

The Epics of Aqhat and Kirta as Social Myths?¹

František Válek

Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

[The presented article addresses the question of whether the epics of Kirta and Aqhat from LBA Ugarit may be considered narratives articulating *social myths*, building upon the theory of Gérard Bouchard. As such, the epics are seen as potentially influential elements within the society of Ugarit, significantly contributing to the construction of the reality of that time. The designation invites us to consider the complex social and historical setting in which the narratives appeared and worked and ask how they could have been relevant, what aims their author could have followed, and what means he used to achieve them. The preservation of sources considerably limits our possibilities in tracking the links among the narratives, author, audience, local and international politics, environment, religion, or emic conception of history. The reconstructed context, therefore, remains largely porous. Still, Ugarit is one of the best sites to start such an endeavour which may broaden our understanding of political uses of narratives in the ancient Near East.]

Keywords: Ugarit; politics; royal epic; social myth; narrative; myth; Kirta; Aqhat.

1. Introduction

The epics² of Aqhat (KTU 1.17–1.19) and Kirta (KTU 1.14–1.16) from the city of Ugarit belong among the best-known works of narrative poetry from Late Bronze Age Syria. They are now known to modern scholars for almost one hundred years. During this time, extensive research has been done on them. The academics have approached these texts from different perspectives and offered a wide range of interpretations. The perspectives cover, for example, historical, mythical, political, myth and ritual school, literary (including relations with wisdom literature), allegorical, agricultural/seasonal, psychological, or satirical.³ The viewpoint I wish to follow does not aim at deconstructing or discrediting previous discussions. After all, I find many of the interpretations valid, even if not complex and exhaustive. The view I am proposing here is no different; it focuses

1. This work was supported by the Czech Science Foundation project No. 23-05181S, Archaeology of Texts. Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation in the Ancient Near East. The topic has also been addressed in my dissertation, *Life, Society, and Politics in Relation to Religion at Ugarit in the Late Bronze Age*, submitted at Charles University in Prague in 2023 and defended in April 2024.

2. The term “epic” is used here as a conventional designation, and interpretations are not based on this genre attribution. Therefore, we may leave the issue of definition and applicability to the ANE material aside.

3. The history of research is not an issue of this paper. See, e.g., Margalit 1999: 203–218 for Kirta, and Wyatt 1999: 238–247 for Aqhat.

only on some aspects of these narratives and does not claim to solve the issue of their interpretation once and for all.

The primary goal is to explore whether these epics may be considered part of the living tradition, i.e., works beyond the world of scholars, students, or scribes. Could these narratives have been more than works of literature, having some real impact on the lives of the inhabitants of Ugarit? Could they have been relevant for them? Were there any political and ideological intentions behind the composition of these texts? Did it serve anyone? Answers to any of these questions are not readily clear. In many ways, we are getting to the limit of what can be reasonably induced from the sources or deduced from applied theories. We may sometimes even step over the edge. In the current stage, this paper presents a preliminary suggestion and exploration of possibilities. The reader should be aware of this issue and is wholeheartedly welcome to be suspicious of any claims made here. These limitations also lead to an unfortunate feature of this article that some suggestions remain too open, general, or flat.

The basic presumption of this paper may sound strange: The people living in the ancient world were indeed living human beings with their social ties, psychologies, opinions, worries, joys, occupations, etc. While it sounds too obvious, it is sometimes forgotten. Stories that were told in these societies were a part of life, contributing to the construction of the ancient world.⁴ This, however, does not mean the narratives were somehow clear or straightforward reflections of the world, society, or history. To detect how the individual stories were connected to the present life, how they were relevant, and what influence they had is a tricky business. Some might have been part of the lived religious realia – reflecting the perceived character of deities and cosmos or used within cults or healing rituals. Others could have been “dead” and foreign for most people and used in the confined context of scribal education, not only to learn how to write in cuneiform and communicate in Akkadian or Sumerian but also to gain an understanding of foreign traditions – a skill useful in international contacts. Others could have been recounted for amusement. Shortly put, even though the presence of narratives indicates they were relevant at least to some part of society, the reasons for this relevance were highly varied. This diversity also varied in different parts of society and changed over time.⁵ The present paper, therefore, deals specifically with the possibilities of interpreting the epics of Aqhat and Kirta in the society of Ugarit around the turn of the thirteen and twelve centuries when they have probably been written down (see below).

2. *The Theory of Social Myths*

In an attempt to approach these issues, we may draw inspiration from the theory of social myths of Canadian sociologist Gérard Bouchard (2017). His approach is based primarily on exploring the workings of myths in modern societies, with special attention to national myths (see also Bouchard 2013). This has some positive and some negative implications regarding the ancient Near East. On the one hand, myths are explored as something living and with real impact. In present societies or in recent history, we can observe in better detail what myths do and how people

4. My perspective is strongly rooted in the theory of the social construction of reality; see esp. Berger & Luckmann 1966. Despite its name, it also gives space for individual actors to actively participate in the construction.

5. An example may be given with the well-known story of Oedipus. Its relevance in ancient Greek society gravely differed from its relevance to Sigmund Freud.

interact with them. On the other hand, the theory cannot be simply transferred to the ancient society – a too simplistic comparison may be gravely misleading. What the theoretical perspective of social myths can do for us is to guide our attention to some issues that may otherwise go unnoticed when discussing narratives of the past.

Bouchard's conception of "myth" is in many ways different from its common or even scholarly use (Bouchard 2017: 23–47). He regards myths as belonging to the category of "collective imaginaries" (Bouchard 2017: 7–27) – "*the symbols that a society produces and through which its members give meaning to their lives,*" (Bouchard 2017: 13) and "*the first references that lie at the core of every culture and that have a very strong hold on society given that they possess an authority akin to sacredness.*" (Bouchard 2017: 8). Collective imaginaries may be considered the base for social reality – that what is shared by society because it is internalised through living in any given culture. At the same time, they are not merely a social category. They are particularly effective when rooted in the unconscious, primary instincts, and emotions. Myths as collective representations are seen as sacred – in the sense of "beyond criticism"; immune, fundamental truths. And most importantly for us, myths are seen as powerful social mechanisms – myths *act*. Bouchard borrows a quote from Bennett to describe myths: they "*are not the things people see when they look at the world, they are the things they see with*" (Bouchard 2017: 105–106). An important issue worth noting is that myths in this perspective are not the narratives themselves. Narratives are only instances in which myths are actualised and articulated in a particular way. They are vehicles for myths. Similarly, myths may be expressed and addressed through visual means, symbols, or catchphrases. By this, any myth-narrative can draw on numerous myths present in society.

In the case of *social* myths, the stress is placed on "*the role of the actors, their motivations, the power relations in which they are involved, their strategic operations, and the concrete, immediate issues associated with them*" (Bouchard 2017: 27). Any myth may be used by social actors to follow their interests. The fluidity and plasticity of myths even allow them to be used for contrasting goals. There is no need to make any clear-cut distinction among different dimensions of myths. For example, if someone carefully narrates a story to manipulate society, it may not conflict with the religious or historical dimension of the myth. On the contrary, when the narration resonates with the deep convictions of the audience on a broader scale, it is even more effective. However, emphasising the roles, intentions, and motivations of the actors should not lead us to consider myths only as a means of manipulation. This creates an unnecessarily biased perspective where myths are negative social mechanisms. Myths are a social necessity, both in ancient and modern times; they are here for better or worse.

One of the most important features of myths is that they give rise to social ethos. They have the ability to mobilise society into action but also to create an atmosphere of resignation and pessimism. As we will discuss below, the epics of Kirta and Aqhat are very interesting in portraying numerous instances of failure and misfortunes. One may then ask whether such a story may indeed serve any mobilising goals or even work as a piece of royal propaganda. Isn't Margalit (1999: 206, 208–209 or 1989: 477–482) right in seeing these works as satirical and critical towards the establishment? The theory of social myths surely allows it. However, Bouchard also stresses that the myths sometimes address the least favourable times of society: wars, defeats, deaths, sacrifices, treasons, failures, natural catastrophes, etc. (Bouchard 2017: e.g., 49, 52, or 61–62). All these themes are powerful as they are filled with emotions. The misfortunes of a king are not necessarily an indication of a "mock-epic" (Margalit 1999: 222) but may actually work for the

benefit of the royalty. That inversion, failure, displacement, critique, mockery, or violence may not have destructive but productive outcomes has also been observed and studied by many others, for example, anthropologists (e.g., Turner 1977 or Douglas 1984: esp. 95–114). Turner had made such observances into one of his key concepts: anti-structure. The popular saying “*what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger*” should not be ignored when discussing myths.

3. *The Epics of Aqhat and Kirta as Mirror Narratives*

One of the main reasons why I tend to consider the Ugaritic epics as articulations of social myths is that they, to some extent, address the same issues and draw on similar imageries. This may indicate that they are focused on dealing with particular themes relevant to Ugaritic society.⁶ Building upon the structuralist approach, I suspect the topics shared by both narratives are central to the message intended by the author (or the client?) and deserve particular attention. This by no means implies that the specifics of each epic are irrelevant; the pondering of the issues from different perspectives may create the meaning. Instead of recounting the full plots of both texts,⁷ we may briefly explore where they mirror each other.

3.1. *Problems with dynastic continuity*

The central motive of both narratives is the crisis of dynastic continuity. The stories open with situations where both Kirta and Daniil (future father of Aqhat) lack progeny.⁸ The lack of heirs may be considered an extremely unfavourable situation in ancient Near Eastern societies. The epic of Aqhat addresses this issue in the so-called “duties of an ideal son”,⁹ recounting what a father is missing in lack of a son. The importance of an heir is contrasted with riches and power – when these are offered to Kirta by Il or King Pabuli,¹⁰ they are shown as futile. The epics track the source of this problem from two perspectives. The problem of Kirta is that he had lost all his wives and, together with them, all chance for the progeny.¹¹ In contrast, the issue Daniil is facing revolves around problems with conception.¹² The same fate might have been relatable to numerous listeners in the audience. Even though it might have been considered a part of the human condition,¹³ it was undesired, and personal and social consequences were grave.

6. On the contrary, Wyatt (2000: 136) suggests that while the epic of Kirta is ideologically rich, Aqhat lacks ideological intentions. This position is, in my opinion, untenable.

7. For translations of Aqhat, see, e.g., Parker 1997: 49–80 or Wyatt 2002b: 246–312; for Kirta, see, e.g., Greenstein’s translation in Parker 1997: 9–48 or Wyatt 2002b: 176–243. The texts are edited in KTU as 1.14–1.16 (Kirta) and 1.17–1.19 (Aqhat). It has been suggested that Aqhat may be connected with the Rapi’ūma texts (KTU 1.20–1.22; see, e.g., discussion in Parker 1989: 134–135 or Wyatt 1999: 234 or 237). Because I am, together with Parker and Wyatt, not convinced about this suggestion, I do not include these texts in the analysis.

8. Kirta: e.g., KTU 1.14 I: 7–35, II: 4–5; Aqhat: e.g., KTU 1.17 I: 16–33. The issue is then addressed throughout the narratives.

9. KTU 1.17 I: 25–33 and parallels. See, e.g., Majewski 2023 for a recent discussion of this passage.

10. KTU 1.14 I: 41–42, II: 1–3, III: 21–37, and V: 33–VI: 22.

11. KTU 1.14 I: 7–25.

12. KTU 1.17 I: 18–19, 38–43, or II: 24–46.

13. As addressed in the Mesopotamian composition of Atrahāsīs, tablet III, col. VII (see, e.g., Lambert & Millard 1999: 102–103). An excerpt of this narrative has been discovered at Ugarit, too (RS 22.421, see, e.g., Lambert & Millard 1999: 131–133). Of course, its relevance to the social reality of Ugarit may be easily disputed.

3.2. *Deities have positive relations with the rulers and provide solutions for their problems*

Both Kirta and Daniil are described as ruler figures who have close and personal relationships with deities. The two narratives cover these relations from several perspectives. Kirta is approached by Il in his dream, presumably by the volition of the god;¹⁴ but Daniil actively performs *incubatio* and thus induces his dream vision to draw Baʿal near.¹⁵ Il sees that Kirta is troubled, but he first assumes that he craves power and riches and Kirta must reveal the roots of his troubles;¹⁶ on the contrary, Daniil does not need to explain himself to Baʿal as this deity immediately knows what is going on.¹⁷ The solution offered to Kirta is formulated as an elaborated plan on how to obtain a new wife by means of a military campaign;¹⁸ the problem of Daniil is solved by Baʿal simply by asking Il to give a blessing.

The close relations between the rulers and deities are also articulated in other parts of the narratives. Both Kirta and Daniil invite deities to feast – an invitation that is gladly accepted by them.¹⁹ An element of divine favour may be seen in the gift given by Koṭar-wa-Ḥasīs to the newborn Aqhat, the precious bow.²⁰ Il also supports Kirta when he falls ill, making a healer-character, Šaʿatiqat, for him.²¹ The bond between Il and Kirta is then best expressed when the king is designated as the son of this god.²² In his illness, his children also ponder his divine-like character through his presumed immortality, an idea that is shattered.²³

3.3. *Some female deities have negative relations with the rulers*

These positive relations are contrasted with negative relations with some female deities. This bluntly reveals that royalty is prone to failure face in face divine will. It also clearly stresses the mortal nature of the ruling class. Kirta is befallen by a nearly mortal illness because of his negligence in fulfilling the vow given to goddess Aṭirat.²⁴ In the epic of Aqhat, the goddess ʿAnat craves to acquire the bow of Aqhat. The hero not only declines her offer of riches and immortality but also laughs at ʿAnat and insults her.²⁵ This time, the hero pays with his life for crossing the will of a goddess.

3.4. *Dynastic continuity fails again*

At first, the problems with dynastic continuity seem to be solved. Both Kirta and Daniil have progeny they longed for. However, the plot is then twisted. As already noted, the son of Daniil, Aqhat, is killed by goddess ʿAnat. King Kirta is betrayed by his son and heir to the throne, Yaṣṣib,

14. KTU 1.14 I: 33–43. As the narrative does not provide great details, it remains possible that Kirta was actively involved in inviting the god to approach him. However, it seems to me that it is the god, who incites the activity here.

15. KTU 1.17 I: 1–16.

16. KTU 1.14 I: 37–II: 5.

17. KTU 1.17 I: 15–22.

18. KTU 1.14 II: 6–III: 49.

19. E.g., Kirta: KTU 1.17 III: 52–IV: 8, 1.15 II; Aqhat: KTU 1.17 II: 24–39, V: 15–31, 1.19 IV: 22–31.

20. KTU 1.17 II: 9–33.

21. KTU 1.16 IV:1–VI:14.

22. E.g., KTU 1.16 I: 20–23.

23. E.g., KTU 1.16 I: 2–23 and II: 43–44.

24. Making the vow to Aṭirat in Tyre: KTU 1.14 IV: 32–43. Aṭirat reacts to the unfulfilled promise: KTU 1.15 III: 25–30.

25. KTU 1.17 VI–1.18.

who criticises his father and wants the throne for himself before he has the right.²⁶ Consequently, Yaššib is cursed by his father.

3.5. *Are other solutions possible?*

The stories end rather pessimistically. We are left to wonder whether this is because of the damaged state of the tablets or the dynasties of Kirta and Aqhat truly end. With the following statements, we go beyond the sources. There is still hope for the dynasty of Kirta. At least one other son is mentioned by name, Ilaḥu.²⁷ Possibly, he could replace Yaššib in his role. The story of Aqhat, on the other hand, does not mention any other male offspring. This story, however, seems to be far more open than Kirta,²⁸ and more action is reasonably expected. However, the possible solutions may not be limited to the male side of the dynasty.

3.6. *The royal women are presented in a strong position(?)*

The society of Ugarit and its power structure may be generally described as patriarchal and patrilinear, but the position and power of royal women are also well documented, and they had an influence on the royal succession issues.²⁹ The epics of Aqhat and Kirta toggle with the position of royal women. First of all, the dynastic continuity depends on them for biological reasons and without them, the stories cannot evolve. While power and influence are generally connected with the queen(-mothers), the narratives focus strongly on the royal daughters. Tītmanit, the last daughter of Kirta, is pronounced the firstborn by Il.³⁰ Her name, meaning “The Eight One”, is here contrasted with her pronounced position. Aqhat then has a sister who bears a general name Paḡit, “Girl/Princess”. But she takes on a quest contrasting with her name: to avenge the death of her brother.³¹ The plots, at least in their extant state, do not resolve the issue.³² We do not know how and if the stories developed, whether Tītmanit and Paḡit took on the roles of their brothers, helped someone else to ensure the continuity of the dynasties, or if the dynasties failed anyhow. We should also acknowledge the possibility that the narratives ended without any resolution.

On the other hand, there is no indication that a queen(-mother) or wife of the king would or even could hold the office of the king. Women are depicted not only as strong but also as someone who is to be acquired, who exists to bear children, and who serves the king and his guests. In addition, the female deities are depicted as those who cause problems; how much this should be

26. KTU 1.16 VI: 25–58.

27. E.g., KTU 1.15 II: 18–III: 25, 1.16 I: 46, 58.

28. This open character is also what led some scholars to seek the continuation of Aqhat in the Rapi’ūma texts (KTU 1.20–1.22). See note 7 above.

29. For some comments on the position of (royal) women at Ugarit, see, e.g., van Soldt 2016b, Stol 2016: 526–529 (in a broader context of ANE societies), Thomas 2014, or Vita 1999: 481–482. On many occasions, the position of women (not only at Ugarit) might have been stronger than the commonly held opinion about the past. Thomas focused on the essential role of royal women in LBA politics, not limiting the discussion to the commonly held opinion of women being “assets” or “objects” in political exchange relationships. Nonetheless, this does not counter the overwhelmingly patriarchal structure of Ugaritic society.

30. KTU 1.15 III: 16.

31. KTU 1.19 IV: 28–61.

32. The question of whether the epics are finished or continued is an unresolved issue. Reasonable arguments can be given for both options. In my opinion, the epic of Kirta might have well ended with the cursing of Yaššib, while the present ending of Aqhat strongly invites continuation. See, e.g., Margalit 1999: 204 and 210 for a short discussion on Kirta and Wyatt 1999: 234 on Aqhat.

connected to the human condition is, however, not clear. Still, even though the final imagery has some ambivalent elements, the strong and positive position of royal women is clearly stressed in the extant texts.

3.7. *What does it mean to be a proper ruler?*

Both narratives also address the topic of how a proper ruler should act. An essential element of Yaššib's conflict with Kirta is that during his illness, the king failed to follow his obligations.³³ This criticism, which may possibly seem just to some in the audience, is not welcomed by the father. In contrast to Kirta, Daniil is depicted as a ruler who follows such obligations.³⁴ The imagery of royal obligations is poetically subsumed under the imagery of care for orphans and widows, the prototypical liminal peoples belonging to the society. The issue of military duties is addressed, too. In sum, the king should be strong, protective, and take care of his people. Noted is also the interaction of the rulers with the local elite. When Kirta is ill, he summons the "chiefs and captains" to discuss with them the problems of governance. It is this elite who pronounces Yaššib as the (temporal/future?) ruler.³⁵ Daniil is then presented as performing his royal duties together with the elite and not only by himself.³⁶

3.8. *The well-being of the land is connected with the well-being of the ruler*

Closely connected with the theme of a proper king is his connection with the prosperity of the land. The weakness of Kirta when he falls ill strongly affects the land. Severe droughts occur, and the food reserves end up empty.³⁷ The prosperity of the land of Daniil is then connected with the fate of his heir. Just like in the case of Kirta, when Aqhat is killed, the land is befallen with droughts.³⁸ Unlike the issue of dynastic continuity, the prosperity of the land is resolved. Kirta is cured by Il's creation of the healer figure Ša'atiqat, and Daniil and Paḡit find the remains of Aqhat so he may be at least buried.

3.9. *The mortality of rulers is stressed*

The issue of mortality of the ruling class is addressed in several episodes, all of which were already mentioned. The wives of Kirta died for various reasons, the king himself almost died of illness, and Aqhat was killed by 'Anat. The narratives ponder about the mortal nature of rulers from several perspectives. The most crucial distinction may be seen in the acceptance of the fate. In the epic of Kirta, the nearing death is pondered in astonishment by his children;³⁹ on the contrary, Aqhat directly embraces his human fate and knows 'Anat's statement is a false promise.⁴⁰

33. KTU 1.16 IV: 29–54.

34. E.g., KTU 1.17 V: 4–8.

35. KTU 1.15 IV–VI. The passages are, unfortunately, rather fragmentary. Terms *ḡy* (bulls) and *zbyy* (gazelles) are used to designate the elite. See, e.g., Miller 1970 for a short discussion on using such animal designations.

36. E.g., KTU 1.17 V: 6–7. Here, a more straightforward term *ādm* is used.

37. KTU 1.16 III.

38. KTU 1.19 I: 38–46.

39. E.g., KTU 1.16 I: 2–23.

40. KTU 1.17 VI: 33–38.

4. *The Epics in Contexts*

So far, we have only seen that both epics may be read hand in hand, pondering the same issues from different perspectives. However, the aim of this paper is to explore if this pondering of the human (especially ruler) condition might have functioned as a social myth. Can we discover whether these texts might have been relevant to the inhabitants of ancient Ugarit at the end of the Late Bronze Age? Are there any discernible intentions and motivations on the side of the creator(s) of these texts? And by what means would the goals have been achieved? If we carefully follow the contexts in which these texts existed, we may reveal some indications. Unfortunately, the evidence presented here is mostly indirect and for most relevant contexts, the sources are altogether missing. Therefore, the conclusions must remain preliminary suggestions.

4.1. *Archaeological Setting*

The exploration of any ancient text may begin with the setting in which it was recovered by the archaeologists. If available, archaeological context provides us with the elemental starting point for further tracking of associations of a text.⁴¹ The six tablets bearing the stories of Kirta and Aqhat are associated with the structure conventionally designated as the House of the High Priest, located on the Acropolis of Ugarit.⁴² This is where the ancient life of the text ended, being buried in the debris of the long-fallen building. If we can uncover anything from the time the building was still in use, we may possibly enrich our understanding of the life of the tablets. We are trying to uncover their role as actors in the Ugaritic society. For that, they – especially their contents – must have been “on the move” and interacted with other actors.

The texts were discovered in the same context as most narratives written in the Ugaritic alphabet and language.⁴³ The building further associates the epics closely with Ugaritic cultic practices, both spatially and textually: the House of the High Priest is located between the Temple of Baʿal and the Tempe/Terrace of Dagan, and a relatively rich collection of ritual texts has been discovered here.⁴⁴

Although the association of Kirta and Aqhat with religion, represented here by myths and cults, is obvious from the find-spot perspective, the precise links of how all these go together are missing. The reasons for their presence in this particular house may be various, but we must not ignore that this is where they were (intentionally!?) placed. However, the notion of this structure should not be subsumed only under religion. The letters and administrative texts discovered here further allow us to set the working of this “institution” into broader networks of Ugaritic life. Unfortunately, we know nothing about how these texts were manipulated, who had access to them, and for what purposes they were stored. The only direct link to a particular individual that the tablets provide leads us to the person who has written them down.

41. While I borrow this vocabulary from Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (see, e.g., Latour 2005) and I draw some inspiration from him on how to approach the material, my approach is far from being ANT. E.g., the very application of the theory of social myths is in contrast with the ANT approach.

42. Only a fragment of tablet KTU 1.14 (RS 2.[003]) and the whole KTU 1.17 (RS 2.[004]) are recorded as discovered on the “surface” (TEO: 26), but the general context indicates they positively belong to the same structure as the rest of the tablets and fragments of the two epic compositions.

43. E.g., the Baʿal Cycle (KTU 1.1–1.6), the Rapiūma (KTU 1.20–1.22), or the Goodly Gods (KTU 1.23).

44. However, we may note that in absolute numbers, the so-called House of the Hurrian Priest in the South Acropolis Trench yielded more ritual texts.

4.2. *Authorship*

The authorship of both epics is attributed to Ilimilku. This claim is based on the colophons preserved on the tablets. KTU 1.16, the last tablet of Kirta, is on its left edge inscribed with text *spr ilmlk t'y*, “scribe: Ilimilku, *ta^{ss}āyu*-official”. The first tablet of Aqhat, KTU 1.17, bears on its lower edge a badly damaged inscription of which only the ending is visible: [...] *prln*. This is usually compared with the colophon of Ilimilku from the Baʿal Cycle and reconstructed as [*spr . ilmlk šbny lmd . ātn .*] *prln*, “[scribe: Ilimilku from Šubbanu, student of Attēnu], the diviner”.⁴⁵

It seems reasonable to suggest that Ilimilku was the scribe of these texts. The question remains whether he may also be considered an author in any creative sense. Such an authorial input has already been argued for by several scholars, notably Tugendhaft (2018) or Wyatt (1997, 2002a, or 2015). The theory of social myths invites us to focus our attention on the activity and intentions of the actors present in creating and articulating the myth-narratives. Was the creation of the six tablets a result of an inventive input on the side of the scribe, or was he a “mere copyist”? Was Ilimilku an obedient student, or did he create these texts later in his career with a rich experience reflected in the clay? Because all data we possess on these issues are of an indirect nature, a broad range of interpretations have appeared.⁴⁶ For example, Pitard saw Ilimilku as a fine but still young scribe who made a lot of scribal errors in his work (2008 and 2012). Hawley, Pardee, and Roche-Hawley argue that Ilimilku was rather an author than a copyist (2015: 250–251). Tugendhaft then places the authorial activity of this scribe at the end of his rich political career, reflecting accumulated wisdom rather than youthful sloppiness, at least in regard to the Baʿal Cycle (2018: 31–34).⁴⁷ Ultimately, the answer may not be the same across the works attributed to him.

The activities of Ilimilku, his status and connections are essential for the interpretation. Was he in any position to use myth as a political device? Unfortunately, since we lack precise synchronicities, the life of Ilimilku collapses for us into an undifferentiated bundle. The best we can do now is to explore Ilimilku as if all information on him applied at once. This endeavour may further be complicated by the fact that not every Ilimilku mentioned in the sources is the same person.⁴⁸

The most “detailed” information we have on him is his colophons. The last tablet of the Baʿal Cycle preserves the lengthiest of them: *spr . ilmlk šbny / lmd . ātn . prln . rb . / khnm rb . nqdm / t'y . nqmd . mlk ūgrt / ādn . yrqb . b'l . trmn* (KTU 1.6 VI: 54–58), “Scribe: Ilimilku from Šubbanu, student of Attēnu, the diviner, chief priest, chief herdsman, *ta^{ss}āyu*-official of Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit, lord of Yargubu, master of Tarimānu.” (Hawley, Pardee & Roche-Hawley 2015: 248).

45. So far, I have not encountered any study claiming different authorship, for example, on palaeographic grounds. On the other hand, I have neither encountered a study confirming the authorship on palaeographic grounds, only some feeble references. E.g., Wyatt notes that “the script is similar” (1999: 234) or that the “ductus is consistent” (2015: 412) without providing further references. I myself lack both the expertise and access to the tablets to make an informed decision in this regard.

46. For a general discussion and further references, see Wyatt 2015 or Pardee 2014, 2012: 112, or 1997: 273, n. 283.

47. It is appropriate to note that the work of Tugendhaft (esp. 2018) has been the starting point for me to consider the political implications of Ugaritic narratives in the context of the author’s contribution.

48. The name was probably relatively common and different bearers of this name are attested; e.g., Ilimilku son of Ilibēlu in RS 16.145 (PRU III: 169), or Ilimilku son of Takšanu and Ilimilku son of Ulunari in RS 16.257+ (PRU III: 199–204). These are not taken into consideration, building upon the fact that Ilimilku has not used patronymic in his colophons (see below).

The translations and interpretations of the colophon differ among the scholars. First, it is not clear which titles relate to whom in it.⁴⁹ I would argue that Ilimilku has designated himself as 1) a scribe, 2) from the village of Šubbanu, 3) a student of Attēnu, and 4) *ta^{ss}āyu*-official of Niqmaddu.⁵⁰ The title “diviner” most likely belongs to Attēnu.⁵¹ Titles “chief priest” and “chief herdsman” may belong to either of them. I have little doubt that the final titles belong to Niqmaddu.

What does this tell us about Ilimilku? The position of the scribe neither confirms nor denies any creative contribution on his side. Although scribes are often associated with the elite, they may not necessarily be elite themselves but occupy a position similar to craftsmen. The site of Šubbanu with which he associates himself also does not reveal to us anything about his status. However, it was probably important to him, and the fact that he chose to identify himself via geographical origin and not through patronymic is itself interesting when considered in the context of patrimonial society (see Schloen 2001). His position was not, at least explicitly, deriving from his father’s position. On the contrary, Ilimilku chose to highlight his teacher. The position of Attēnu would be of great interest to us, but we know of him only from the colophons of Ilimilku. The office of *prln* (“diviner”) might have been an important one but is generally shrouded in mystery to us. We cannot even tell if this had anything to do with divinatory practices, as one would expect.⁵² If Attēnu were the holder of the titles “chief priest” and “chief herdsman”, these would further relate him to official cultic activities and highlight his elite position. The association Ilimilku makes with Attēnu is, in my opinion, a reference to his education in the highest circles, akin to highlighting studies at Oxford, Sorbonne, or Harvard in a modern CV.⁵³

Probably the most important reference is to the office of *ta^{ss}āyu* and specifically *ta^{ss}āyu* of the king. Supposing the attribution to Ilimilku is correct, it indicates his proximity to the ruler. The office itself was then highly important, even though most of its characteristics, unfortunately, elude us. Van Soldt has suggested that this term should be equated with logosyllabic SUKKAL (1988), indicating a high-level scribe/official akin to “royal secretary” or “secretary of state”. At the same time, the term has clear cultic connotations. In ritual texts, the term *t^l* was used to designate a specific type of offering and the verb *t^l-y* designated its performance. In KTU 1.119, we may encounter a sacrifice that is performed in *bt t^ly*, the house of *ta^{ss}āyu*. Unfortunately, further details of both the political and religious dimensions of this office elude us. It is also possible that the term *t^ly* designated different positions in politics and cults. Anyhow, Ilimilku may be well associated

49. Various suggestions have been explored and referenced by Wyatt (2015: 405–407). Interestingly, he does not consider the sequencing suggested by Hawley, Pardee & Roche-Hawley (2015: 248), which seems one of the most probable to me.

50. This attribution is sometimes contested, and Attēnu is seen as the holder of this title. However, since Ilimilku described himself as *ta^{ss}āyu*-official in KTU 1.16: left edge or in KTU 1.4: left edge (damaged) without any reference to his teacher, it seems reasonable to suppose he was (at least in some part of his life) not only *ta^{ss}āyu*-official but specifically *ta^{ss}āyu*-official of Niqmaddu.

51. In KTU 1.179: 40 from the House of Urtēnu, title *prln* seems to be once again connected with Attēnu. In addition, both Attēnu and *prln* share Hurrian etymology, which may indicate a connection – however feeble.

52. Van Soldt 1989 has established the understanding of this term as a “diviner” in comparison with Hurrian *purulini*. I have tentatively suggested this office could have related to the Hurrian cults at Ugarit, drawing an association with the contemporary office of “the diviner” at Emar, where he has been an overseer of Hittite-Hurrian cults. But this is far from being anyhow conclusive; see Válek 2021: 54.

53. On the other hand, some argue this indicates his student status when writing/copying the compositions; see, e.g., Pitard 2008 or 2012.

both with religion and politics, which is in accord with the findspot of the tablets, as well as their contents.

Ilimilku was also set within the elite circles of Ugaritic society. Letter KTU 2.88 from the House of Urtēnu includes two messages sent from an unnamed queen and Ilimilku to Urtēnu.⁵⁴ This correspondence places the scribe side by side with the queen and connects him with Urtēnu, who may himself be counted among the Ugaritic elite with high-level connections and important trade relations.⁵⁵ The letter further indicates a high level of trust among the correspondents. Although its exact contents and meaning are debated, it seems that Urtēnu is obliged to keep the conversation secret. Association of Ilimilku with the queen is further strengthened by letter RS 6.198 from the House of the High Priest (see, e.g., Lackenbacher 2002: 297–298), in which Bēlu-būr asks Ilimilku to deliver a message to the queen, indicating he had access to her. His relations to a queen may bear some implications for the topic of the position of the royal women tackled in the epics. This letter also draws Ilimilku into the sphere of the Assyrians. As we will see below, this may not be an insignificant detail. RS 19.070 (PRU IV: 294) from the Royal Palace mentions Ilimilku as the royal envoy despatched to the Hittite court. The link with Urtēnu made above may be further strengthened by several texts discovered at “his” house. Even though these may not necessarily relate to Urtēnu himself, they place Ilimilku in relations with an elite and influential household. Medico-magical text KTU 1.179 includes a colophon attributed to him,⁵⁶ and letters RS 94.245 and 94.2483 place him within international relations with Ušnatu and Sidon. An excerpt of the Baʿal Cycle on tablet KTU 1.133 then connects Ilimilku with the House of the Hurrian Priest,⁵⁷ an important locus with numerous religious texts, including ritual texts related to royalty.

In my opinion, this composite image of Ilimilku allows us to consider him a person fit to participate in the creation of narratives bearing influence on the state ideology. This applies to the epics, as well as the Baʿal Cycle. In the colophon of KTU 1.179, he states: *ind ylm dnn*, “no one has taught it (to me).” With this, Ilimilku may intend to highlight his creative skills and expertise. In contrast with Mesopotamian practices, he does not add his colophons to the narrative compositions to note that he faithfully copied them from some verified ancient originals. Rather, he might have added these colophons to be known as the author who has given creative input into his works, maybe even in parodying the Mesopotamian tradition (Hawley, Pardee & Roche-Hawley 2015: 251).

Still, it must be stressed that providing creative input does not readily mean that Ilimilku wholly invented these compositions from scratch. As further argued below, building upon previous traditions is one of the strategies for constructing a successful social myth. The authorial input may be more in how a story is told. Different emphases, new episodes, changes, or restructuralisation may significantly shift the meaning of a known composition. In this regard, we may note that the ground plot of the fight of Baʿal with Yamm from the first two tablets from the Baʿal Cycle was

54. For recent studies, see, e.g., Monroe 2020 and van Soldt 2016b.

55. On Urtēnu, see, e.g., Malbran-Labat & Carole 2007.

56. The name is lost in lacuna, but similarities to his other colophons are clear. KTU 1.179: 40ʹ: [*spr . ilmlk . š]ʹbʹny . lmd . ātn . prln*.

57. It has also been suggested that an Akkadian excerpt of this composition, pertaining to the building of the Temple of Baʿal, has been discovered in the House of Urtēnu (RS 94.2953, Arnaud 2007, no. 65). However, it has been convincingly argued that this text is not anyhow connected to the Baʿal Cycle but narrates a flood story; see Cavigneaux 2007. Therefore, this potentially very interesting connection must be abandoned.

surely not created by Ilimilku as we know of references to it several centuries prior to him from Mari (FM 7, nos. 5 and 38). But this does not anyhow counter the possibility that the particular recounting of this story at Ugarit was his own, aimed at particular interests, just as when this plot has been reinterpreted in Egypt for the benefit of Amenhotep II (so-called papyrus Astarte, see Collombert & Coulon 2000). As Bouchard notes, the process of creating social myths is difficult. It is often rather “through an operation that belongs more to translation or transposition than to construction or invention” (Bouchard 2017: 90).

4.3. *Historical Context*

Although the possibility that Ilimilku simply wrote down known narratives cannot be disregarded, the chance that he was active may be further corroborated by the historical context in which he lived. I count myself among those who claim that there is never “the” meaning of any myth that could be discovered through the narrative itself. The relevance and perceived meaning of any story goes hand in hand with the various circumstances in which it is set. Any myth can be recounted with different interests, goals, and emphases and read or listened to with many interpretations. The highly varied modern interpretations are a clear indication of this. It also does not matter if the plot itself is set in the past, present, future, or beyond time; it is always (also) about the present (Michalowski 2010: 16), and its relevance should be sought there.⁵⁸ The obvious problem here is that we have no direct accounts of how the Ugaritic epics were performed and received. At best, we can search for indications and parallels – are there any ways in which the epics could have been historically relevant at Ugarit at the end of the Late Bronze Age? Are there indications of why Ilimilku has written them as he did and chosen to reflect the specific topics in them?

The first issue that needs to be addressed here is whether it is reasonable to suppose these texts were in active use during this timeframe. The recent shift in dating the invention and active use of Ugaritic alphabetical cuneiform seems to confirm this.⁵⁹ If the script was indeed in use only after ca. 1250 BC until the end of Ugarit’s existence, then the Niqmaddu mentioned in the colophon of Ilimilku must be Niqmaddu IV, the penultimate king of Ugarit, ruling ca. 1210–1200 BCE.⁶⁰ This significantly narrows the possible timeframe, moving it closer to the demise of Ugarit. Still, a window of some 30 years or more remains for the precise date of the composition.⁶¹ Obviously, a lot has changed during this time, and the political relevance of the narration might have changed or

58. Here, we may note that the relevance of the text does not need to be anyhow deep or noble. Some may indeed be relevant for constructing opinions about life, the cosmos and everything, but others may be relevant only in small details, because they are fun, good for learning languages and writing, or interesting objects of study for scholars. There is never a too-insignificant motivation. However, not every motivation and story lead to the creation of a full-blown social myth.

59. For the recent shift in dating the active years of Ilimilku to the reign of Niqmaddu IV (according to the numbering of Arnaud 1998) together with the shift in dating the invention/practical application of Ugaritic alphabetical script to the second half of the thirteenth Century, see, e.g., Roche-Hawley & Hawley 2013: 258–263 or Hawley, Pardee & Roche-Hawley 2015: 234 with further references.

60. The precise dating of the reigns of kings of Ugarit is problematic. I am here following the dating of Liverani (2014a: 332) and numbering of Arnaud 1998.

61. Theoretically, Ilimilku might have written any of his works up until the end of Ugarit’s existence – using the title of *ta^{sr}āyu* of Niqmaddu to refer to his long-passed position. At the same time, his relation to Niqmaddu is expressed only in the colophon from the Ba’al Cycle. Consequently, the epics might have been also composed well before Niqmaddu IV ruled.

passed. Unfortunately, with our current knowledge, we are left with a more condensed understanding of the historical context covering a longer period.

This time, probably like any other, was full of paradoxes. Ugarit was an economically prospering kingdom, building upon its trade relations and favourable geographical position. The location was good not only for interconnecting inland and maritime trade routes but also for agriculture, as the mountains to the east held the precipitation at the coast. Nonetheless, the end of the kingdom was nearing. The very end might have been an abrupt event caused by a military attack, but the process leading to it was far more gradual. Kemp and Cline (2022) have explored the period from the perspective of the “Systemic Risk Theory”; droughts, hunger, social disruptions, migrations, military endangerment, wars, and earthquakes all slowly contributed to the disruption of the LBA system (see also Knapp & Manning 2016). The topic of droughts is highlighted in the Ugaritic epics, connecting rain with the well-being of the king.

As far as the sources indicate, Ugarit was a Hittite vassal until its demise, but the grip of the overlords might not have been so tight in the end, and Ugarit tried to get the best of it (see, e.g., Devecchi 2019, Boyes 2018, or Halayqa 2010). Hatti itself was a subject of the growing crisis, and Ugarit was at the same time well aware of its economic potential and importance. It maintained good relations with Egypt, and the expanding Assyrians tried to undermine the Hittite position. Here, we may enquire about the position of the king of Ugarit and how it fits into the international context. To which king we may relate the words of RS 34.129: “The king, your lord, is young and does not know anything.” (RSO VII, no. 12)? This exclamation may resonate with the problems of dynastic continuity addressed in the epics. When were the “great men” (LÚ.MEŠ GAL) and the “elders” (LÚ.MEŠ *šibu-ti*) addressed by Urḫi-Tešub from Karkemiš to discuss the issues of military assistance instead of the king (RS 88.2009, RSO XIV, no. 2)? Do the two letters coincide in time? I am inclined to place the second letter at the nearing end of Ugarit, being threatened by military conquest (see also Halayqa 2010: 322–323). However, by then, Ḫammurāpi II was probably not that young (a fact which might have been maliciously ignored by the Hittite king). These letters were discovered in the House of Urtēnu. Documents from this house attest to strong political ties on the highest level. In addition, it mediated important international political correspondence and therefore had considerable political influence. And, as already mentioned, it also had direct ties to the author of the epics. Yet another text from the House of Urtēnu possibly tackles the relevant context, KTU 1.161. This is a text of a royal funeral pertaining to the transition of power from Niqmaddu IV to Ḫammurāpi II. This event fits well into the timeframe of interest and may also resonate with the problems of dynastic continuity, as well as with the position of royal women, as the queen Tarriyelli is mentioned there alongside the heir to the throne.

4.4. *Near Eastern Propaganda in Narrative at Ugarit*

The last of the broader contexts outlined here is the possibility of inspiration for Ilimilku to actively contribute to politics via narratives. Here, we may draw our attention to the genre of royal epics that may be considered the prototype of narrative royal propaganda. However, a narrative does not become a royal epic in this sense simply by being a story about a king. Here we may note that Daniil is not even designated as a king in the epic of Aqhat. Nevertheless, his ruler-like character seems clear enough.

The usual royal narrative praises a king more directly – his military achievements, his building activities, his undeniably positive relation with deities, and so on. If any hiccups appear, they are

there to show how well the hero surpasses them. In addition, such royal narratives are usually aimed at praising the living king. Such compositions are easily understood as royal propaganda, aiming at becoming a full-fledged social myth, even though the precise processes mostly elude us.

The cases of Kirta and Aqhat are largely different. Even though Liverani noted on the epic of Kirta that “the happy ending of the story is typical of a fairy-tale” (2014a: 342), the stories, in my opinion, present us with a series of ups and – mostly – downs. The stories of Ugarit also do not narrate about living kings. Even more, they do not narrate about any famous predecessor or founder of the dynasty.⁶² Consequently, it may be hard to take the Ugaritic narratives as royal epics *per se* – as works of propaganda. When a comparison with the Near Eastern royal epics is made, the researcher faces difficulties in how exactly these narratives should promote the king or his office. It is rather surprising that scholars who interpret them as royal propaganda have so often ignored the recurring and substantial pattern of failure.

Nonetheless, the more straightforward royal epics illustrate that narrating politics was a practised option in the ancient Near East. What I want to argue here is that Ilimilku might have known of this, and the encounter with such practices might have inspired him to engage in the activity himself. As has already been noted, Ilimilku participated in international diplomacy, where he presumably encountered various representations of other royal figures. One letter in particular may attest to this.⁶³

An example of an active narrative propaganda is a letter RS 34.165 from an Assyrian king, addressed to the king of Ugarit, discovered in the House of Urtēnu (RSO VII, no. 46). Unfortunately, neither the name of the sender nor the addressee is preserved, only the sign Ú of *ú-ga-ri-it* remained. Suggested as the relevant Assyrian kings were Shalmaneser I or Tukultī-Ninurta I (see, e.g., Tugendhaft 2018: 107–108, Liverani 2014a: 360, Halayqa 2010: 315, or Singer 1999: 689). The letter describes the events leading to the battle of Nihriya, where the Assyrian and Hittite forces clashed. The Assyrians tried to undermine the position of the Ugaritic overlord by depicting him as a weak ruler who resorted to the diplomacy of manipulation and lies.⁶⁴ It is arguably too bold a statement to assert that this document from Assyria have directly inspired Ilimilku to use narratives to promote local political goals. However, it supports the claim that narrative articulation of ideology was a known form of political activity at Ugarit.

In addition, Ilimilku’s education probably allowed him to build upon a long tradition of cuneiform literature to compose something fitting his (and his client’s) needs. Such a practice was rather common in the context of Near Eastern royal propaganda (see, e.g., Válek 2022: 67, Rieken

62. Even though Daniil is mentioned among the Rapiūma in KTU 1.20–1.22, there is no clear indication he would belong to the Ugaritic dynasty. For the emic conception of it, the best evidence is the dynastic lists (see, e.g., Arnaud 1998), where neither Kirta nor Daniil appear. Instead, the eponym Ugarānu is seen as the founder of the dynasty. However, the Rapiūma text indicates that Daniil was a part of the Ugaritic cultural milieu. He might have been a good literary persona to fulfil the needs of the epic. Unfortunately, we know very little about him. Some Biblical figures may belong to the same stream of tradition (Parker 1997: 50–51 with references to Ezek 14: 12–20, 28: 3 and Jub 4: 20).

63. Originally, I have also used fragment RS 25.435 from the Lamaštu Archive to support this argument. It has been identified by Arnaud (2007, no. 36) as belonging to the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta (see Machinist 1978). Since Tukultī-Ninurta was a contemporary of several Ugaritic kings, including Ammiṭtamru III, Ibirānu VI and possibly also Niqmaddu IV, using this document as an attestation for the spread of Assyrian propaganda was tempting. However, it became clear that this intertextual attribution is untenable. The most decisive factor is a new edition of the epic’s fragments in Jakob 2024. Text no. 9 in his edition contains the passage for which Arnaud suggested overlap. This overlap is clearly not present. See Válek 2024 for a summary.

64. For an interesting study on lying and telling tales in international correspondence, see Breier 2020.

2001: 583–584, or Vanstiphout 1998, esp. 586). We may note that a traditional work of Mesopotamian epics, the *Epic of Gilgameš*, has been discovered at Ugarit in the House of Urtēnu (RS 94.2066; see Arnaud 2007, no. 42 and George 2007). Mesopotamian compositions, including heroic poetry, were at that time spread across the Near East (see, e.g., Bachvarova 2012: 103–104, Gilan 2010, or Westenholz 2010: 37–39) and thus influenced the scribes when creating works for the living kings. Such compositions were not used only for learning logosyllabic cuneiform and Akkadian or Sumerian. They also provided scribes with a repertoire of motives that could be employed in promoting royal ideology.

In the perspective of social myths, the use of intertextual references is a powerful tool. Giving hints and making intertextual puns may resonate with the audience. The necessary prerequisite for this to work, however, is the knowledge of the audience of the referenced narratives. In this regard, it must be noted that any story may through a variety of references address different audiences, with different effects. In addition, reuse of motives may also simply work for the author as a source of inspiration that he himself finds useful and fitting. This issue is also further addressed below.

5. *Aqhat and Kirta as Social Myths*

So far, we have mapped some basic contexts in which the epics were set. Now, we may direct our attention to exploring whether the epics could have really worked as social myth-narratives, i.e., epics through which some social actors aimed at reaching particular goals and influencing the perception of reality in society. In other words, if we suspect some social impact of narratives, we should be able to track why, how, and for whom they were composed.

Should we accept that Ilimilku was the author of the epics, we may now search for his motives to do so. We have already noted that some researchers propose interpreting his works, for example, as a critical reflection of the existing political system (Tugendhaft 2018 on the Baʿal Cycle), or even more strongly as satirical works aimed at ridiculing the degenerate institution of (divine) kingship (Margalit 1999: esp. 206, 208–209 and 1989: esp. 477–482 on the epics).

What such interpretations, in my opinion, lack, is that they leave the issue of why a high-ranking official would do so open. Wyatt replies to Margalit’s interpretation: “I cannot myself believe that Ilimilku was a republican” (Wyatt 1997: 780). Side by side with Wyatt, I doubt that Ilimilku aimed to undermine his lord’s position via poetry and then commit treason. Let alone append his name on the pamphlet. Of course, composing critical poetry does not have to aim to destroy political order; it may also focus on saving it. Also, the reasons for such an activity do not have to be anyhow deep. Maybe Ilimilku simply wanted to have a laugh at the royalty without them noticing, and we are now cracking our heads over an elaborate joke, and only Margalit is having a good laugh with him. Taking the basic presumption of the social myth theory – Ilimilku was a thinking person – this surely remains a possibility.

We have seen that Ilimilku was well interwoven with the elite of Ugarit. Such a position can lead a person to consider many different options. He could have wanted to keep his position and would not risk criticise his benefactors. He could have carefully worked to strengthen his position together with the royal ideology. He could have craved more power and therefore aimed to weaken his lords. The royalty could have also been enlightened and welcomed the feedback. The epics might have been a didactic tool for a young monarch or could set up a mirror for an older one. All these, and many more, remain viable and are not necessarily exclusive. For the sake of our

argument, let us pretend that Ilimilku wanted to be constructive and support the regime and not discredit royalty. Such a claim is rather complicated.

Some motives belong to the repertoire for praising kings, but most themes in Kirta and Aqhat reflect a failure. Is childlessness, illness, drought, famine, failure to keep a promise to a deity, death of an heir, or treason of an heir fit for royal representation? Can these themes help with royal ideology? The answer may be positive, but often only when the problems are overcome and work to highlight the ruler's strength and success despite the unfortunate conditions.⁶⁵ In the case of Ugaritic narratives, this issue is complicated by the state of the extant tablets – we do not know if the tales ended with the scales tipping wholly in favour of the monarch. What has been preserved suggests otherwise.

The context in which the epics appeared indicates that there were some very pressing issues endangering the societies, and the position of political representation might have been rather unstable. Ugarit and many other sites of the LBA world were on the brink of destruction and dissolution of current political elites.

The process was gradual, and indications of it were probably observable. As we have noted several times, Kirta and Aqhat were addressing some of the problems. Most visibly, this pertains to the periods of drought and subsequent food shortages. In addition, the expressed royal obligations relate to social issues, subsumed under the imagery of widowhood and orphanhood. Although these were old and well-known literary topoi in the ancient Near East, it does not diminish their relevancy.

It may be argued that the narratives do not provide solutions for the presented issues. Or, if they present any, it is mostly only temporal, ends in failure anyway, or a new problem surfaces. What is helpful to consider is that political narratives do not have to provide a solution to the problem. We know of this from modern political campaigns, too. Highlighting the problems and providing someone who “knows what to do” works well, even if the “what” is never articulated. Far more important is to articulate the problem. The myths are here to give rise to emotions that lead to a shared ethos. An ethos, that may favour a strong king, supported by deities, who listens to the advice of the elite, who knows how to deal with usurpers, solve crises, and ensure the continuity of the political elite and his own dynasty. When the king and his dynasty are weak, the whole land suffers. When the king is strong, the land prospers. Such an ethos favours a strong persona on the throne.

The imagery of such a king could have been achieved by portraying him in a more victorious manner. However, we should consider that Ugarit was a rich and powerful kingdom but still a petite one. Ugarit was always dependent on large powers – Mittani, Egypt, or Hatti. Presenting the king as a mighty conqueror is difficult to imagine in this position. Kirta's siege of Udm results in obtaining a wife, not in expanding his kingdom. Rather, the epics note that the king's obligations lie in the kingdom's military protection. A contrasting strategy – acknowledging and promoting the role of the Hittites and deriving the power from them⁶⁶ – would be incompatible with the presumed

65. Some comparisons may be made, e.g., with the Statue of Idrimi (BM 130738; see e.g., online edition by Lauinger, *ORACC, Statue of Idrimi*, available at: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/aemw/alalakh/idrimi/corpus/> [accessed 14th November 2023]). In this story, Idrimi faces initial difficulties, losing his throne. Nonetheless, for the most part, the statue inscription tells a story of his successful reinstalment – even if with the great help and support of the Hurrian king Parattarna, which bears some further political implications of power negotiations.

66. As the Idrimi inscription did with the Hurrians, see note above.

context of negotiating and problematising power relations. At the same time, it might have been reasonable not to promote great local power and independence. Facing the possibility that the Assyrians may soon be taking over the Hittite sphere, including Ugarit, to remain sober in this regard was better than to propagate too bold plans. The subordination of Ugarit was a political fact. But a fact set in ever-shifting power relations.

The strongest recurring topic in both narratives is the threat to dynastic continuity. We have seen that it has been addressed from several perspectives: lack of children due to the death of wives or bareness, death of an heir, and disobedience/treason. The sources from the period we are exploring do not explicitly mention any problems with royal succession. Nonetheless, there are some indications that the position might not have been excellent at some points. For example, we have seen that the Hittites addressed the *sākinu* of Ugarit via the House of Urtēnu instead of the king himself (RS 34.129) and, more importantly, noted that the king was young and inexperienced. The second letter (RS 88.2009), addressed to the elders and great man, also indicates the bypass of the royal office. On the other hand, the evidence for a strong position of the king is abundant, and few indications do not have to mean a structural and long-term problem for the royalty.

The above-mentioned text of the royal funeral (KTU 1.161) may be seen as a feeble reference to some issues within the dynasty within our timeframe. It seems suspicious that the text mentions ʿAmmittamru and Niqmaddu, presumably ʿAmmittamru III and Niqmaddu IV, as well as the heir to the throne ʿAmmurāpi, but omit the predecessor of Niqmaddu IV, Ibirānu VI. Could we suspect any foul play here?

The recent historical experience could have also been a factor in addressing the problem of succession. The strikingly short period of rule of Ar-Ḫalba and some documents related to him are sometimes interpreted as a consequence of revolt against the Hittites not long after Ugarit became their vassal (e.g., Singer 1999: 636–638). Whether this was the case or he only suffered a premature death is not that important. Either way, it had some implications on royal succession. He was succeeded by his brother and not by a son whom he might have lacked. The problems with royal succession were once again repeated in the next generation, when the brothers of ʿAmmittamru III were deported to Alašiya (see RS 17. 35, 17.352, 17. 362, and 17.367, edited in PRU IV: 121–124). Even closer to the active years of Ilimilku was the international clamour surrounding the divorce of ʿAmmittamru III with his wife from Amurru, who had also been a relative of the Hittite king (see, e.g., PRU IV: 125–148, Singer 1999: 680–681, or Thomas 2014: esp. 140–229). The issue of royal succession was an intrinsic part of it, too – the son had to choose either to follow his mother and lose his claims to the throne or to abandon her (see Thomas 2014: esp. 140–162).

The historical reality of dynastic succession was far from seamless at Ugarit. The epics were set within this historical experience. Once again, it is next to impossible to trace direct links revealing the effectivity of the narratives in this regard, but there is a possibility that they were intended as a kind of “damage control”.⁶⁷

67. Similarly, the extensive ideological reforms of Šulgi in Ur III may be perceived as an attempt to control the damages caused by the death of Ur-Nammu on the battlefield (Michalowski 2010: 20).

The epics also touch upon two topics where the royal ideology is detached from the persona of the king. The rulers in the epics are shown to interact with the elite of their cities, and the government is, therefore, not a pure monarchy. The already-mentioned letter RS 88.2009 then confirms that it was not only a literary topos, but the elders, great men, as well as other officials were indeed an effective component in the political life. The epics confirm this as the proper way of ruling. We may wonder whether such a notion was present in the epics because the influential elite, including Ilimilku, wanted to promote themselves side by side with the king. Did they try to subtly take advantage of the young king? How would this relate to the dispersion of political activities to the “private” households in the city, like the House of Urtēnu?

Apart from the rulers and (male) elite, the epics also highlight the role of the royal women. There may be several reasons for this. Obviously, they are intrinsically connected with the royal succession. Without them, there is none. However, their role in the epics is far from “producing heirs”. They are active actors in the plot. While this is never stated explicitly in the epics, the princesses Tītmanit and Paġit may also be those who, in the end, resolve the problems with royal succession. The poet plays with their very generic names – the Eight-One and Girl/Princess. But the last daughter of Kirta is pronounced firstborn by Il, and Paġit takes upon herself the quest of searching for the body of her dead brother and avenging him. Thomas (2014) has broadly explored that in political relations, the women were not – as is sometimes stipulated – mere objects of international exchange, generating power through their paternal relationship, but active actors in both domestic and international politics. The now widely accepted conception of patrimonial society at Ugarit (following Schloen 2001) sometimes cloaks the fact that neither political reality nor the language was exclusively patrimonial but depended a great deal on women, too (Thomas 2014: 1–19). Is it conceivable to perceive these literary features in the context of the close relations of Ilimilku and the queen? Once again, the sources surrounding the epics allow for this option, even if any explicit and direct links elude us.

The theory of social myths also invites us to search for elements that can be used as persuasion strategies (Bouchard 2017: 93–111). What makes a narrative effective in reaching its goals? Expectedly, the nature of our sources provides complications to this line of enquiry. Many of the persuasion strategies the actors may employ are connected with the live performance of the narratives. In this regard, it is essential to acknowledge that we are exploring a society that was dominantly oral. There was only a very limited circle of those who could read the epics as they were composed. This opens space for more actors who had an effect on the articulation besides Ilimilku himself. If we suppose the stories were mediated via performers, we should acknowledge that they themselves could have modified the contents of the story. Even though this material is not available to us, it seems that oral cultures scarcely retell a story exactly the same throughout different iterations (see, e.g., Ong 2005: 56–66). However, it was not only the narrated content that contributed to the reception of a story. Where did the performer make emphases? Where did he pause or whisper? Was this accompanied by any kind of dramatic performance? On what occasion did such a performance appear? And how would that hope affect the listener?

Our knowledge of the performance of narrative compositions is nearly non-existent. At best, we have some indirect references and comparative evidence. For example, the Baʿal Cycle mentions a singer who sings at the feast of the Storm-God (KTU 1.3 I: 18–22). It is possible that this is a narrative reflection of the real practices (Hawley 2015: 73). Singing was also performed during religious rituals (see e.g., KTU 1.112: 21 or KTU 1.148 that includes a Hurrian hymn), and

singers are mentioned in some administrative texts (e.g., KTU 4.103:41 or 4.168:4). A large collection of Hurrian hymns on deities from the Royal Palace (see, e.g., Ernst-Pradal 2016) further highlight the importance of songs in cultic contexts. Unfortunately, it is far from clear if these practices should be anyhow related to the performance of narrative poetry. Text FM 9, no. 8 from MBA Mari mentions a singer who should serve the king by extolling him, but such a shred of comparative evidence is feeble at best.

Where the researcher may fall victim to efforts to empathise is when trying to figure out what was perceived as compelling by the audience. It seems to me that there are no common rules on what is perceived as a good performance. Admittedly, accustomed to the Hollywood production, when reading the ancient narratives and poetry for the first time, I had problems in grasping how this would be appreciated by anyone. Whenever someone states that some ancient work is an excellent example of a great skill of poetry, I ask myself: really? For me, it took a lot of time to immerse in these works to start appreciating some of their aspects. This, however, should not be confused with what was appreciated by the ancient authors (see also Parker 1989: 54–59). To properly narrate a story, the narrator and listeners must be mutually attuned. When this is not the case, the myth can, in a better case, be unsuccessful in raising the wished-for ethos; in a worst case, the myth can wholly backfire.

The most problematic issue of this research is to determine the audience. Although this term appears repeatedly in this paper, there are no indications of whom it should designate (see also discussion in Parker 1989: 143–144). In theory, we may include “everyone” here. Liverani has suggested approaching the reach of ideological materials within the framework of the “theory of concentric belts” (2014b). Possibly, the narratives could have circulated throughout society, but with different levels of details, understanding, and impact. The limited number of persons closest to the king knows most of the details and is strongly influenced by the peculiarities of the narratives. The further the narrative is distanced from the elite, the level of details decreases, and the story is, in the end, known only in a feeble outline, but to a great number of people. Anyhow, this remains a theory at best, and no solid conclusions can be made with it. We should never forget that the individuals in the audience were also the actors of the social interactions. They were an integral part of the process of narrative reception. The modern interpretations can hardly cover the whole spectrum of ancient perceptions.

One of the features where we can possibly observe the efforts of the poet to make his work compelling is the employment of various poetic devices. The epics were set within the broader cultural milieu of the ancient Near East. As has already been noted, the scribes of Ugarit were trained on known compositions from Mesopotamia, like *Atraḥasīs* or the *Epic of Gilgameš* (see, e.g., Roche-Hawley 2015, Cohen 2013: 55–77, Hawley 2008, or van Soldt 2016a and 1995). Some of the poetic devices were shared in this milieu, and we may suspect Ilimilku was inspired by them. Natan-Yulzary has explored such literary features appearing in the Ugaritic epics (2017, 2020, and 2022; see also Parker 1989: 7–59). The audience might have expected and appreciated the extensive use of different forms of parallelisms, fixed word pairs, or repetitions.

One of the recurring poetic features is the “seven/eight-fold” imagery. It has been recurring throughout heroic compositions. The employment of this imagery was probably aimed at raising a feeling of completeness. Kirta had seven/eight sons and seven wives – all of them perished (KTU 1.14 I: 7–21); seven/eight new children are promised to him (KTU 1.15 II: 23–25); Kirta is

instructed to march to Udum for seven days (KTU 1.14 III: 1–5); Daniil is approached by Baʿal after seven days of venerating deities (KTU 1.17 I: 15–16); the droughts affect the country for seven/eight years (KTU 1.19 I: 44–46); and Aqhat is mourned for seven years (KTU 1.19 IV: 15–18). Ilimilku then used the deviance from this pattern to build up the tension. For example, Kirta did not follow the instructions of Il but stopped at the shrine of Aṭirat in Tyre; by this, he had interrupted the sequence (Natan-Yulzary 2020: 158–159). This deviance was the start of his later illness. Thus, Ilimilku constructs his compositions upon established traditions, but he does not so blindly, but creatively manipulates them to insert plot twists (Natan-Yulzary 2020: 164–165, 170–172).

Ilimilku has aptly made use of more cases of intertextuality.⁶⁸ An episode where a more direct inspiration probably appears is the quarrel between Aqhat and the goddess ʿAnat. The deity craves the precious bow of the young hero and even offers immortality in exchange (KTU 1.17 VI: 25–41). This episode is reminiscent of the Epic of Gilgameš, where the hero refuses similar offers of Ištar.⁶⁹ At the same time, the Ugaritic text is very far from merely transposing the known episode, but creatively adapts, reuses, and transforms parts of it to narrate a new story. For example, in the Mesopotamian composition, the friend of the main protagonist, Enkidu, pays for this quarrel; at Ugarit, it was Aqhat himself.

But we do not have to focus only on how Ilimilku has been using and transforming the contents of known compositions. Most of the time, he had been building upon well-established literary topoi in a more subtle way. Apart from the seven/eight-fold sequencing, we may note the imagery of widowhood and orphanhood (see e.g., Fensham 1962).

One of the very important recurring imageries used by Ilimilku is the following of divine will (see, e.g., Válek 2022: 53–56). While we often tend to perceive the rulers as those who do as they wish, this has not been the case – at least in ideology. Proper rulers crave divine support, boast of it and care for divination.⁷⁰ The epics highlight the submission of the rulers to the divine will as an essential element, and any deviance from it does not end well. Once again, we may use the example of Kirta’s vow to Aṭirat. Not only does he not follow the instructions of Il, but he also fails to fulfil his promise to the goddess. The prime example of this deviance is Yaššib, the son of Kirta, who opposes his father because *ywsrn[[x]]n . ggnh*, “his insides instructed him” (KTU 1.16 VI: 26, translation according to DUL: 293). He did not follow the divine will, but his own. The quarrel between Aqhat and ʿAnat may be perceived in the same context – he had opposed her wishes.

In the context of the social myths theory, using intertextuality and traditional expressions is a time-tested way to success. It is easier to build upon the imageries shared within society than to create completely new sets of them. However, this does not mean these imageries have to be statically repeated. As we have seen, a sudden deviance from them is also highly effective, as it attracts the attention of the audience and explicates plot twists. The possibility that Ilimilku had

68. The research on intertextuality is a vital field of study of ANE compositions. For some recent contributions, see, e.g., Wisnom 2019 or Bach 2020.

69. Tablet VI of the standard Babylonian epic; see George 2003: 616–631. See Parker 1989: 112–122 for broader literary connections of this episode.

70. Divination was often an integral part of the decision-making process in ANE courts. See, e.g., Maul 2018: 237–252 and 2015 or Lenzi & Stökl 2014. At Ugarit, the evidence for the active use of divination in politics is only indirect. It may be evidenced, e.g., by the large collection of ivory divinatory models from the Royal Palace (see Gachet & Pardee 2001) or by the Ugaritic divinatory compendia that could also have a bearing on the public sphere.

only reworked known stories about Kirta and Aqhat also fits well into this scheme and does not counter the suggested interpretation.

Natan-Yulzary notes that “the knowledge shared by the poet and his interpretive community allows the poet to manipulate the audience’s interpretations” (2020: 172–173). This opens yet another issue for the enquiry. Such a statement presupposes that there is some shared knowledge between Ilimilku, the interpreter, and the audience. However, we have started this section with a reference to the scribal education. Now, the question is whether the poetic artistry of Ilimilku might have been appreciated outside the scholarly community. Because of their training, the scribes might have been ignorant of the rest of the population. What has worked well on scholars might not have worked on everyone or in the same manner. Because we lack access to the oral traditions of Ugarit, we cannot know how well, and if, people knew Gilgameš or Atrahāsīs and how interiorised were the recurring patterns of poetry. Since many of them occur throughout the history of the ancient Near East, it is probably not unreasonable to suppose the oral tradition, to a great extent, worked similarly. The feature of the seven/eight-fold imagery may easily belong to the broadly dispersed pattern of expression. But not every instance of intertextuality might have meant something to the audience. But we should be aware that the careful reading of every word, expression, and formulation may, to some extent, miss how the narratives worked when being told.

Because the sources of the poet’s inspiration could have been too distant for some of his audience, he also employed imagery that was more fitting to a particular time and place. For example, the comparison with the ritual texts from Ugarit clearly shows that the pantheon appearing in the epics was well-known at the site. These were not deities from distant places, belonging only to stories. They were present in the local temples, affecting the daily life of the city. The light motifs of Hurrian themes in the epic of Kirta may draw on the popularity of Hurrian elements in the local culture (see, e.g., Válek 2021 49–54). Kirta is a known king of Mittani; the new wife of Kirta is named Ḥuraya, possibly “the Hurrian-One”; and the name of his city Ḥābur relates to the river in the Hurrian homeland. This Hurrian setting, nevertheless, cannot overshadow the prevalent Semitic scheme and content. Geographical references may also trigger some associations within the audience – namely, the cities of Tyre and Sidon, which are mentioned in relation to Aṭirat, belonged most likely to the known world of Ugarit due to their proximity. Even though we cannot locate the cities near which Aqhat was killed (*qr . mym, mrr . tǵll . bnr, or ablm*), and we cannot even be sure about their historicity, the names were probably chosen because they were somehow relevant for the audience and aimed to trigger specific associations.

In contrast with this familiar setting, the poet situated the plot of the narratives completely outside the Ugaritic realm. The epics are distanced from Ugarit and from the ruling dynasty. This poses a legitimate objection to interpreting them as part of the local royal propaganda. However, it may also be interpreted as a clever move on how to talk about failures. Bouchard has argued that myths do not have to be about victories and successes to achieve their goal (2017: e.g., 49, 52, or 61–62), especially in the case of the petite and dependent kingdom such as Ugarit.

The motive of failure is full of potential because it is intrinsically connected with emotions. It also bears the promise of improvement. We have already mentioned in the introduction that a similar approach has been coined by Turner in his conception of anti-structure, especially in relation to ritual. Inversion, failure, humiliation, loss, harm, or endangerment do not have to be

mechanisms of disintegration, but the other way around.⁷¹ However, they also always open the potential for destruction. Connecting the failures directly with the living ruler may be very dangerous. It is sometimes better to ponder them from a safe distance.

The emotion-rising elements appear throughout the epics. The motifs of bareness, betrayal and the loss of children, wives, or fathers were surely relatable to many. In the patrimonial society, family continuity was important not only for the royalty and elite but also for the rest of the population. The danger of droughts and crop failure was an ever-present possibility, having grave consequences. The contemporary correspondence even attests to the emotions these problems caused (e.g., *KTU 2.104* between Urtēnu and his sister).

Emotions have the power to mobilise. They create a powerful ethos, especially when built upon shared collective imaginaries. However, there is also a risk of giving rise to feelings of hopelessness. Myths can mobilise but also lead to pessimistic resignation – myths can backfire (Bouchard 2017: 53).

6. Conclusion

The epics of Kirta and Aqhat were explored from the perspective of the theory of social myths. As such, they were addressed as active elements within the Ugaritic society, forming the social reality, entering into dialogue with historical realities, and stemming from the intentions of their creators.

It has been argued that both epics can be read hand in hand because they share many topics they address from different perspectives. Problems with dynastic continuity, the dependence of the prosperity of the land on the well-being of the ruler, positive and negative ruler-deity relationships, position of royal women, obligations of the rulers, etc. The narratives help the author and the audience to ponder these issues from a safe distance, to explore the limits of cultural order, society, the human condition, or politics.

The epics were discussed within the specific context of the LBA Ugarit, shortly before the city and its kingdom ceased to exist. Their author, Ilimilku, was well entangled within the elite relations of local and international politics, economics, and religion. The sources indicate that he did not have to be a mere copyist of these works but could have actively contributed to their contents and might have used them to achieve his (or his client's) goals, disregarding whether he has been composing anew or building upon already existing tradition. The broader historical setting in which he has written these works is sometimes reflected in them. For example, environmental issues addressed in the narratives significantly contributed to the dissolution of the LBA world.

The narratives are filled with motives of obstacles and failures. Childlessness, illness, drought, famine, failure to keep a promise to a deity, death of an heir, or treason of an heir were articulated as problems a monarch may face. It has been argued that such motives may not be a sign of satire or critique of the system but could have been employed in favour of the current establishment, strengthening the position of the king, the elite, and possibly also the royal women. This strategy

71. In this context, we may mention *KTU 1.114*, which includes the divine banquet of Il, ending in the humiliating inebriation of the head of the pantheon. This story is then used constructively as a base for a remedy, presumably for a hangover.

might have been particularly effective in the context of a petite kingdom that was experiencing environmental, social, and warfare issues.

As stated in the introduction, the conclusions of this research must remain preliminary. The available evidence is rich, but it does not allow us to discern the peculiarities and details necessary to track all associations that were present in ancient times. The motives of involved actors, the use of the narratives, the intended audience or the reach of these epics are revealed in the sources only indirectly. We are able to reconstruct to some extent the relevant relationships of Ilimilku with the elite, the historical context, or to explore many poetic devices and intertextualities of the narratives that could have been used to increase their social effect, but the final and definitive links that would clearly connect the physical tablets and their contents with these realities are usually lost to us. Still, I hope that the article shows that such an endeavour is not entirely impossible and meaningless. Hopefully, with future exploration of more narratives and the active involvement of the authors, kings, elites, but also the non-elite audience in their production and reception, a more detailed understanding of ANE narratives as active and living social elements may be achieved.

7. Abbreviations

- DUL DEL OLMO LETE, GREGORIO & JOAQUÍN SANMARTÍN 2015. *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. 3rd revised edition. HdO 112. Leiden–Boston: Brill.
- FM 7 DURAND, JEAN-MARIE 2002. *Florilegium marianum VII: Le Culte d’Addu d’Alep et l’affaire d’Alahtum*. Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 8. Paris: SEPOA.
- FM 9 ZIEGLER, NELE 2007. *Les musiciens et la musique d’après les archives de Mari*. Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 10. Paris: SEPOA.
- KTU DIETRICH, MANFRIED, OSWALD LORETZ & JOAQUIN SANMARTIN 2013. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten. Dritte, erweiterte Auflage. The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts: from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places. Third Enlarged Edition*. AOAT 360/1. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- PRU III NOUGAYROL, JEAN, GEORGE BOYER & EMMANUEL LAROCHE 1955. *Le Palais Royal d’Ugarit, volume III: Textes accadiens et hourrites des archives est, ouest et centrales*. Mission de Ras Shamra VI. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale & Klincksieck.
- PRU IV NOUGAYROL, JEAN 1956. *Le Palais Royal d’Ugarit, volume IV: Textes accadiens des archives sud (Archives internationales)*. Mission de Ras Shamra IX. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale & Klincksieck.
- RS object siglum, Ras Shamra (Ugarit)
- RSO VII BORDREUIL, PIERRE (ed.) 1991. *Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville*. Paris: ERC.
- RSO XIV YON, MARGUERITE & DANIEL ARNAUD (eds.) 2001. *Études ougaritiques I. Travaux 1985-1995*. Paris: ERC.
- TEO BORDREUIL, PIERRE & DENNIS PARDEE 1989. *La trouvaille épigraphique de l’Ougarit, 1: Correspondance*. RSO V/1. Paris: ERC.

8. Bibliography

- ARNAUD, DANIEL 1998. Prolégomènes à la rédaction d'une histoire d'Ougarit, II: Les bordereaux de rois divinisés. *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* 41/2: 155–173.
- . 2007. *Corpus des textes de bibliothèque de Ras Shamra-Ougarit (1936-2000) en sumérien, babylonien et assyrien*. AuOrS 23. Sabadell: Editorial AUSA.
- BACH, JOHANNES 2020. *Untersuchungen Zur Transtextuellen Poetik: Assyrischer Herrschaftlich-Narrativen Texte*. SAAS 30. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- BACHVAROVA, MARY R. 2012. From “Kingship in Heaven” to King Lists: Syro-Anatolian Courts and the History of the World. *Journal of Near Eastern Religions* 12/1: 97–118.
- BERGER, PETER L. & THOMAS LUCKMANN 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- BOUCHARD, GÉRARD 2013 (ed). *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*. London–New York: Routledge.
- . 2017. *Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries*. Toronto–Buffalo–London: University of Toronto Press.
- BOYES, PHILIP J. 2018. Negotiating Imperialism and Resistance in Late Bronze Age Ugarit: The Rise of Alphabetic Cuneiform. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 29(2): 185–199.
- BREIER, IDAN 2020: ‘Had I Been Writing Lying Words to My Lord?’ (EA 117:29-30): Telling Tales in the Correspondence Between the Egyptian Ruler and his Syro-Canaanite Vassals in the El-Amarna Archive. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 51: 31–55.
- CAVIGNEAUX, ANTOINE 2007. Les Oiseaux de l'arche. *Aula Orientalis* 25/2: 319–320.
- COHEN, YORAM 2013. *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*. WAW 29. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- COLLOMBERT, PHILIPPE & LAURENT COULON 2000. Les dieux contre la mer. Le début du «papyrus d'Astarté» (pBN 202). *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire* 100: 193–242.
- DEVECCHI, ELENA 2019. A Reluctant Servant: Ugarit under Foreign Rule during the Late Bronze Age. In: J. MYNÁŘOVÁ, M. KILANI & S. ALIVERNINI (eds.), *A Stranger in the House – the Crossroads III. Proceedings of an International Conference on Foreigners in Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern Societies of the Bronze Age held in Prague, September 10–13, 2018*: 121–135.
- DOUGLAS, MARY 1984. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. 1st ed. 1966. London–New York: Routledge.
- ERNST-PRADAL, FRANÇOISE 2016. Paléographie des tablettes musicales hourrites de Ras Shamra – Ougarit. In V. MATOĀIAN & M. AL-MAQDISSI (eds.), *Études ougaritiques IV*. RSO XXIV. Louvain: Peeters: 73–94.
- FENSHAM, CHARLES F. 1962. Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21/2: 129–139.
- GACHET, JACQUELINE & DENNIS PARDEE 2001. Les ivoires inscrits du Palais Royal (fouille 1955). In: M. YON & D. ARNAUD (eds.), *Études ougaritiques I. Travaux 1985-1995*. RSO XIV. Paris: ERC: 191–230.
- GEORGE, ANDREW R. 2003. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts. Volume I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2007. The Gilgameš epic at Ugarit. *Aula Orientalis* 25: 237–254.

- GILAN, AMIR 2010. Epic and History in Hittite Anatolia: In Search of a Local Hero. In D. KONSTAN & K. A. RAAFLAUB (eds.), *Epic and History*. Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell: 51–65.
- HALAYQA, ISSAM K. H. 2010. The Demise of Ugarit in the Light of its Connections with Ḫatti. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 42: 297–332.
- HAWLEY, ROBERT 2008. On the Alphabetic Scribal Curriculum at Ugarit. In R. D. BIGGS, J. MYERS & M. T. ROTH (eds.), *Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale. Held at The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. July 18–22, 2005*. SAOC 62. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: 57–67.
- HAWLEY, ROBERT, DENNIS PARDEE & CAROLE ROCHE-HAWLEY 2015. The Scribal Culture of Ugarit. *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 2(2): 229–267.
- JAKOB, STEFAN 2024. *Historisch-epische Texte*. KAALI 16/WVDOG 163. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- KEMP, LUKE & ERIC H. CLINE 2022. Systemic Risk and Resilience: The Bronze Age Collapse and Recovery. In A. IZDEBSKI, J. HALDON & P. FILIPKOWSKI (eds.), *Perspectives on Public Policy in Societal-Environmental Crises: What the Future Needs from History*. Cham: Springer: 207–223.
- KNAPP, BERNARD A. & STURT W. MANNING 2016. Crisis in Context: The End of the Late Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean. *American Journal of Archaeology* 120: 99–149.
- LACKENBACHER, SYLVIE 2002. *Textes akkadiens d’Ugarit: Textes provenant des vingt-cinq premières campagnes*. LAPO 20. Paris: Cerf.
- LAMBERT, WILFRED G. & ALAN R. MILLARD 1999. *Atra-Ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- LATOUR, BRUNO 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press.
- LENZI, ALAN & JONATHAN STÖKL (eds.) 2014. *Divination, Politics, and Ancient Near Eastern Empires*. ANEM 7. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- LIVERANI, MARIO 2014a. *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy*. London–New York: Routledge.
- . 2014b. The King and His Audience. In S. GASPA, A. GRECO, D. M. BONACOSSO, S. PONCHIA & R. ROLLINGER (eds.), *From Source to History: Studies of Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond*. AOAT 412. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag: 373–385.
- MACHINIST, PETER B. 1978. *The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta: A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature*. Ph.D. Thesis. Yale University.
- MAJEWSKI, MARCIN 2023. Filial Duties in the Ugaritic Epic of Aqhatu. *Collectanea Theologica* 93/1: 5–43.
- MALBRAN-LABAT, FLORENCE & CAROLE ROCHE 2007. Urtēnu Urtešub. In: J.-M. MICHAUD (ed.) *Le royaume d’Ougarit de la Crète à l’Euphrate. Nouveaux axes de recherche. Actes du congrès international de Sherbrooke 2005. (Collection Proche-Orient et Littérature Ougaritique, II)*. Sherbrooke: G.G.C. Editions: 63–104.
- MARGALIT, BARUCH 1989. *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqhat*. BZAW 182. Berlin–New York: De Gruyter.
- . 1999. The Legend of Keret. In W.G.E. WATSON & N. WYATT (eds.), *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*. HdO 39. Leiden: Brill: 203–352.

- MAUL, STEFAN M. 2015. Telling the Future: Reflections on the Status of Divination in Ancient Near Eastern Politics. In P. MEUSBURGER, D. GREGORY & L. SUARSANA (eds.), *Geographies of Knowledge and Power*. KNAS 7. Dordrecht: Springer: 123–133.
- . 2018. *The Art of Divination in the Ancient Near East: Reading the Signs of Heaven and Earth*. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- MILLER, PATRICK D. 1970. Animal Names as Designations in Ugaritic and Hebrew. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 2: 177–186.
- MICHALOWSKI, PIOTR 2010. Maybe Epic: The Origins and Reception of Sumerian Heroic Poetry. In D. KONSTAN & K. A. RAAFLAUB (eds.) *Epic and History*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell: 7–25.
- MONROE, CHRISTOPHER M. 2020. Informed or at Sea: On the Maritime and Mundane in Ugaritic Tablet RS 94.2406. In A. GILBOA & A. YASUR-LANDAU (eds.), *Nomads of the Mediterranean: Trade and Contact in the Bronze and Iron Ages*. Leiden–Boston: Brill: 205–220.
- NATAN-YULZARY, SHIRLY 2017. The Use of Resumptive Repetition for the Construction of Time and Space in the Ugaritic Epic of Aqhat. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 48: 373–390.
- . 2020. Kirta's Pitfall Rhapsody – A Literary Reading in Kirta. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 51: 153–179.
- . 2022. Reading Ugaritic Narrative-Poetry: The Epic Description of Kirta's Expedition to Udum in KTU 1.14. *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 35: 82–120.
- ONG, WALTER J. 2005. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. 1st ed. 1982. London–New York: Routledge.
- PARDEE, DENNIS 1997. The Ba^ʿlu Myth (1.86). In W. W. HALLO & K. L. YOUNGER, JR. (eds.), *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World. Volume 1*. Leiden: Brill: 241–274.
- . 2012. {G} as a Palaeographic Indicator in Ugaritic Texts. In E. DEVECCHI (ed.), *Palaeography and Scribal Practices in Syro-Palestine and Anatolia in the Late Bronze Age*. PIHANS 119. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten: 111–126.
- . 2014. L'Autorité littéraire au XIII e siècle av. J.-C.? 'Ilîmilku d'Ougarit: Scribe/Auteur? In: M. GOREA & M. TARDIEU (eds.), *Autorités des auteurs antiques: Entre anonymat, masque et authenticité*: Brepols: Turnhout: 35–57.
- PARKER, SIMON B. 1989. *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition: Essays on the Ugaritic Poems Keret and Aqhat*. RBS 24. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- . (ed.) 1997. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- PITARD, WAYNE T. 2008. Watch that Margin! Understanding the scribal peculiarities of CAT 1.4 Obverse. *Maarav* 15/1: 27–37.
- . 2012. Nodding Scribe and Heavy Thumb: The Scribal Errors in CAT 1.14 III 52–V 8. In M. J. LUNDBERG, S. FINE & W. T. PITARD (eds.), *Puzzling out the Past: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures in Honor of Bruce Zuckerman*. CHANE 55. Leiden: Brill: 135–154.
- RIEKEN, ELISABETH 2001. Der hethitische šar-tamḫāri-Text: archaisch oder archaisierend?. In G. WILHELM (ed.), *Akten des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für Hethitologie, Würzburg, 4.-8. Oktober 1999*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag: 576–585.
- ROCHE-HAWLEY, CAROLE 2015. Mesopotamian Cuneiform at Ugarit: Learning versus Using. In C. ROCHE-HAWLEY & R. HAWLEY (eds.), *Devins et lettrés dans l'orbite de Byblone*. OM 16. Paris: Éditions de Boccard: 59–66.

- ROCHE-HAWLEY, CAROLE & ROBERT HAWLEY 2013. An Essay on Scribal Families, Tradition, and Innovation in Thirteenth-Century Ugarit. In B. J. COLLINS & P. MICHALOWSKI (eds.), *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*. Atlanta: Lockwood Press: 241–264.
- SCHLOEN, DAVID J. 2001. *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East*. SAHL 2. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- SINGER, ITAMAR 1999. A Political History of Ugarit. In W. G. E. WATSON & N. WYATT (eds.), *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*. HdO 39. Leiden: Brill: 603–733.
- STOL, MARTEN 2016. *Women in the Ancient Near East*. Boston–Berlin: De Gruyter.
- THOMAS, CHRISTINE N. 2014. *Reconceiving the House of the Father: Royal Women at Ugarit*. Ph.D. Thesis. Harvard University.
- TUGENDHAFT, AARON 2018. *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*. London: Routledge.
- TURNER, VICTOR W. 1977. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 1st ed. 1969. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- VÁLEK, FRANTIŠEK 2021. Foreigners and Religion at Ugarit. *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 9(2): 47–66.
- . 2022. *The Epic of Zimrī-Līm*. M.A. Thesis. Prague: Charles University.
- . 2024. RS 25.435 – Not the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta at Ugarit. *N.A.B.U.* 2024/3: 107–108.
- VAN SOLDT, WILFRED 1988. The Title *tūy*. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 20: 313–321.
- . 1989. *ʾAtn prln*, “Attā/ēnu the Diviner”. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 21: 365–368.
- . 2016a. School and Scribal Tradition in Ugarit. In S. YAMADA & D. SHIBATA (eds.), *Cultures and societies in the Middle Euphrates and Habur Areas in the Second Millennium BC. Vol 1: Scribal Education and Scribal Traditions*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: 145–156.
- . 2016b. The Travelling Queen of Ugarit. In V. MATOĀN & M. AL-MAQDISSI (eds.) *Études ougaritiques IV*. RSO XXIV. Louvain: Peeters: 109–117.
- VANSTIPHOUT, HERMAN 1998. Comparative Notes on Šar Tamḥāri. In H. ERKANAL, V. DONBAZ & A. UGUROGLU (eds.), *XXXIVème Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale – XXXIV. Uluslararası Assirioloji Kongresi – Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları XXVI. Dizi – Sa. 3*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 573–589.
- VITA, JUAN-PABLO 1999. The Society of Ugarit. In W. G. E. WATSON & N. WYATT (eds.), *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*. HdO 39. Leiden: Brill: 455–498.
- WESTENHOLZ, JOAN G. 2010. Historical Events and the Process of Their Transformation in Akkadian Heroic Traditions. In D. KONSTAN & K. A. RAAFLAUB (eds.), *Epic and History*. Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell: 26–50.
- WISNOM, SELENA 2019. *Weapons of Words: Intertextual Competition in Babylonian Poetry: A Study of Anzū, Enūma Eliš, and Erra and Išum*. CHANE 106. Leiden: Brill.
- WYATT, NICOLAS 1997. Ilimilku’s Ideological Programme: Ugaritic Royal Propaganda, and the Biblical Postscript. *Ugarit Forschungen* 29: 775–796.
- . 1999. The Story of Aqhat (KTU 1.17–19). In W. G. E. WATSON & N. WYATT (eds.), *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*. HdO 39. Leiden: Brill: 234–258.
- . 2000. Just How “Divine” Were the Kings of Ugarit? *Aula Orientalis* 17-18: 133–141.
- . 2002a. Ilimilku the Theologian: The Ideological Roles of Athtar and Baal in KTU 1.1 and 1.6. In O. LORETZ, K. A. METZLER & H. SCHAUDIG (eds.), *Ex Mesopotamia et Syria Lux: Festschrift für Manfred Dietrich zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*. AOAT 281. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

- . 2002b. *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilimilku and His Colleagues*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- . 2015 The Evidence of the Colophons in the Assessment of Ilimilku's Scribal and Authorial Role. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 46: 399–446.