

central theme: that of the battle between the hero and the monster.⁵⁷¹

P. COMBAT IN COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY: NOTE TO THE FOLLOWING TABLE: *In view of the overwhelming richness of the globally available data, I have confined myself to presenting the data from only one, reliable and well-referenced source, namely Fontenrose's (1959 / 1980) inquiry into the Delphic foundation myth.*⁵⁷² *The fact that these data have a worldwide distribution does not in itself confirm the hypotheses (however obvious and tempting) that these myths have diffused from one unique geographical origin. For one could equally plausibly maintain (as Fontenrose does in his conclusion) that the struggle on which this mythical complex centres takes place time and time again in every human being in her or his own right, or at least finds resonance in every human being, and that as such this struggle is imply a reflection of the universal human condition, which cannot be tied to one specific origin in space and time. From a rather different perspective, one might reject the approach in Table 13.1 on the grounds that, given the richness of narrative, free variation attending all of the myths involved in this complex, each of the individual personages parades here is in fact incomparable to all others; in that perspective, the reduction which is applied here (to the simple schema 'hero versus monster') would be absurd, would commit violence to the literary value and contents of these myths. My answer to such dismissiveness would be that structuralist analysis of myths (which we owe in the first place to Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1964-1971, 1968, 1979) has acquainted us with the thought that, underneath the narrative surface structure of the various individual myths (a surface structure which we can investigate in its own right) we can detect simple schemas that are recurrent in space and time. Making these schemas explicit enables us to recognise the unity underlying the plurality and pluriformity of myths. However, since this was first written (2001) I have done much more work on comparative mythology, and (contrary to Fontenrose, who in the conclusion of his impressively comprehensive 1980 / 1959 study saw no alternative but to rush through the open door of the universal and timeless human experience as struggle) I have found a middle ground between that (fairly uninteresting) universal level and the narrative divergence of the combat myth in so many different local contexts: in my book Before the Presocratics (van Binsbergen 2012d; cf. 2009c, 2010d) I show that all these forms of combat, at one level of analysis at least, may all be read (just like the many forms of metamorphosis narrated by Ovid – as well as the transformations on which the Chinese Book of Changes / 易經 yì jīng ('I Ching') revolves) as narrative expressions of a very wide-spread cosmology of cyclical element transformation, underlying world-views, clan systems and divination systems in many part of the Old World, and even the New World, since the Early Bronze Age, and in its earliest and least sophisticated form, since the Upper Palaeolithic. Thus, the combat is, among other referents, the forceful and transformative influence of element A on element B, by which B metamorphoses into another element, C. Incidentally, Ancient Greek material is unavoidably over-represented in Fontenrose's corpus; it is such material which also offers (that is, within the confines of that corpus) the only window on North Africa and Africa South of the Sahara. For a simple illustration this is no serious defect provided we realise within what kind of self-imposed constraints we are conducting our analysis.*

⁵⁷¹ In the same vein Ginzburg has argued that converging representations concerning witches, ancestors and ecstasy have an even wider distribution (Ginzburg 1966 / 1986, 1992 / 1989).

⁵⁷² We may list the following sources here (Tripp 1974; Graves 1964: 79): Hyginus (1872), *Fabula*, 140; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, I.4.1; *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (see Hesiod etc. 1914), 300 f.; *Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius*, II, 706 (non vidi).

| | selected | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| regions | protagonists (italics = ♀) | enemies (italics = ♀) | passive heroines (italics = ♀) |
| Africa | Perseus | Ketos | <i>Aso, Andromeda</i> |
| Egypt | Ammon, <i>Athena / Neith</i> , Geb, Horus, <i>Isis</i> , Min, Osiris, Ra ^c , (Seth), Thoth, <i>Uto, Anat, Ašerat</i> , | Apep, Bata, Busiris, the Sea, Seth, (Thoth), <i>Anat, Ašerat</i> , | (<i>Isis</i>), <i>Nut</i> |
| Canaan, Israel, Ugarit, Syria | <i>Anat</i> , Aqhat, Ba ^c al, <i>Beltis</i> , El (Il), (<i>Judith</i>), Kadmos, Melqart, <i>Paghat</i> , Perseus, Phoenician heaven god, Yahweh | Holofernes, Humbaba, <i>Judith</i> , Ketos, Leviathan, Mot, Orontes, Phoenician Hawk Dragon, Satan, Tannin, Yam, Yatpan | <i>Andromeda, Ašerat, Kasiepeia, Omphale, Phoenician earth goddess</i> |
| Anatolia, Cilicia, Hittite Empire / Ḫatti, Cyprus | Ba ^c al Tarz, Hittite Weather God, Hupasias, <i>Inaras</i> , Kumarbi, Marsyas, Perseus, Sandon, Tešub, Telipinu | dragon, Illuyankas, <i>Medusa</i> , Okeanos, Syleus, Typhon, Ullikummi, Upelluri | <i>Aphrodite, Semiramis</i> |
| Mesopotamia | Anu, Ea, (Enkidu), Enlil, Gilgameš, (<i>Inanna</i>) / (<i>Ištar</i>), Lugalbanda, Marduk, Nergal, Ninurta, Šamaš, Tammuz | Apsu, Asag, Bilulu, (Enkidu), <i>Eriškigal</i> , (Gilgameš), Girgire, Humbaba, Imdugud, <i>Inanna / Ištar</i> , Kingu, <i>Labbu</i> , Seven Demons, <i>Tiamat</i> , Zu | |
| India, South East Asia, Persia | Fredun = Thraetaona, Indra, (<i>Kaikeyi</i>) | Azi Dahaka, <i>Danu</i> , Garuda, <i>Manthara</i> , Nahusha, Namuci, Ravana, Sinhika, Viparupa, Vritra | (<i>Kaikeyi</i>) |
| China | Chu Yang, Li Ping, No Cha, Shen Yi, Yi, Ying Lung, Yü | Ch'ih Yu, Chu Wang, dragon, Fung Po, Ho Po | <i>Hsi Wang Mu</i> |
| Japan | Agatamori, Amewakahiko, Izanagi, Raiko, (Susanoo), Takemikazuchi | Susanoo | <i>Amaterasu, Izanami</i> |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| North Africa and Southern Europe | Athena / Neith, Herakles, Melqart, Perseus | Antaios, Atlas, Cacus, Evander / Faunus, Geryon, Ophion | |
| Greece | Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Dionysos, Erechtheus, Erös, (Hekate), Herakles, (Hermes), Io, Kadmos, Kronos, Pan, (Poseidon), Ouranos, Zeus [Keraunios] ⁵⁷³ | Acheloos, Aigis, (Apollo), Ares, Delphyne, Despoina, Diomedes, (Dionysos), Drakon, Echidna, Gigantes, Glaukos, Hades, Hekate, Hera, (Herakles), (Hermes), Hydra, Kampē, Kepheus, Keto, Ker, (Kronos), Kyknos, Lamia, Laogoras, Laomedon, Linos, Neleus, Ocean = Okeanos, Ogygos, Pallas, (Perseus), Phlegyas, Phorbos, Poinē, Poseidon, Python, the Sea, Sphinx, Styx, Sybaris, Tartaros, Telphusa, Thanatos, Thetys, ⁵⁷⁴ Titans, Tityos, (Ouranos), Zeus [Hthonios], Zeus' hawk ⁵⁷⁵ | <i>Artemis, Deianeira, Demeter, Gē, Io, Kelto, Leto, Moirai, Persephone, Rhea, Xenodikē</i> |
| pre-Christian Northern Europe | Bearson, Beowulf, Hagen, Odinn, Ogjier the Dane, Parzival, Sigurd / Siegfried, Sigmund, Thor | dragon, Fafnir, Firedrake, Grendel, <i>Grendel's Mother, Hel, Holda, Lorelei</i> , Midgard Snake, Regin-Mimir, <i>Valkyrie, Venus, Ymir</i> | <i>Audumla, Brynhild, Krimhild, Lohengrin</i> |
| Christian Europe | St Evenmar, St George, St Michael | Satan, St George's dragon, the Woman of <i>Rev. 12 & 17</i> | |
| the Americas | Coyote, Gucumatz, Huanhpu, Xbalanque, Tahoe | Nashlah, Xibalba, Vucub-Caquix, Wishpoosh | |

Table 13.1. *World-wide continuities: The battle between the hero and the monster.*⁵⁷⁶

At the moment that they are formulated, applied, transmitted and attested, systems of knowledge can only manifest themselves as strictly local, as more or less embedded in a local cultural orientation and in local practices. Yet these local forms are often to be recognised as the results of *transformative localisation*: the embellishment and reformulation, more or less in local cultural terms, of knowledge which in fact comes from elsewhere and which may have a wide regional, even global, distribution. Through the

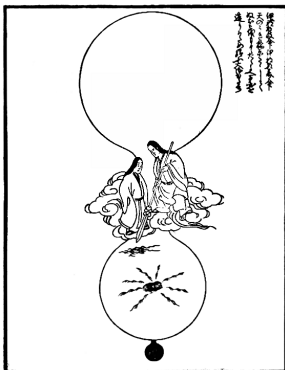
⁵⁷³ Many names could be added here, e.g. Agenor, Argos, Eurybatos, Euthymos, Koroibos, Lykos, Pyrrhichos, Silenos.

⁵⁷⁴ Thetys, a Titaness goddess of the primal sea, closest to the mytheme of the Mother of the Waters; often considered the grandmother of Thetis wife of Peleus and mother of Achilleus. In many accounts Thetis and Thetys merge.

⁵⁷⁵ Many names could be added here, e.g. Admetos, Akrisios, Aktaion, Amykos, Amyntor, Asklep-ios, Autolykos, Dryopes, Erginos, Eurynomos, Eurypylos, Eurytion, Eurytos, Euphemos, Geras, Heros of Temesa, Koronos, Ladon, Laistrygones, Lakinius, Lityerses, Lykoros, [Peri-] Klymenos, Phineus, Phorkys, Polydektes, Satyros, Theiodamas, Tiphys, Titias.

⁵⁷⁶ Compiled on the basis of scattered information in: Fontenrose 1980 / 1959, where also the relevant sources are identified.

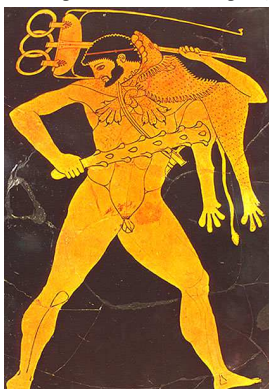
centuries, the mythical themes of Table 13.1 have given rise to a very rich iconography, a very small selection of which I present in the following pages. The considerable variation in size of pictures and captions precludes a more logical chronological or geographical order in the presentation. What emerges is the awareness that, despite the rich variation in conception and execution, we are possibly in the presence here on a *global* mytheme – pre-scientific knowledge shared almost over the entire globe.



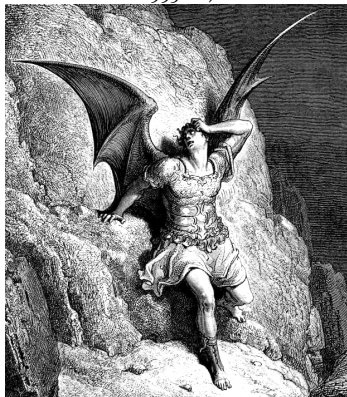
1. Izanami and Izanagi in a three-volume Japanese book containing stories of the creation of Japan, probably *Kojiki*, held at the Library of Congress of the USA (source: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/world/images/s13p4.jpg>)



2. The River Dragon, on whose back the culture hero Fu Xi (right) discovered the *pa kua* or Eight Trigrams fundamental for the Ancient Chinese world-view (T'ang dynasty) (Cherry 1995: 26)



9. Heracles seizing the tripod at Delphi, detail from an Athenian red-figure clay vase, about 480 BC, © Martin von Wagner Museum, Würzburg University; source: <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/CGPrograms/Dict/image/heracles.jpg>)



10. Satan in the 19th-c. CE depiction of Gustave Doré (source: Anonymous, 'Satan', at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>)



3. Babylonian cylinder seal: The battle of Tiamat and Marduk (source: <http://www.mythofcreation.co.uk/images/tiamat.GIF>)



4. The Gilgamesh cylinder seal (MS 1989), Assyria, ca. 7th c. BCE; www.schoyencollection.com/media/djcatalogz/images/the-gilgamesh-cylinder-seal_f.jpg



5. Sumerian 'Cylinder of Adda' depicting the god Ea / Enki, held at the British Museum B.M. 89115



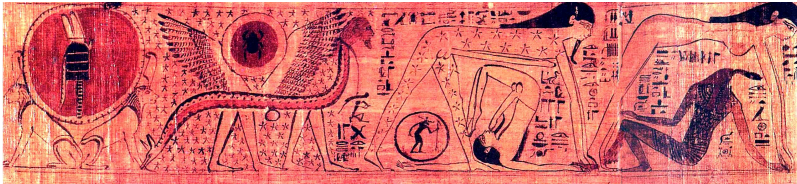
6. The goddess Inanna depicted on a Sumerian incense burner, with snakes, leopards and bulls (www.enenuru.net/sheshki/board/0202180600_1024.jpg)




14. Apollo Killing Python (1589; Anonymous after Hendrik Goltzius, Netherlands, 1558-1617) (source: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/dac/imag/1968/0029/003/1968-29-3-0013-moi.html>)



15. Bel-Merodach / Marduk, armed with the thunderbolt, does battle with the tumultuous Tiamat (Maspero / Sayce 1906: III)



11. Ancient Egyptian magical papyrus now held at the British Museum, London, United Kingdom, with composite and occult depictions of dragon, snake, dung beetle  Hpri, star-spangled Nut with a male self-fertilising body (reminiscent of the cosmogonic myth of Atum's masturbation), Nut, Geb in a self-fertilising posture, Geb as snake (throughout the Old World there is a close conceptual and even lexical relationship between 'earth' and 'snake'), the sun disc (inscribed in which is Amun's headdress) supported by two lions (often identified with Shu and Tefnut), etc.



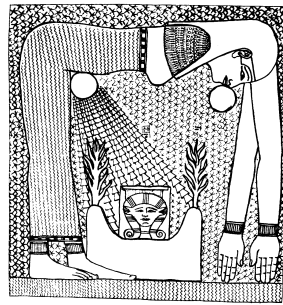
7. Horus depicted as falcon on the stele of King Snake, 1st dynasty Egypt (source: <http://www.louvre.fr/img/photos/collect/ae/grande/en007.jpg>)



8. Ancient Greek stele of Apollo and Hermes (source: <http://www.forthnet.gr/olympics/athens896/pictures/docs/herms.html>)



18. Saint Michael in the Breviary of Martin of Aragon, a 15th Century CE European illuminated MS (ROTH 2529) held at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France (source: http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/images/jpeg/i8_0072.jpg)



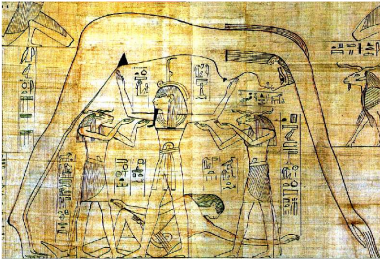
20. The goddess Nut through whose body the Sun (☉) passes from vulva to mouth, against the background of the starry sky, while sending its rays (depicted as individually palm or reed stems consisting of tapering segments) over the corn-covered (🌾) mountain (⚓) of the goddess Hathor (identified by her coiffure ending in two spirals), i.e. Egypt (source: <http://www.jbeilharz.de/ellis/egypt.html>)



21. Hera gathers the eyes of Argos, 17th c. CE drawing, Europe (source: <http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/oooImages/aim/argus-2615.jpg>)



19. One-eyed Odinn on his eight-legged mount, wielding lightning (Anonymous, 'Öðinn')



12. Ancient Egyptian papyrus representing the air god Shu separating the gods Geb (Earth) and Nut (Heaven); source: http://ivizlab.sfu.ca/arya/Gallery/Egypt/Geb_Nut.jpg



13. Pygmy fighting a crane on an Ancient Greek vase; Anonymous, 'Pygmy (Greek mythology)'



16. A Mesopotamian magical tablet: Nergal, the god of Hades (Maspero / Sayce 1906: III)



17. Gustave Doré's depiction of the Biblical theme of the destruction of Leviathan by Yahweh (source: Anonymous, 'Leviathan', at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leviathan>)

Table 13.2. Selected iconographic representations of the mythemes listed in Table 13.1.