a fertility goddess, associated with a young male god who in history was the ka-mutef, the "bull of his mother" (Baumgartel, 1960:144-147, 1965:20, 33). Two palettes of the fourth millennium BC show the Mother Goddess in the form of a cow as also goddess of the sky, on the later one in association with the pharaoh (Hornung, 1982:103, 227). The transmutation of older beliefs into the emphatically ruler-centered cult of historic Egypt was also well under way. The pharaoh had become son of Nekhbet, a mother goddess and also "Great Wild Cow" (Perry, 1966:50); he assumed the position of ka-mutef and was portrayed as a rampant bull overthrowing his enemies (Hoffman, 1979:130), such that "the bull is the king, whether of Upper or Lower Egypt, since precisely that epithet is constantly applied to the reigning monarch" (Gardiner, 1961:396). Bull and cow attachments were also spread over most of the rest of the leadership, both divine and human. The queen mother was "the cow that hath borne a bull"; the sun was the "bull of heaven"; various high gods, including Osiris, Amun, and even the revolutionary Set, had "bull" titles (Frankfort, 1948:162, 166, 169-171). The "holy family" itself was redefined and pressed into direct political service. That the pharaoh assumed both male parts is well known, becoming Horus, the Son, while alive, and Osiris, the father, after death, such that the Son was perpetually reincarnated in each new ruler. But the Mother also remained in service, if less visibly, legitimating the power of the ruler by becoming the throne (Isis) on whose lap the ruler sat, which action physically passed to him the power to rule (H. and H.A. Frankfort, 1949:26).

In this context the position of Horus is particularly interesting.
Sometime before history there seems to have formed a specific set of relationships within the "holy family," as follows, with degree of capitalization indicating level of importance (a solid line indicates parentage, a dashed line, sexual congress):

father \[ \rightarrow \] MOTHER

Son \[ \rightarrow \] daughter

Horus (Eg. *Hor*, "above") was historically the son of Osiris and Isis, but he also belonged to a second divine family, which K. Sethe suggested in 1930 to have been his original provenance. This was a Mother-Son-Bull group, in which his mother was not Isis but Hathor (Eg. *Hat-hor*, "house of Horus" or "house above") (Griffiths, 1960:13, 1966:8, 141), Cow, Sky, and Mother Goddess (Shorter, 1937:130-131). As royal goddess Hathor was protector of the pharaoh (Bleeker, 1973:103); as queen of heaven she was also Lady of the Void (R.T.R. Clark, 1959:87) and also goddess of love and wife of her own son Horus (Shorter, 1937:130-131; Kees 1977:85). Horus thereby became *ka-mutef* (Griffiths, 1960:91), fathering on her the god Ahy, the rising sun, the bull of the Void (R.T.R. Clark, 1959:88), represented as a boy wearing the double crown of pharaoh (Shorter, 1937:125). This in turn reconnects to the living pharaoh, who as already noted was from ancient times Horus and *ka-mutef*. Horus was also the first deity to be specified with the title "king of the gods" (during the reign of Pepy I, 23rd century BC), which was shifted elsewhere later (Hornung, 1982:227). It may also be important that the Egyptian creator-gods were thought of as four pairs of bulls and cows (Raymond, 1969:77, 79).

Storm analysis would next cast new light on a famous Egyptian tale, "The Contending of Horus and Set" (for the throne of Egypt), known first from the twelfth century BC. In Storm terms this should be an evolved form of an original story of the conflict of the Mother’s Son (Horus) against the Storm Lord (Set) for the sovereignty of the religious world-order. Storm analysis especially explains why these two gods in particular should be the...
protagonists of so basic a story. In Egypt the two seem at first to have fought to a standoff, such that they become co-rulers, with pharaoh ruling from "the throne of Horus, the seat of Set" by order of "the two Lords." This was resolved only towards the eleventh century BC with the victory of Horus and ouster of Set into the desert (te Velde, 1977:71, 138). Thus under Storm analysis, Horus inherited his sky associations essentially as incidental regalia of the Mother's Son. Presumably they were emphasized by their easy fit into Storm theology while that was strong, but they were not at the core of his status as a god.9

Moving outwards, the western Mediterranean provides some scanty evidence. In Malta the Tarxien temples of the middle third millennium BC (Evans, 1971:222-223) are remarked as "essentially temples of the Asiatic Mother-Goddess, often built in pairs with a double shrine, suggestive of the worship of a male and female divinity" (James, 1958:141), and there is note of "statues of the fertility goddess and of the bull which is her special beast" (Service and Bradbery, 1979:101). Likewise the oldest Sardinian religious artifacts are female figurines and bull decorations on tombs (Guido, 1964:44-49). Andalucian and Balearic sanctuaries included bull heads; parallel to them was a worship of the dove as personification of the Goddess (Arribas, 1964:131-132). The Son is not specifically reported.

The movement east is much better known. In the Halaf tradition of northern Mesopotamia, beginning about the same time as the last phases of Çatal Hüyük, goddess figurines are frequent and pottery motifs emphasize stylized bulls' heads (Mellaart, 1967b:36). From the following millennia there is very little evidence beyond the usual figurines, mostly female, and paired temples again remarked as suggesting paired deities (Ringgren, 1973:33-34). By historic times the rule of the male elementals Sky and Storm was well established in Sumer, but it may be important that in neighboring Elam, which shows only one period even of major Sumerian influence before the imperial unification of the later 2000s BC (Amiet, 1979:196-197), the Mother Goddess continued to hold "undisputed sway" (Hinz, 1973:43). The Sumerians themselves labelled several deities as "old," presumably marking a greater antiquity than the others could claim, and every one of these "old" deities is a goddess (Mallowan, 1967:33-34). The position of Son/Consort was again prominent and
evolved through several incumbents, one of them the Storm Lord himself (Lloyd, 1978:57). The Mother Goddess Ninkhursag remained in the top rank with the three principal male elementals (Jacobsen, 1949:150), and her temple in Ur included a number of bull statues important enough for separate mention in an inscription (Lansing, n.d.:57, 131). The bull as ruler was scattered all over the pantheon, including another “bull of heaven” associated with sky functions, and the Sky god had as daughter and wife “Lady Wild Cow,” the queen of heaven (Jacobsen, 1963a:100, 1963b:974-975). The “holy family” is, if anything, too visible; the idea of one individual to an identity does not seem to have been current in Sumer. Four of the obvious candidates (by no means necessarily all from the same set) would be:

Mother Goddess: Ninkhursag.

Father: Nanna, a moon god—which is itself a strong association with both Mother and Bull (Neumann, 1963:55-56, 141n)—bull god, and “father” (Jacobsen, 1976:25, 121), though that last is also applied to a few other very senior gods.

Daughter: Inanna, daughter of Nanna and probably originally his female counterpart Ninanna, and holder of so many functions and attributes as to be called “Lady of a Myriad Offices” (Jacobsen, 1976:17, 135-141), among others queen of heaven and goddess of light, life, and love (Kramer, 1961:86).

Son: Sumugan, quondam “king of the mountain,” “god of the plain,” in the historic pantheon by grant of the ruling Storm Lord (Kramer, 1961:61-62, 72). A recently deciphered inscription (CT 46.43) also puts Sumugan squarely into the typical “holy family” relationship (L’Heureux, 1979:79-81):

(same code as previously)

```
    (unnamed) ----  Earth
          /               /         \
      Sumugan------------Sea
```

Another inscription includes a phrase “as Sumugan makes his cattle fruitful” (Goff, 1963:187), indicating a relation to cattle, though whether as bull or as cowherd (Dumuzi?) is not clear.
Moving next to India, figurines from Mehrgarh in Pakistan possibly of the sixth millennium BC are reminiscent of those in western Iran of the period (Jarrige and Meadow, 1980:128), and there is apparent continuity of figurine development from then until the site was abandoned in the middle third millennium BC (Jarrige, 1977:86). An immediately pre-Harappan culture had pottery on which the bull was depicted in exact Sumerian style (G. Clark, 1977:257). Mature Harappan times have yielded a wealth of figurines and a very few (some four out of more than 2500 [Schwartzberg, 1978:158]) seals from three locations showing a male deity with aspects of the later Siva (Allchin and Allchin, 1982:214). Both goddess and possible gods are also heavily associated with the bull (Basham, 1954:13-14; Allchin and Allchin, 1968:138), which as white bull is Siva’s living representative (James, 1959:102) and as cow belongs to the Mother Goddess and consort of Siva, Durga (Bhattacharji, 1970:110, 158, 170). Among animal figurines the bull is prominent to pre-eminent (Bisht, 1982:119); at one site, of 114 figurines recovered, one is human male, one, human female, and “all . . . save for a couple” of the others are bulls (Dales, 1979:266). The religious remains from immediately post-Harappan times are extremely scanty, but do include bucrania in the Harappan iconographic tradition as pottery motifs in the Punjab (Allchin and Allchin, 1982:246) and, ca. 1200 BC near Poona, a statue of a mother goddess on a bull in a fashion known historically (Bhattacharyya, 1977:152-153).

Thus the three symbols already both important and closely intertwined in Çatal Hüyük times. The fourth, Mountain, is just as important and intertwined historically, but exists in Çatal Hüyük only in a single painting, suggested by the excavator to be a landscape (Mellaart, 1967a:176-177). In later times it was vastly more:

In the ancient civilizations from Egypt to India and beyond, the mountain can be a center of fertility, the primeval hillock of creation, the meeting place of the gods, the dwelling place of the high god, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the monument effectively upholding the order of creation, the place where god meets man, a place of theophany (Clifford, 1972:5).

Cauvin has interpreted Mellaart’s findings to suggest that this relationship Mother/Mountain/seat of power already existed in Çatal Hüyük (1972:100-101).
Mountain is not an image easily distinguishable archaeologically, and it is not now obvious from purely archaeological evidence except in Çatal Hüyük. But in historic times it was a theological nexus from Greece to Egypt to India. In Greece the gods lived on Mount Olympos, and this was not just a simple place-name; variously eighteen (Cook, 1964:100) or twenty-odd (Murray, n.d.:44) mountains around greater Greece were awarded that title and a similar association. In Crete the Mother is specified to be the Mountain Mother (Pendlebury, 1965:273; James 1959:137) and her sanctuaries were built at or near the tops of mountains (Guthrie, 1964:9). In western Anatolia Cybele, Great Mother of the Gods, was the Mountain Mother and almost invariably had her sanctuaries on mountains (Anonymous, 1963: 747-748; Gurney 1976:193). The chief male deity of the Hittite pantheon was attended by two bulls and two mountains (Gurney, 1977:4). The leading goddess of Ugarit was Anat, Lady of the Mountain (James, 1959:70); several mountains around Canaan were labelled the homes of specific gods, and Mount Saphon or Zion had the place assigned in Greece to Olympos (James, 1960:213; Clifford 1972:35-47; Ringgren 1973:133). In two of the several Egyptian cosmogonies creation presumably occurred on a “Primeval Hill,” hardly an unusual symbol in the flood plain of the Nile, but one of them specifies it to have been a hill of fire, which would be outside the Nile experience (James, 1960:205). The Mother Goddess Hathor was “controller of the mountains” (Bleeker, 1973:27) and guardian of the “mountain of the dead” (Yoyotte, 1959:118). It has been suggested that the pyramids themselves were probably physical images of the Primeval Hill, for which two of the hieroglyphs are step pyramids (Frankfort, 1948:153, R.T.R. Clark 1959:39). In India the Mother, wife of Siva, is variously Durga, a mountain dweller (Bhattacharji, 1970:165) and Parvati, “daughter of the mountain” (Neumann, 1963:151). The Indian stupa has been suggested to be another imitation of the Primeval Hill of Creation, also with an imitation axis of the world set through its center (Irwin, 1979). In Indian tradition at large the mountain has been absolutely central to concepts of organization, such that construction and circumambulation of a physical imitation world-mountain (frequently the capital city) was the definitive requirement for the legitimacy of kings (von Heine-Geldern, 1958:3-7).
But the most thorough evidence is from Sumer, which provides easily the oldest documentation on the subject. Here the Mother Goddess Ninkhursag was by direct translation of her name “Lady of the Mountain” (James, 1959:48), “Queen of the (Cosmic) Mountain” (Kramer, 1961:41). The ziggurats themselves were physical imitation mountains (Frankfort, n.d.:55-57). Storm as ruler was personally “the great mountain” and his temple was Inkhursag, the “house of the mountain” (Jacobsen, 1976:100-102). The mountain was at the center of the Sumerian creation legend, being the “Bond of Heaven and Earth” and the “Place where Flesh Sprouted Forth” (and the primeval garden, of other fame) (Perry, 1966:62). Thus both conceptually and physically Mountain was firmly at the center of most Southwest Asian religious systems.

Why a mountain? Or more specifically why, in the flood plains of the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates and Indus-Ganges, would so alien an object be received into the very core of the religious system? Even in Greece, Anatolia and Canaan the idea makes no great sense, because while all three areas had mountains in quantity, none was so physically spectacular as to make it immediately distinct from all others—as witness simply that in fact so many were called into service for the position. Moreover, the concept “mountain” itself shows no obvious derivation from the fertility cult that presumably underlay the Goddess religion. Probably, then, there was some specific tie of Mountain into the system, which became lost when the system migrated away from its birthplace.

We return to that single picture of a mountain known from Çatal Hüyük. Here a unique qualification is immediately obvious. This is a particular mountain, the twin-peaked Hasan Dag visible on the eastern horizon as seen from Çatal Hüyük. Nor is it just a mountain: It is a volcano in full eruption, bombing the land with pyroclastics and smothering it in smoke and ash (Mellaart, 1967a:133, plates 59, 60, 176-177). In this light the identification of the Egyptian Primeval Hill as a hill of fire—even in one rendition as a (twin-peaked?) “island of two flames” (Raymond, 1969:70)—becomes intriguing. Moreover, the economic development which produced Çatal Hüyük was at least partly linked to the obsidian produced by Hasan Dag, which has been found as far afield as Jericho (Mellaart, 1975:94, 103-104). Agriculture became established approximately in this period (Renfrew,
1973:199; van Zeist 1977:27; Moore 1978:284, 286), and Çatal Hüyük itself had irrigation agriculture and has yielded remains of a surprising number of domesticates (Mellaart, 1975:98-99). While it cannot now be determined whether those Neolithic farmers knew of the short-term destruction and long-term increase in soil fertility caused by ash falls, direct experience of the event cannot be dismissed. It may then have required no great leap of the Neolithic imagination to see a center of creation, a seat of power both awesome and terrible, in the eruptions, obsidian flows and ash falls of a major volcano. The idea is necessarily speculative, but it fits the evidence both of local circumstance and of later legend and would explain Mountain's central place in the historic Goddess theology. \(^{14},^{15}\)

There remains properly one further stage of the investigation. The Goddess and Company are an evolved theology, but Storm is an elemental. Its provenance is worldwide and its applications are very straightforward; it takes very little theological training to watch one's roof blow away. If in fact the Storm Lord is a natural and predictable product of ex-barbarians on the edge of a religious civilization, then one would expect some other Storm Lords to have evolved into successful rulership elsewhere in the world, outside that group of civilizations associated specifically with the Goddess.

And in fact there are a few, but all of them are in one or another way debatable. Susa-no-O of Japan has been mentioned as beginning in the right historical conditions, but he is unusual in being relegated to the opposition in the finished pantheon, possibly as the ruling god of an area (Izumo) opposing the Yamato unification (Sansom, 1958:31-33). Among the Polynesians, Maori legend holds that during the years immediately after Creation, dominion was held by the storm god Tawhiri, who only later was dethroned by the war god Tu (Reed, 1961:1-7). In Inca Peru the one god admitted to official equality with the Inca patron deities was the thunder god Illapa, "the flashing one" (Brundage, 1963:48-49). The Aztec co-ruling deity Tlaloc was among other things lord of the hurricane, but has so long and complicated a prior development that this may not be very useful. Of the group only Susa-no-O definitely appears in the prescribed circumstances for a Storm Lord, the origins of the others not being known. For a possible further example of the Storm revolution...
we must examine the early development of China, at the transition from Shang to Chou.

This transition is easily the most hotly argued subject in all of pre-modern Chinese history. At one extreme Dr. Ho Ping-ti argues that all important Chinese developments except Buddhism date at least to Shang, such that China has had essentially a straight-line development from then until modern times (1975). At the other extreme Dr. Wang Kuo-wei assesses that "the changes and revolutions in Chinese politics and culture have never been greater than . . . [between Shang] and Chou" (Chang, 1977:298). Certainly much of the Shang religion died out after the Chou conquest (Allan, 1979:2). Only one, very controversial, source dares describe this change in any detail, but its findings are fully in accord with the barbarian background of Storm transitions elsewhere. The Chou had still been nomads and conquered the plain of Chou (probably whence their name) only a hundred years before the conquest of Shang itself; they conquered the middle Wei only some fifty years later; they conquered the eastern Wei valley, their future capital area, only five years before overthrowing Shang itself. And during that hundred years they imported the older neighboring culture in just as wholesale a fashion as the four previously cited medieval examples did in their encounters (Wu, 1982:233-289).

For the next point a further parallel must be drawn with the Near East. Although the Storm Lord de facto ruled the ancient pagan revolutions, behind him, somewhat in the position of de jure ruler now at least semi-retired, stood the Sky God. The physical background of this, a passive overarching Sky behind a very active and directly influential Storm, may be readily appreciated. Thus Ouranos stood behind Zeus (who, however, also held some Sky power himself) (Guthrie, 1964:36-38), An behind Enlil (Kramer, 1963:118), Varuna behind Indra (Bhattacharji, 1970:45). So also El stood behind Baal, though with a more complicated background, because of the Canaanite mixture of Storm and Goddess elements: El remained as much Father as Sky (Gaster, 1965:121-222) and continued to authorize the rulerships of other deities (L'Heureux, 1979:3-10). Jacobsen's statement above placing Enlil "second only to the sky above him" illustrates. However supremely honored An may have been in theory, it was in practice Enlil, Lord Storm, who was "lord of heaven and earth,
who determines the destinies of the country” (Jacobsen, 1949:208). This combination seems almost as general as Storm rule itself. The successful invaders bring in not just Storm but Storm and Sky (retired).  

The Chou had just such a god, called T’ien, Heaven. The origin of T’ien is part of the Shang-Chou transition debate and just as hotly argued as the rest of it. Suffice first that T’ien has been shown to have originated as “the dome of the sky” (Werner, 1961:502) (though this, too, is hotly argued) and that by general agreement even in this debate, the Chinese character for T’ien exists nowhere in any record or inscription before Chou times, while it comprises 83% of the references to the high deity even in the oldest Chou sources, as compared to 17% continued use of the old Shang name (Creel, 1970:494-495). The theory of the Mandate of Heaven, the political decision of Heaven in earthly affairs, seems also to have been introduced as part of the overthrow of Shang (Creel, 1970:44).

But although Heaven might issue mandates and express displeasure at their abuse, it became and possibly already was a somewhat removed deity. For everyday purposes the old Shang earth-gods continued to serve (Creel, 1937:180-181, 337), with one important exception. The old Shang supreme deity had controlled rainfall along with much else—it is noted as a “special concern”—and this impacts directly on the purported Storm transition. By historic times the Shang rain deities had been replaced by another agent entirely, and under the present hypothesis that agent should be Storm. And in the same period, if Heaven was the theoretical ultimate power, practical rule should also have come to be vested in Storm. In historic China this practical rulership, as distinct from the more removed power of Heaven, was vested in the actual human ruler, an elaboration paralleled and probably vastly overmatched by the pharaohs of Egypt. This Chinese ruler came by historic times to be called T’ien-tzu, usually rendered “Son of Heaven” (Creel, 1937:343), a proper enough parallel. Therefore if these comparisons and this hypothesis are to hold, and thereby to explain the origin of these Chinese relationships, then the Emperor of China, the Son of Heaven, should be Storm. This turns out to be precisely the case. The Chinese ruler is and during historic times seems always to have been identified with the one other non-anthropomorphic
anthropomorphic concept besides Heaven which any foreigner might recognize instantly as somehow being peculiarly Chinese. The name of the Emperor, the name of the Storm, is in Chinese lung, in English dragon.¹⁹

So say the records: The Emperor was in his person “the real dragon” and two of the earlier emperors were supposedly sons of dragons (Andersson, 1934:70-71). The dragon was supposedly the emblem of the founding dynasty, the Hsia, and each ruling dynasty came as history developed to be tightly associated with dragons in other ways as well (Werner, 1961:285-286). The Storm association of the Chinese dragon has produced one of the most widely quoted passages in Oriental studies:

The Eastern dragon is not the gruesome monster of mediaeval imagination, but the genius of strength and goodness . . . . He unfolds himself in the storm clouds; he washes his mane in the seething whirlpools. His claws are in the fork of the lightning, his scales begin to glisten in the bark of rain-swept pine trees. His voice is heard in the hurricane which . . . quickens a new spring (Williams, 1976:77-78).

Even the earliest surviving Chinese work, the I-ching, Classic of Changes, declares that “thunder is a dragon” and thunderstorms are dragons fighting (de Visser, 1969:37).

But while Tien, Heaven, has been argued to be a Chou introduction, no one has suggested this for the dragon. There are more or less serpentine figures from much earlier artwork, and more than 41 characters from the Shang inscriptions have been denoted possibly ancestral to the later one denoting lung. Creel has suggested outright that a dragon deity is among those found on the Shang oracle bones (1937:104).

To support the idea that the association of dragon and ruler was a Chou innovation, there is only piecemeal information. The dragon was supposedly the emblem of the pre-Shang Hsia dynasty. But Creel adduces considerable evidence that the constitutional traditions concerning the Hsia were a Chou fabrication in support of their own usurpation (1938:97-131). The serpentine figures of the Shang bronzes seem less lung than k’uei, possibly derived from the alligator, such that “there may be no Dragon on the ritual bronzes of Shang” (Waterbury, 1942:73, 133). The guardian spirits of Shang seem to have been principally tigers, which were then particularly associated with rulership, plus cattle or water buffalo and birds; there is no mention of dragons
But the earliest Chou records do show such a connection. The *I-Ching*, with its reference to dragon instead of Shang-ti as Storm, is believed to date to the beginning of the Chou period (Creel, 1970:446). The *Shih-ching*, Poetry Classic, is considered authentically early Chou (ca. 1100-600 BC) (Creel, 1970:463) and reports that rulers of the rank of duke and above had dragons on their clothing as emblems of their rank (Legge, 1960b:402). Part of the *Shu-ching*, Documents Classic, is just as old, but it is in a possibly later part (Creel, 1970:447-463) that the ruler is reported to have worn two dragons as his emblem, the next ranking nobles, one (Legge, 1960a:80). The first clearly dated reference comes only with unification into the empire in 221 BC; the First Emperor took the title *Tsu-lung*, "Original Dragon", and the dragon remained part of the imperial regalia henceforth (Paper, 1978:2).

Thus only the Shang oracle bones clearly suggest a pre-Chou origin even for the simple concept "dragon," much less for royal association. Even this might be debated; the single available analysis of one of these oracle bone ancestral *lung* characters suggests that in the context it means a "grace" or "favor" rather than "dragon" (Keightley, 1978b:59n7, 80n89). This, together with the sheer number of characters labelled possibly ancestral to the historic *lung*, may indicate that the historic character is a composite from Shang glyphs designating its presumed attributes. In any case no source makes any association for Shang times of dragon with either weather or ruler, whereas dragon is clearly associated with both from earliest known Chou.

Finally on the subject of dragons, it is worth noting that their Storm association is not just a Chinese concept, although the Chinese seem unique in keeping the rulership association as well. Storm=Dragon seems to be just as widespread an image as Sky=Heaven. In European popular myth the dragon darkens heaven to pitch blackness, looses water to turn mountain streams to torrents, lights the scene with fire flashes from jaws and eyes, etc. (Baring-Gould, 1973:172-173). A bride attacked by dragon demons could fend them off by claiming to be the lightning's daughter and the thunderbolt's granddaughter (Huxley, 1979:65). Even outside Eurasia, the Australian aborigines tell storm legends of the Rainbow Snake and the southeastern United States and Caribbean area receive regular annual visits, on a
summer and fall passport as it were, from the Carib weather dragon Huracan (Huxley, 1979:13-14, 74). More important to the present purpose, the dragon appears as an enemy, indeed as the enemy which the Storm Lord must conquer to earn his rulership. This spreads across the ancient Storm Lords from Zeus to Indra, but not just among them. Susa-no-Ø had to conquer the eight-headed dragon Yamato-no-Orochi (de Visser, 1969:236), and it seems hardly likely that the Scandinavians drew on ancient Near Eastern legend when creating the tale of Thor and the Midgard serpent.

Thus the basic evidence for the existence of a civilized Old Religion in Europe, Egypt and southwestern Asia, involving Goddess, Son, Bull and Mountain as central symbols, and of a generic type of change from that Old Religion to its protohistoric successors. Much work remains to be done. In closing I shall mention two avenues for further research.

Presumably much light can be cast on the Old Religion simply by subtracting all the Storm elements from its protohistoric successors and comparing the remains. For this a general formula is possible. By late prehistoric times the prospective Old Religion seems to have been evolving a complex “holy family” relationship mentioned earlier in these pages, often involving repetition for several generations of a single relationship.

```
father  ---  MOTHER
     |     |
Son  ---  daughter
parentage  mates
identities (one identified with the other)
```

Each figure might also divide into local or functional specializations, while all of them still remained so interconnected that there are suggestions of hermaphroditism.

But the invaders brought in two new principals:

- Sky
- STORM
With conquest there arose a need for reconciliation of these two views. In India it was simple; the old system was simply erased, and appears in the Rgveda only in that some of Indra’s chief opponents were goddesses. (Later developments indicate that it survived outside the official system, of course.) In Canaan it was probably simple; Sky and STORM were assimilated to father and Son. In Greece it was also relatively simple. The legends suggest that in the original situation Ouranos was son and lover of Gaia (Spretnak, 1981:45) in the usual Goddess fashion, but by historic times:

```
Ouranos (sky/father) --------------- Gaia (mother)
```

```
Kronos (son?) (20) --------------- Rhea (daughter)
```

```
Zeus (STORM)
```

Or, presumably there are other Goddess images whose antiquity remains to be proven. It has for example been suggested that the general identification of the sun god with the lion is further connected to the year god (Krappe, 1945), a very old Goddess image. Large felines, lions or leopards, are in fact scattered over much of Near Eastern mythology from Çatal Hüyük (Mellaart, 1967a:166) onwards. But as of present evidence the connection is weak enough that the image could be intrusive. Or again, Gimbutas has suggested that the serpent image is found from Çatal Hüyük forward as a spiral or snake motif associated with the Goddess and possibly with the “cosmic waters” (1980:44-45, 48)—a connection which would certainly seem possible in light of the worldwide prevalence of snake/dragon associations with water/storm, as already discussed.

Finally there is the question of the influence of the Old Religion in later times, after the Storm Lords had lost their power. That there was some such influence is well known, and this essay closes with a quotation concerning the last of the powerful Goddesses:
Of all the deities of Hellenism, Isis of the Myriad Names was probably the greatest. She was identified with practically every goddess and deified woman of the known world; she was the one reality which they all imperfectly shadowed forth. She was the Lady of All, All-seeing and All-powerful, Queen of the Inhabited World. . . . All civilization was her gift and her charge. Her statues portrayed a young woman in modest dress . . . sometimes bearing in her arms the babe Horus. . . . The November festival, Isia, represented the passion of Osiris—his death at Typhon [Set]'s hands, Isis's faithful quest for his body, his divine resurrection. . . . In the ceremony [of initiation] the aspirant was first purified with water, and then wandered in the dark places of the underworld as Osiris had done between his death and resurrection. . . . At the end he came out in a blaze of light . . . his soul was henceforth free of the dominion of fate and death. . . . When Christianity triumphed, and Zeus and Apollo, Sarapis and the star-gods, were hurred from their seats, Isis alone in some sense survived the universal fall. The cult of the Virgin had been introduced before the Serapeum was sacked, and Isis's devotees passed quietly over to the worship of another Mother—how quietly sometimes may be seen from this, that various instances are said to be known of her statues serving afterwards as images of the Madonna (Tarn, 1961:357-360).

NOTES

1. The late- and post-Roman developments should not need footnotes. Regarding India after the Gupta Empire, for collapse and barbarian invasions see Thapar, 1966:142; for economic collapse see Kosambi, 1965:196; for reversion to a barter economy and the rise of serfdom and a landed aristocracy see Sharma, 1980:44-80; for the formulation and spread of assorted universal religions see Bhattacharji, 1970:13 and passim; for the importance of religion in the Hindu (Saiva) Tamil-nad see Nilakanta-Sastri, 1955:512, 652, in the Jaina Deccan see Pulsaker, 1955:291 and Jain, 1979:429-431. The position of Buddhism in Bengal is less well known, but the early medieval rulers, the Pala dynasty, are known to have been uniformly Buddhist. Regarding China after the Han dynasty, for barbarian invasions, economic collapse and the rise of the barter economy see Eberhard, 1977:101-102, 109 ff.; for barbarization see Yü, 1967:202-214; for the development of serfdom and the landed aristocracy see Loewe, 1968:165-166; for the development and spread of new universal religions see Smith, 1968:97; for the importance of Buddhism in the medieval synthesis see Wright, 1959:70-73, 82-83; for that of Taoism, see Strickmann, 1976:1050.

2. This identification is questioned.

3. There may be one indication of immediately pre-Buddhist ruling thunder symbolism in Tibet, but it is not so labelled in my sources. Contemporary Chinese records (T'an dynasty) report that the early
Tibetans worshipped particularly the yuan-ti (god), which is the Tibetan gNyān, the argali or Asiatic bighorn sheep. The names of the early Tibetan kings (thus a definite association with rulership) indicate that argali worship was at its height in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, i.e., immediately before the Buddhist conversion (Ekvall, 1964:32-33). The gNyān are nowadays held to be spirits occupying a place between earth and sky (de Nebesky-Wodjakwitz, 1977:288), a proper enough Storm position. Thunder, on the other hand, is nowadays held to be the throwing of dragons’ eggs (David-Neel and Yongden, 1934:285n4), possibly a Chinese influence—? I have been unable to find any source specifically associating the argali with thunder or any other particular divine attribute. But if any single terrestrial event is to be considered an obvious tangible parallel to the thunderclaps of a Himalayan storm, the logical candidate would be the mating battles of a pair of argali rams, with the crashes of their six-foot horns echoing around the valleys of that strikingly crumpled land.

4. The evolution of the Vajrayana is very poorly known. Its first intimations seem to have occurred in the fourth century AD, its great development in the seventh and eighth centuries, at the same time as the conversion of Tibet. This conversion was reportedly carried out by “Indian scholars” and “Tibetan translators” (Bu-ston, 1931:190-191), though in this case the word “translator” should be understood in a cultural as well as a linguistic sense—Buddhism was translated into not only Tibetan words but Tibetan terms of thought. The word “vajra” (= rDorje) also took on the meanings of adamantine hardness and diamond purity, which meanings are the ones usually stressed in philosophical treatises. For such little as is known see for example Bell, 1931, Bu-ston, 1931, Dutt, 1964, Ekvall, 1964, Hoffmann, 1961, Lalou, 1967, Tucci, 1980.

5. There are also other less well-known medieval situations involving possibly similar ruling thunder gods, e.g. Mahrem of Axum, as well as ancient examples not addressed herein because of a lack of information about origins, e.g. Tinia of Etruria. Gimbutas has also advised (personal communication, 1987) that the wall-scratchings left by the Indo-European invaders of the Balkans seem to favor a “shining and thundering lord.”

6. The recalibration necessary to convert radiocarbon to real dates remains in dispute; therefore radiocarbon dates are left in their unrecalibrated state (Libby half-life) and indicated by the symbol “bc”,”BC” is used to indicate a real date.

7. As noted in the text, Frankfort (1951) devoted a special lecture to rebutting the idea that a single religious substrate underlay the historic Near Eastern religions. His principal points were that the same forms could carry very different meanings (which I shall certainly not dispute) and that the common occurrence of a few specific ideas should not be taken as proof of common background (which, again, agreed). But the presence of system—not only the same ideas, but the same relationships
among them—requires a much higher level of coincidence, and only for the, themselves very simple, Sky, Storm, and dragon symbols have I been able to find evidence of independent worldwide derivation. For all other situations, I shall propose that common system means common origin. This should be subject to rather easy test:

(a) Is there any civilization known which has the same central symbols and system thereof as any other civilization (anywhere, anytime) with which it is demonstrably not connected?

(b) If not, and if the reader wishes to postulate the common occurrence of Mother-Son-Bull-Mountain around so great a part of the Old World as mere coincidences of development, then what accounts for the presence of this group in those areas known to have been in contact with Catal Hüyük and its heirs but not in such other areas as Siberia, Australia, America? I.e., if this group is suggested to have developed coincidentally all around this rather extensive region, then why did it develop only in this region?

(c) The objection may be raised that, points (a) and (b) notwithstanding, common origin and coincidence remain equally probable alternatives until proven otherwise. In response I submit that such an objection violates one of the oldest basic principles of the modern Western formal knowledge system, experimental Science. This is Occam's razor: Thou shalt not multiply entities unnecessarily. That is, pending actual test of evidence, any single hypothesis which explains both events and non-events in a field is automatically to be preferred over every other hypothesis which requires multiple causes and/or does not explain both events and non-events. (Non-event: The Çatal Hüyükün tetrad was not part of the central symbology of the native American religions; because the American civilizations were not heirs of Çatal Hüyük.) One may of course then object to Occam's razor, but this raises questions of epistemology rather beyond the purview of this essay.

8. These interpretations are, however, rebutted, not as being necessarily incorrect but as based on insufficient data; see for example Tringham, 1971:82-83. They do, however, fit the pattern.

9. The legends do not say who fathered Horus on Hathor, and since the Egyptian gods were in almost as great a state of flux as the Aztec pantheon, assignment of original roles is very speculative. But in footnotes one may speculate. The Storm revolution failed so thoroughly in Egypt that the supposedly usual roles are found reversed there. Thus Hathor is not the Earth but the Sky Mother. This at least makes it obvious what kind of god to look for: an Earth Father strongly tied to Horus and/or Hathor. The god historically best tagged as "Father Earth" is Geb, but he is little more than a name in a cosmogonical generation list. One might also argue a case for Min. But there are certain now mysterious elder gods as well, whose positions declined greatly before historic times. The most likely candidate would seem to be Tatenen. In historic times Tatenen was only an aspect, both of Horus and of Ptah, but he had his own god-hieroglyph, which suggests an originally separate existence. The name means literally "the rising earth," evidently the primeval
fertile earth, source of nourishment. The joint references to Horus-Tatenen make it a bit difficult to say just which credits went to which half, but one finds such statements as Horus “uniter of the land, named with the great name Tatenen, he who is south of the wall, the Lord of Eternity” and pharaoh who “united the two lands in peace, like his father, Horus-Tatenen” (Holmberg, 1946:56-63, 206-207). Further dissection is needed.

10. This interpretation has been challenged; see Sullivan, 1964:115-125; Rao, 1982:358.

11. The present consensus is that another animal than the bull prevails on the Harappan seals. The bull is found on 156 examples; the “unicorn” on 1159 (Ghosh, 1982:321). But this beast is, except for a camel-like head and a single horn, very like a bull. There is at least one “unicorn” seal known with two horns (Dales, 1979:47, figure 13), and there is opinion that the thing is actually just a modified bull (Dhavalikar, 1982:362).

12. In his later works Jacobsen suggested “of the foothills” or “of the stony ground” instead of “of the mountain.” But since he does continue “of the mountain” in references other than to Ninkhursag, and since all other translators do so label Ninkhursag, that usage is continued here. See Jacobsen, 1970:30, 1976:100-104.

13. Egypt also shows one other surprisingly old bit of theology. The Great Wild Cow and Mother Goddess Nekhbet was also the vulture mother, with the elements inextricably intertwined as of the earliest records (Anthes, 1961:20-21, 31). Vultures were a very major element in the shrine paintings in Çatal Hüyük VII and VIII (Mellaart, 1967a:166-168) and are remarked specifically as an attribute of the Mother Goddess (Cauvin, 1972:64). Nekhbet also “counted as the moon,” historically a strong Goddess association and as Frankfort puts it “the subject of almost unlimited identifications” (1948:145). Since the Storm revolution seems to have altered Egyptian theology least of all the ancient historic religions, direct comparison to Çatal Hüyük can be very tempting.

14. One other very central element of protohistoric religious imagery may, on a very speculative basis—no hard evidence at all—be subject to derivation directly from the local geography of Çatal Hüyük. Fairriservis had noted that “Çatal Hüyük was situated on the lowest dry soil before swamp conditions—in other words in the midst of the most watered alluvial or fluvial soils,” hypothetically for the sake of agricultural yield (1975:164). This part of Anatolia is an interior drainage system, into a set of lakes, and the edge of lake and swamp would vary considerably with the luck of the spring rains and melt. Thus here as in Egypt there was a very indistinct and fluctuating boundary between the fertile land and the faceless waters, or more particularly between the developed, complexly variegated, and highly productive upraised earth and the formless but (as any close observation and experience would demonstrate) somehow pre-fertile waters. This indistinct and changeable boundary between developed complex fertility (land) and formless pre-fertility (water) strikes me as an ideal source for that concept-group the procreative/destructive Primeval Flood/Sea/Void, which pervades ancient religion. Because of its
dependence on the rains sent by the Sky Mother, this could also produce the equally pervasive further association with the Goddess. This accidental congeniality of circumstances might also have contributed to the retention of the Old religion in Egypt in more its original form long after it had been revolutionized elsewhere. Of course, it is somewhat of an anticlimax to find that nowadays the Primeval Sea itself has largely dried up.

15. While Storm analysis has nothing to say regarding the question of social complexity in prehistoric times, it may suggest a conceptual framework for analyzing the physical remains. In protohistoric Egypt pharaoh was the "bull of his mother," etc., and Minoan Crete also suggests a strong bull connection for a male ruler. Add to this that some few of the legendary divine genealogies of protohistoric times consist of repetition one generation after another of the purported "holy family" relationship. It therefore seems possible that the Goddess chose as ruler—or, to be more safely inexact, as representative-immanent—a physical incarnation of her son/lover "the bull of his mother." This position would then be passed on by an endless succession of ritual marriages as indicated by the repetitive divine genealogies of the same kind. This would also explain why the son/lover is visible in Çatal Hüyük and in protohistoric theology but not between; he was physically incarnate in each area and could be his own icon. Note that this says nothing about the authority exercised from this position; Europe is hardly the first inventor of constitutional monarchy, and the surviving legends and traditions about the death of the year-god/king do not suggest a secure incumbency.

16. It is, however, very difficult to extend this pantheon further safely. The sun god(dess) frequently held the third position among the elementals, in Japan and among the Hittites even rising to number one or co-number one. But the elemental EarthSea (Enki/Ea of Sumer/Akkad, Poseidon of Hellas) might as easily take on third rank. And below that level the debate could be endless.

17. Shang-ti is cited as one of two deities (the other being the River [god] Ho) who could cause rainfall, and also as the "supreme ruler whose approval and assistance the kings might seek particularly where the welfare of the state was concerned" (Allan, 1979:10). The cited special concerns are "rain, thunder, wind, drought, harvests, the fate of the capital, warfare, epidemics, and the king's person" (Keightley, 1978a:221-225). If one eliminates harvests and epidemics from the list and consigns floods to the river-god, Shang-ti himself begins to resemble very strongly an evolved Storm Lord, looking after weather, politics and force.

18. Properly this was a commonplace or literary device rather than a formal title, so far as is known; the formal titles were, under Chou, wang (king), later huang-ti, usually rendered Emperor (Dubs, 1945).

19. Some protest has been raised that this makes the ruler of China into a (storm) god. I submit that this is a cultural problem; the word "god" represents a Mediterranean-Indian concept, possibly even derived from
Çatal Hüyük times, and should be used only with great care outside its home milieu. The early Chinese ruler is described as follows:

The princely genius is of a religious and magical nature. This genius rules and regulates all things by immediate action, the action of spirit upon spirit. It acts by contagion. . . . The overlord draws his power from a mystic force which is in him in a concentrated form, but which, diffused, animates his whole country. The genius of the country exists in its entirety in the overlord. . . . He commands nature and men to be what they are. He dispenses to men and beings their destiny. He gives them a certain potency which is the measure of his own power. The formula must be taken literally: like overlord, like subjects, like prince, like country. Rushes and chrysanthemums grow thick-set and vigorous when the princely genius is in its full strength. Does it decline, is it exhausted? The people of the country die off prematurely. . . . (Granet, 1958:250-251, 262).

Possibly for this situation the best term would be the Quechua word *huaca*, referring to any object of any kind which is a focus of the forces of nature. Neither dragon nor ruler is quite a god in the accepted Western sense of the word, nor probably even in the old Egyptian sense of the word, but their individual connection to and ability to channel the forces of nature would seem established.

20. Kronos seems to have been essentially an agricultural and harvest deity (Perry, 1966:164), and by definition of being Gaia’s son was the Mother’s Son. Also, Gimbutas reports a sculpture possibly ancestral to Kronos in an Old European context undisturbed by Storm intrusions (1974:83).

REFERENCES

CAH-f. Fascicles of chapters to the revised volumes I and II of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. Cambridge University Press.


Bell, Sir Charles 1931. The Religion of Tibet. Oxford University Press.


de Visser, M.E. 1969. The Dragon in China and Japan. Wiesbaden: Martin Sandig o HG.
Gurney, O. 1976. “Asia Minor, Religions of,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia II.*


1960b. *The Chinese Classics, vol. IV, the She King.* Hong Kong University Press.


