

Creatures with Seven Heads in the Revelation of John

—

A History of the Motif in the Ancient Near East*

Christoffer Theis

Abstract: The essay offers a history of the motif of the multi-headed creatures in Revelation of John 12:3 and 13:1–2. It presents hints for a transmission of these specific creatures from a common view of cultures in the Ancient Near East in antiquity. So far, the focus for explaining these creatures was mainly based on motifs from the Old Testament, or the heads were seen as signs for Roman emperors. But with inclusion of sources from various cultures of the Ancient Near East, it becomes obvious that the feature of multiple heads, as well as the specific number of seven heads, is a common theme in different cultures. The presentation was surely not invented by John and there is no need to equate the heads with Roman emperors.

1. Introduction

If one thinks about threats to God and Christ in the Bible, the Revelation of John and the mentioning of specific enemies are surely among the most impressive examples. In Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 two of these enemies are described as a snake and a beast, each of them with seven heads. In Rev 12:9 John denominates the seven-headed snake as the Satan, so this specific depiction of an animal becomes the most obvious threat to God and his creation. The phenomenon of creatures with many heads is attested only in a few instances in the Bible. The prophet Ezekiel mentions a Kerub with two faces in Ezek 41:18b–19; according to Ezek 1:4–10 a Kerub can also have four faces. According to Ps 74:13 (cf. Jes 27:1), a Tannīn (תַּנִּינִי) and according to Ps 74:14, a Liwyatan (לִיַּוְיָטָן)¹ can have multiple heads, but the specific number is not mentioned.² Thereby, the motif

of a snake or a beast with seven heads is unique in the Bible in the Revelation of John, and the prophet used this representation of an enemy of God in his prophetic proclamation of an era, which will end with a fight between God and the evil.

The question is, is this motif, the depiction of a seven-headed being as an enemy, a unique motif of John or can this motif be seen as a common topic in the Ancient Near East? Can we identify the snake as a common threat for god(s) in the time before John wrote his Revelation? By an investigation of the archaeological remains passed down from other ancient Near Eastern Cultures, we can clearly show that John did not invent or even develop the motif. With a look at the specific motif history, proposed explanations made by scholars in commentaries or articles about Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 can be rejected. The aim is, to

* This article was written in the project “Egyptian loanwords in Languages of the Ancient Near East”, which is funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.

¹ For this specific being, see the literature presented by Ebach 1984; Huber 2016; Lipinski 1984, 521–522; Uehlinger 1999, 511–515.

² For this Psalm s. Dahood 1968, 198–208; Gunkel 1986, 320–326; Hossfeld – Zenger 2000, 355–372; Kraus 1989, 675–683; Oeming – Vette 2010, 181–187; Seybold 1996, 285–290; Tate 1990, 240–255.

collect significant depictions and written sources of snakes with seven heads from the Ancient Near East, and especially to examine the motif history of these creatures in different cultures. In a further step, it is the aim to answer the question, why especially a seven-headed snake becomes the enemy of God *par excellence* in Revelation. The favorable end of the battle can be seen as perfection of creation by the final overcoming of all evil – with that, the snake takes part in the last part of the progress of history, which is controlled and directed by God,³ to bring his creation to completion. Due to the fact that the sources mentioned afterward emerges from various cultures, the motif of “Seven heads” illuminates how different cultures shared traditions and common topics through several centuries.

2. Creatures with Seven Heads in Revelation

The composition of the Revelation of John is commonly dated to the last years of power of Emperor Domitian,⁴ who ruled between 81 and 96 CE.⁵ According to Rev 1:9, the Revelation was written by a certain John on the island of Patmos in the Cyclades. In chapters 12 and 13, the writer reflects the vision of Daniel, which can be attributed to the assumption of Jürgen Roloff to a type of “Grundmaterial apokalyptischen Welt- und Geschichtsverständnisses”.⁶

In the vision of the prophet in Rev 12 and 13, two creatures are described, which have more than one head. At first, a woman, which has born a child, appears in the sky in Rev 12:1–2. It is no doubt, that the newborn child is Christ. The seven-headed snake appears after the woman in Rev 12:3.

καὶ ὤφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων μέγας πυρρὸς ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα

“And there appeared another sign in heaven; and behold a great red snake, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”⁷

The animal, which can be accurately defined as an enemy of God, a counterpart to Christ and the embodiment of the antichrist,⁸ has, according to the text of the Revelation, seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns upon the horns. The text is mainly consistent in the textual record, only some minor textual witnesses omit *μέγας*.⁹ Not until the seven-headed snake can attack the child, Christ is raptured and the snake is beaten and defeated by the archangel Michael in Rev 12:7–8. The fallen snake goes to the sea thereupon and then the prophet sees another creature, this time identified as a beast (θηρίον) according to Rev 13:1–2, which emerges from

³ Cf. Leonhardt 2009, 388.

⁴ There are other views, which are not commonly accepted. Hadorn 1928, 221–223, 225–226 dated the composition before 70 CE; Wilson 1993, 587–605 dated it under Nero (54–68) or Galba; Berger 1995, 616–618 dated it in the year of the four emperors 68/69 CE, and J. W. Marshall 2001, 2 dated it one year later to 69/70 CE. In contrast to these scholars, Kraft 1974, 93–95 came up with the assumption, that the Revelation was created over a longer period between the years 97/98 and 114/115 CE, and with this dating, in the years of power of the emperors Nerva (96–98 CE) and Trajan (98–117 CE). For a summary, s. Witulski 2007a, 14–52. Another point of view was expressed by Witulski 2007a, 346–350; Witulski 2007b, 174, who dates the book as late as emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE), exactly between the years 132 and 135. Furthermore, he equals the emperor with the

animal of Rev 13:1–18. Ritt 2009, 997 equals this animal *pars pro toto* with the apocalyptic power of the state, which accelerates the coming of the kingdom of God.

⁵ For example Bachmann 2000, 360–362; Böcher 2010, 14; Broer 2001, 669–672; Feuillet 1962, 77; Klauck 1992, 161; Kollmann 2007, 54–55; Mounce 2009, 15–16; Ritt 2009, 997; Roloff 2002, 34, n. 63; Schnelle 2002, 562–566; Scott 1949, 30; Yarbrough Collins 1981, 377–403.

⁶ Roloff 2002, 35.

⁷ For the Greek text Nestle – Aland 2017, 654.

⁸ Cf. Roloff 2002, 40 and 48–49. For the expression Ἀντίχριστος in the New Testament, which is not documented before 1Joh 2:18, 22; 4:3 and 2Joh 7, s. Klauck 1992, 237–248; Jenks 1991.

⁹ Cf. Nestle – Aland 2017, 654 and also Karrer 2012, 438 and 441.

the sea – a counterpart to the first beast, which appeared on land.

καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἔχον κέρατα δέκα καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὀνόματα βλασφημίας καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδον ἦν ὅμοιον παρδάλει καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄρκου καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὡς στόμα λέοντος καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ δράκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην

“And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the snake gave him his power, and his throne and great authority.”¹⁰

The body of the beast is like unto a leopard (παρδάλις), it has the feet of a bear (ἄρκος) and the mouth of a lion (λέων). With that, the beast is clearly a composite being of different animals, which can be compared to the animals and the beast in Dan 7. The second creature is a helper of the first one,¹¹ which was brought up out of the sea by the snake. Later the δράκων μέγας in Rev 12:8 steps upon the beach. Thus, the snake and the beast are standing simultaneously upon the beach. That both of them belong together can be clarified by Rev 16:13, where three unclean spirits (πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα) like frogs (βάτραχοι) come out of the mouths of the snake and the beast, and also from the mouth of the false prophet

(ψευδοπροφήτης). From the different heads of the second beast, only one is emphasized in Rev 13:3. This head is wounded to death (καὶ μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον), but later this deadly wound is healed (καὶ ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη).¹²

The prophet sees the animal a last time in the wilderness. According to Rev 17:3, the prophet sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns (καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα καθημένην ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον γέμοντα ὀνόματα βλασφημίας ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα), as it is mentioned once more in Rev 17:7. It is apparently the same beast, which comes out of the sea in Rev 13.

3. The Snake and the Beast with Seven Heads – Scholarly Points of View

Only in a few commentaries, the depiction of the seven-headed creatures in Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 was approached by scholars. Especially considering some archaeological remains, we can make further suggestions to develop a completely different approach to the interpretation of these creatures and the motif history of the snake. The origin and the interpretation of the snake with seven heads in Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 is only discussed in a few instances. The exact number of the heads as seven was often interpreted as an account for the Roman Empire and the heads as the embodiment of emperors.¹³ The interpretation of animals in a vision was already developed by scholars for the vision of Daniel in Dan 7,¹⁴ which was written during the second

¹⁰ For the Greek text Nestle – Aland 2017, 656. A minor textual version is the alteration of ὀνόματα in Rev 13:1 to ὀνόμα.

¹¹ E. g. interpreted as the false prophet by Hadorn 1928, 144; Lohmeyer 1926, 115; Sickenberger 1940, 131.

¹² This head was interpreted by Bousset 1906, 360–361; Charles 1920, 348–350; Hadorn 1928, 143 and Reddish 2001, 250–251 as Emperor Nero.

¹³ E.g. Blount 2009, 229; Böcher 1988, 82–83; Bousset 1906, 367; Charles 1920, 345–347; Friesen 2001, 141; Hadorn 1928, 141; Mounce 2009, 245–246; Preuß – Berger 2003, 394; Ritt 1986, 66; Roloff 2002, 39; Smith 1872, 19; Wikenhauser 1959, 104–105. Contra identifications like these, Beagley 1987, 106; Ernst 1967, 118.

¹⁴ Cf. Bauer 1996, 145–147; Collins 1993, 166–170; Flusser 1972, 148–175; Lebram 1984, 88–89; Koch 1980, 182–205; Mertens 1971, 136–139; Montgomery

century BC in the period of the Maccabees.¹⁵ The heads of the snake of Revelation were identified with the emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. But only by exclusion of the emperors Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and even Augustus, the number seven can be achieved. The question remains, in which way the exclusion can be verified or even justified. The interpretation of the seven heads as the exact aforementioned emperors is arbitrary since it eliminates some others. Robert L. Thomas wants to see the heads of the creatures as a real prophecy by identifying them with emperors or empires in the future.¹⁶ A slightly different approach was brought forward by Mitchell G. Reddish, who wants to identify the second creature with all of the emperors of the Roman Empire.¹⁷ But also for this identification, the question remains, why the seven heads should be understood as embodiments of emperors.

Another interpretation of the particular snake with seven heads was the identification as the snake from the Garden of Eden.¹⁸ But for this presumption, we have to assume that it grew six new heads because there is no evidence for a reptile with more than one head in Gen 3. Another interpretation identifies the reptile with Satan,¹⁹ which can also be explained by the reference of the prophet in Rev 12:9 itself. In this construction, there are references to Ezek 29:3 and 32:2, where the Egyptian Pharaoh is denominated as a snake and thus, the whole snake was interpreted by scholars as the land of

Egypt as a whole. But in this case, the only common element in both sources is the snake – but in Ezek 29:3 and 32:2 there is no designation as a reptile with many heads and an interpretation of every snake mentioned in the Bible with the beast of Revelation is far from being accepted.

A specific identification of one of the creatures with seven heads in the Revelation, as it was pointed out by Reddish for instance, who identifies it with Mesopotamian goddess Tīāmat or with the snake Python from the myth of the Greek goddess Leto,²⁰ cannot be accepted due to the fact that neither Tīāmat nor Python were ever depicted with seven heads nor does either of the texts mention this specific aspect. According to one source, Tīāmat could have a male and a female face,²¹ but the appearance with two faces in the form of a *Janiceps symmetros* is different from a creature with seven heads, so a special identification is not convincing.

Even Hydra was named as the pattern by Leon Morris,²² but if we have a closer look at the Greek sources, we find many different numbers of heads designated to her, but the number seven is never attested. Another interpretation was put forward by Hubert Ritt, who tries to identify the seven-headed snake with the Greek god Typhon and the woman of Rev 12:1–2 with

1950, 289; Redditt 1990, 121–122; Roloff 2002, 12; Scheider 1954, 48.

¹⁵ For an introduction, s. Albani 2010, 40–54; Collins 2001, 1–15; Förg 2013, 206–218; Mertens 1971, 168–170.

¹⁶ Thomas 1995, 123.

¹⁷ Reddish 2001, 258.

¹⁸ Cf. Charles 1920, 325; Hadorn 1928, 134; Lohmeyer 1926, 101; Sickenberger 1940, 121–122; Wikenhauser 1959, 96.

¹⁹ Cf. Blount 2009, 229; Larkin 1919, 91; Lupieri 1999, 191; Mbosowo 2010, 103; Morris 2002, 153.

²⁰ Reddish 2001, 234.

²¹ London, BM 55466+55486+55627, rs. II, 12 (STC I, 213:12), an astrological-mythological text,

published by King 1902, 213; Landsberger 1923, 45; s. further Reynolds 1999, 377; McBeath 1999, 29.

²² Cf. Morris 2002, 153. According to Alkaios, *frag.* 443 (έννεα κέφαλος) and Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fab.* 30 (*cum capitibus novem*), Hydra has nine heads; but she can also have fifty heads (πεντηκοντακέφαλον) according to Simonides, *frag.* 569; s. Liberman 1999, 193; P. K. Marshall 1993, 44; Page 1962, 294. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. hist.* IV, 11, 5 mentions one hundred necks, and on every neck one snake (έκατόν αὐχένες ἔχοντες κεφαλὰς ὄφεων διετετύπωντο), s. Oldfather 1956, 376. This is also the case for Ovid, *Met.* IX, 1956 (*centum numero*) and for the Suda, s. Adler 1935, 635; Miller 1984, 6.

the Egyptian goddess Isis.²³ This identification is also not convincing due to the fact that neither Seth nor his *interpretatio graeca* Typhon has seven heads.²⁴ The only connecting element – a pregnant woman, who escapes from an enemy, does not suffice as a hint for a tradition, because this motif is very common, not only in antiquity, but also in modern times.²⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins and Robert H. Charles tried to identify the creature in the Revelation with a „*mušruššu*^{sic} *tâmtim*“, i.e. the famous mythological hybrid creature *mušhuššu*, known from ancient Mesopotamia, which is e.g. depicted on the reconstructed Istar Gate of the city of Babylon from the 6th century BC.²⁶ This identification is also not maintainable because the *mušhuššu* is never depicted with more than one head.

Ernst Lohmeyer and Hubert Ritt want to equate *Liwyatan* and *Tannin*, already known from Ps 74, with the creatures of Revelation.²⁷ It will be pointed out later, that there are some similarities between the creatures, but a direct identification is not convincing if we take the complete motif history of the specific creature in the Ancient Near East into account. As it was already pointed out, there are some connections between Daniel, Ezekiel and the Revelation,²⁸ but the multi-headed beings mentioned in Dan 7:6 and Ezek 1:4–10 and 41:18b–19 are different from the seven-headed ones in Revelation, so a direct adoption is not convincing.

4. A Seven Headed Snake in the Ancient Near East

The discussion of the attested scholarly views shows that a consistent or even convincing explanation or derivation has not been presented so far. But if we have a closer look at the specific motif of the seven-headed snake in different cultures of the Ancient Near East, a harmonization becomes a possibility. The development of an animal, or more specific, a snake with seven heads is not an invention of John, but can be traced back to many cultures of the Ancient Near East more than two millennia ago. The development of depictions of creatures with more than one head started, as becomes clear from the archaeological remains, with animals with two heads on one body. The depiction of animals with two heads, e.g. birds, turtles, gazelles, on so-called cosmetic palettes is very common in Egypt during the fourth millennium BC.²⁹ This is also the case for some depictions on seals from the region of Syria and the Palestinian area, which can be dated to the period between the Chalcolithic and the early Bronze Age.³⁰ From this early motif, the development of other animals, gods, or even humans and composite beings starts off and objects bearing such depictions are passed down for more than three millennia to the time CE.

²³ Cf. Ritt 1986, 65; comparable Yarbro Collins 2001, 75–76; and also Charles 1920, 313, but he identifies the fleeing women with the Egyptian goddess Hathor.

²⁴ According to some writers like Aischylos, *Prom.* 353–354 (ἐκατογκάρανος), Aristophanes, *Nub.* 336 (ἐκατογκεφάλα τυφῶ), Hesiod, *Theog.* 824–826, Oppian, *Hal.* III, 15, Pindaros, *P.* I, 16f. (ἐκατοντακάρανος), VIII, 16 (ἐκατόγκρανος) or *O.* IV, 6–7 (ἐκατογκεφάλος), Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fab.* 152 or Seneca, *Herc. f.* 784, Typhon has one hundred heads; s. Billerbeck 1999, 144; Dover 1968, 24; Fajen 1999, 144; P. K. Marshall 1993, 131; Race 1997, 88/

214/ 330; von Schirmding 2012, 66; Sommerstein 2008, 480. Strabo, *Geogr.* XIII, 4, 6 cites a fragment of Pindaros, which mentions only fifty heads (πεντηκοντοκέφαλος), s. Radt 2004, 650.

²⁵ Cf. the sources mentioned by Bousset 1906, 20–74.

²⁶ Yarbro Collins 2001, 77; Charles 1920, 318.

²⁷ Cf. Lohmeyer 1926, 113; Ritt 1986, 66.

²⁸ Cf. Kowalski 2004, 504–507; Parallels to Daniel mentioned by Moyise 1995, 51–53; for parallels to Isaiah Fekkes III 1994, 175–190.

²⁹ For sources Theis 2017, 131–136.

³⁰ S. Teissier 1987, 30 (figs. 2a–d).

As it was already mentioned, according to Ps 74:13 and to Ps 74:14, a *Tannin* (תַּנִּינִים) and a *Liwyatan* (לִוְיָטָן) can have multiple heads.³¹ Psalm 74:3–9 is a text about an enemy, who has entered the temple. This topic was interpreted in theological discourse as a reflection of the Babylonian invasion of 587 BC.³² If the sanctum is destroyed, this can be seen as an attack of the god itself, and with that, both of the beings with multiple heads in Ps 74 can be defined as enemies of God *par excellence*. In Ugarit, there was also a being named *Tunannu*, and according to KTU 1.3, III, 40–42 this being is a “fleeing snake” (*bīn ʿqltn*) with “seven heads” (*šbʿt r’ašm*).³³ According to KTU 1.83, 5, this being has two tongues (*lšnm*) and so possibly also two faces or heads.³⁴ The number of faces or heads does not seem to be standardized in antiquity, but in both of the aforementioned sources, a plural is certainly attested. We can think about the influence of John by the *Tannin* in Ps 74:13, but this being can also be embedded in a further history of the motif in the Ancient Near East. The *Tannin* in Ps 74:13 can also be equated with the *Tannina* in Odes of Solomon 22:5, which is described as an animal with seven heads in the second century CE.³⁵ It is worth mentioning that there are no other hints to sources of a seven-headed snake in the Bible or the region of Syria and the Levant so far, but the motif is quite common in

other regions nearby. Due to the existence of these other sources, one should refrain from naming one specific culture as the origin of the seven-headed snake. Snakes can be seen as aggressors and enemies in various sources;³⁶ the number seven was also an influential and powerful number, as it is pointed out below.

There is also the description of a snake with seven heads from Ugarit. In the important myths of the so-called Baʿal-cycle in KTU 1.5, vs. I, 1–3 the god Mōtu tells Baʿal, that he killed “Lītānu, the fleeing snake” (*tmḥš Ltn bīn brḥ*), “the mightyful, the one with seven heads” (*šlyt d šbʿt r’ašm*).³⁷ Again, in this case, the snake is an enemy of gods, which has to be destroyed.³⁸ This episode is mentioned once more in KTU 1.82, 1–7.³⁹ The name of the enemy and the description as a beast with multiple heads brings this myth in connection with biblical texts as Jes 27:1; 51:9; Ps 74:13–14; 89:11; 104:26; 148:7 and Hiob 7:12; 9:13; 41:26, which were also interpreted as a description of the struggle against chaos.⁴⁰ It is very important to mention that *Lītānu* and *Šlyt* live in the sea⁴¹ – and the seven-headed creature in Rev 13:1 is also emerging from the sea. It is also possible that the *Tunannu*, which must be a snake due to his equalization with Sumerian MUŠ and Akkadian *bašmu* on a tablet from Ugarit,⁴² has at least two faces or heads with KTU 1.83, 5, but according to KTU 1.3, III, 40–42 seven

³¹ This Psalm is often quoted in magical texts, as it is the case with Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Sachau 95 in a conjuration of a snake. Thanks lot to Peter Juhás (Münster/Göttingen) for this information! For the manuscript s. Sachau 2006, 367–374 (no. 107).

³² S. Wälchli 2012, 58–59.

³³ For the Ugaritic text s. Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 12. For a comparison between texts from the city-state of Ugarit and Ps 74 s. Donner 1967, 338–344.

³⁴ For the Ugaritic text s. Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 101.

³⁵ There are many interpretations of the *Tannin* in the Old Testament. In Ex 7:10–12 it was defined as a crocodile, cf. Baethgen 1892, 234; Briggs – Briggs 1925, 155; Cassuto 1967, 94; Duhm 1922, 287 (the dragons are according to Duhm a depiction of the swimming generals of the Pharaoh!); Gunkel 1986, 325; Herkenne 1936, 253; Hossfeld – Zenger 2000,

424; Kalt 1936, 271; Kittel 1929, 249; Kraus 1989, 676; Meiser 1974, 352; H. Schmidt 1934, 141; van Uchelen 1986, 247; or as some sort of sea monster, cf. Tate 1990, 240.

³⁶ S. Theis 2014, 613–619.

³⁷ For the Ugaritic text Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 22; cf. the commentary by Dietrich – Loretz 1999–2000, 56–74. This designation correlates with CTA V, col. I: 1–4, s. Herdner 1963, 32.

³⁸ Cf. KTU 1.3, III, 40–42, s. Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 12; Smith – Pitard 2009, 204; Niehr 2015, 206–207.

³⁹ Cf. the recent publication by Miglio 2013, 30–48.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bauks 2019, § 3.1.2; for other sources § 3.2; for this case Kaiser 1959, 74–75/145.

⁴¹ S. Dietrich – Loretz 1999–2000, 75; Donner 1967, 343.

⁴² Published by Nougayrol et al. 1968, 24, no. 137, I, 8’.

heads.⁴³ This *Tunannu* can be equated with Hebrew תַּנְיָנָה, already mentioned as a multi-headed creature in Ps 74:13.

In Mesopotamia, the fight against a snake or a dragon-like creature with seven heads is a common motif on seals already in the Early Dynastic Period III around 2550–2350 BC. The scenes were commonly referred to as “struggle against chaos” or “struggle against dragons”.⁴⁴ One of the earliest examples is depicted on a shell shim, today Jerusalem, BLMJ 2051 (**fig. 1**).⁴⁵ The composite being with the body of a panther has seven snakes as heads. In front of it sits a god with the horns crown, attacking the animal with a throwing stick, which has already struck the lowermost head. The god is identified with a god of vegetation, presumably Ningirsu or Ninurta, and the monster with a personification of aridity.⁴⁶

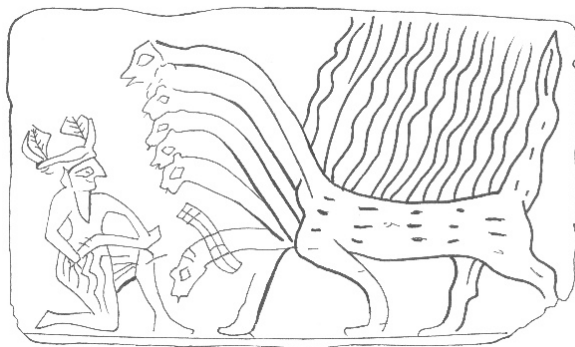


Fig. 1: Jerusalem, BLMJ 2051

(Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–326, no. 233).

⁴³ For the Ugaritic text Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 12/ 101.

⁴⁴ Cf. Schroer – Keel 2005, 324; Uehlinger 1995, 55–101. Some of the Mesopotamian pictorial sources are mentioned by Lewis 1996, 29.

⁴⁵ Published by Black – Green 1992, 165; Braun-Holzinger 2013, 176; Hansen 1987, 60–61, pl. 16, 29; Kahler 2008, 71–76, fig. 3; Keel 2001, 16; McBeath 1999, 68; Pritchard 1954, 218, no. 671; Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–327, no. 233; Uehlinger 1995, 89, fig. 9. This object is shortly mentioned by Künzl 2015, 23–24 in comparison to the tradition of John.

⁴⁶ Interpretations made by Black – Green 1992, 165; Schroer – Keel 2005, 326.

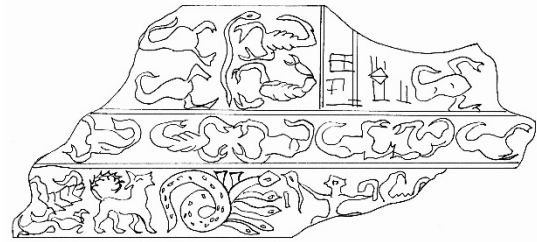


Fig. 2: Chicago, OIM, A 34753

(Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–327, no. 232).

The object Chicago, OIM, A 34753 (**fig. 2**) can also be dated to the Early Dynastic Period III.⁴⁷ The snake is imaged as an animal with seven heads – in the depiction, there are only five heads left on the body, and two other heads are already cut off by the lord of the animal, who is standing in front of it. He holds two of the heads in his hands.

Another example is pictured on a seal from Ešnunna, today Bağdad, IM 15618, which can be dated to the early Akkadian Period around 2300 BC.⁴⁸ The creature shows the body of a panther with seven snakes as heads and five flames emerging from its back.⁴⁹ A god attacks the creature from its front with his spear. Three of the heads are already slain, which is depicted by these hanging down saggy; a fourth head is being lanced by the spear. The gods on both sides have the horns crown on their heads and are commonly identified as Ninazu, the city god of Ešnunna, or his son Ningišzida or Tišpak.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Published by Braun-Holzinger 2013, 186, no. 30; Douglas van Buren 1946, fig. 16; Frankfort 1935, 121; Keel 2001, 16; McBeath 1999, 67–68; Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–327, no. 232; Uehlinger 1995, 88, fig. 7.

⁴⁸ Published by Braun-Holzinger 2013, 186, no. 29; Kahler 2008, 71–73, fig. 4–5; Keel 2001, 16; McBeath 1999, 68; Orthmann 1975, no. 135d; Pritchard 1954, 221, no. 691; Schroer – Keel 2005, 328–329, no. 234; Uehlinger 1995, 89, fig. 10.

⁴⁹ Kahler 2008, 72 interprets these as snakes instead of flames.

⁵⁰ Interpretation according to Schroer – Keel 2005, 328.

All the aforementioned scenes clearly depict the battle between a god or gods and a snake with seven heads or a beast with seven snakes as heads as early as the third millennium BC. The number of seven heads is the essential motif. Besides the depictions, the snake is referred to as MUŠ SAG IMIN “snake with seven heads”⁵¹ and in later times as MUŠ.MAḤ SAG IMIN “great snake with seven heads”.⁵² For example, the killing of the seven-headed snake is mentioned in AN.GIM, l. 32–40; 52–62 and LUGAL-e, l. 133⁵³; both of them are attested until the first millennium BC.⁵⁴ There is also a reference in a cuneiform tablet in the collection of William F. Albright, which mentions Ningirsu in l. 16 as the one, who MUŠ SAG.IMIN-na mu-un-ug₅-ga-a-ni „has killed the seven-headed snake“.⁵⁵ This tablet comes from the ancient city of Dayr and can be dated to the Late Babylonian or already the Persian Period. The threat posed by seven-headed snakes was also viewed as a possible problem in everyday life, which becomes evident by a reference in the collection of omens in *Šumma ālu ina mēlē šakin*.⁵⁶ The largest amount of tablets from this collection can be dated to the seventh century BC, but there are also some tablets from the third century BC, which shows the long tradition of omens in connection with the wide-spread find-spots of the tablets.⁵⁷ In *Šumma ālu ina mēlē šakin* 23:91 a snake with seven heads is mentioned, which could possibly appear in a man’s house in real life. One of the last examples from Mesopotamia is the depiction of a seven-headed snake on a seal from the Sasanian Empire (**fig. 3**), which is killed by a man on a horse with his spear.⁵⁸



Fig. 3: Seal, Sasanian period, today J. Pierpont Morgan Library (Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Ward 1910, 211, fig. 641).

Besides the fact that the depiction of animals with two heads is already attested from the fourth millennium BC in Egypt,⁵⁹ a seven-headed snake seems to be of minor interest, here. There are numerous depictions of snakes with multiple heads especially in the Books of the Netherworld, but a creature with exactly seven snakes as heads is only attested once on Pap. Berlin. P. 15770 and this composite creature also has an eighth head of an antelope.⁶⁰ This being can also be interpreted as an enemy, due to the fact that it is attacked by a god with his spear and by the fact that the depiction is found on a protection amulet. For paleographic reasons, the amulet made of papyrus can be dated to the 20th dynasty. The next Egyptian depiction of a snake with seven heads comes from the Persian Period and is found in the temple of Hībis in the oasis of al-Ḥārġa, build in the reign of Dareios I. (522–486 BC).⁶¹ Based on the description, this animal is a helper. The latest known type is attested on a gem in Cambridge, 2012.1.144 (**fig. 4**).⁶²

⁵¹ Cf. the entries in lexical lists, e.g. CDLI, no. P461397, l. 277 (cdli.ucla.edu/search/search_results.php?CompositeNumber=Q000001; 21st March, 2019).

⁵² Cf. Douglas van Buren 1946, 18–19; Heimpele 1968, 480–482; Landsberger 1934, 53. In general, s. Pientka-Hinz 2011, 208.

⁵³ S. Cooper 1978, 144.

⁵⁴ Published by Cooper 1978, 60–65.

⁵⁵ Published by Lambert 1971, 345; s. also Wiggermann 1992, 162.

⁵⁶ Cf. the edition of Freedman 2006.

⁵⁷ Concerning the concept of tradition in general Theis – Wilhelmi 2015, 710–713 and 715–716.

⁵⁸ Published by Ward 1910, 211, fig. 641.

⁵⁹ S. Kaplony 1963, pl. 6, no. 7; pl. 25, no. 56–57; pl. 26, no. 62; Theis 2017.

⁶⁰ Published by Fischer-Elfert 2015, 141–145; for a special discussion of this being see now Theis 2019.

⁶¹ Published by de Garis Davies 1953, pl. 3, 2.

⁶² Published by Michel 2004, 137, pl. 59, 2.

The composite being has a human body and seven snakes as heads. With the aforementioned sources, in Egypt a snake with seven heads is only attested in a few sources and this being can be an enemy or a helper.



Fig. 4: Gem, Cambridge 2012.1.144

(Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Michel 2004, pl. 59, 2).

The sources for a beast or especially a snake with seven heads are also common during the time CE, so John is not the only attestation for this motif. In the Coptic translation of Rev 12:3, the creature is described verbatim as “a great scarlet coloured dragon“ (ΟΥΓΝΟΒ̅ ΝΔΡΑΚΩΝ ΕΥΤΡΕΥΡΩΩ).⁶³ A snake with seven heads (*Tannīna ḏ-šabā rēšaw*) is attested in the Odes of Solomon 22:5 and described as an enemy of God.⁶⁴ By taking the name *Tannīna* into account, we can clearly trace back this snake to the aforementioned sources from Ugarit and the Bible; the defeat and the slaughtering of the snake is mentioned in a section about the might and deeds of God. A basilisk with seven heads

is also attested in Pistis Sophia 71, which is described as an enemy of the Pistis, but finally, it is defeated.⁶⁵ Also, in Nağc Ḥammādī II, 1, 11, 26–35 Iaw is once described as a god with the head of a snake (ΔΡΑΚΩΝ), and upon it, seven other heads (ΣΑΥΦΕ ΝΑΠΕ).⁶⁶

According to the sources, a snake, or for some instances a beast with seven snakes as heads, is always depicted or described as an enemy of a god or gods or even humans, and this animal is always defeated by gods. The snake can be seen as a specific sort of enemy for gods and humans in every culture of the Ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, the type of a seven-headed creature is attested for more than three millennia, for a longer period than in any other culture. It becomes obvious that almost every culture has some sort of a seven-headed beast as an enemy of god(s). From the first sources in Mesopotamia, which were created already during the Early Dynasty Period III around 2550–2350 BC, over the mentioning of a specific *Tunannu* in the city state of Ugarit and the Bible (נִנְנָה), and also some attestations from Egypt, a snake with seven heads was used by John as the ultimate enemy of God in his Revelation, as it is also attested in the later Odes of Solomon (*Tannīna*).

Conclusion

It becomes obvious that a snake with multiple heads or a creature with seven snakes as heads are a very common motif in the different cultures of the Ancient Near East – in the world of living beings and also in the world of the gods. Besides the snake with seven heads, there are various sources for snakes with two heads in Greek and Latin, as it is the case for example with Claudius Aelianus, *De nat. anim.* VIII, 7,

⁶³ Published by Horner 1924, 390.

⁶⁴ Published by Lattke 2001, 147. In the Coptic translation, there is only a “snake” referred to and not more to *Tunannu*, cf. ibd., 147. S. Niehr 2006, 726 for

literature.

⁶⁵ Published by C. Schmidt 1905, 156.

⁶⁶ For the Coptic text s. Waldstein – Wisse 1995, 71–73; cf. Waldstein 2001, 118–119.

IX, 23 und XVI, 42 (δικέφαλος),⁶⁷ Isidor of Sevilla, *Orig.* XII, 4, 20 (*Amphisbaena (...) duo capita habeat, unum in loco suo, alterum in cauda*)⁶⁸ or Solinus, *De mirab. mundi* XXVII, 29 (*amphisbaena consurgit in caput geminum*)⁶⁹. Even the Assyrian king Esarhad-don (680–669 BC) is said to have killed snakes with two heads on his tenth campaign, which led him to Egypt.⁷⁰ As it was pointed out, there are only a few sources from Egypt with a special reference to snakes with seven heads, the major part of these sources is passed down from Mesopotamia and also from the city state of Ugarit. Especially with the creature *Tunnanū*, the later Hebrew *Tannīn* (תַּנִּינ) and the *Tannīna* of the Odes of Salomo 22:5, it is possible to establish a motif history of a specific multi-headed being for about 1700 years.

The number seven for the quantity of heads can be explained by the special function of this number in the Ancient Near East, a symbol and an allegory for totality and completion.⁷¹ This is also the case for the Bible: In Gen 2:2, God creates the earth in seven days; according to Gen 4:15 the murder of Cain will achieve revenge seven-times; and in Gen 7:2–3 Noah takes seven of every clean cattle and also of the fowls of the air. In apocalypticism, the number seven is a common reference for the entirety.⁷² Thus, the number of seven heads can be equated with totality, in this special case the totality of evil. This becomes obvious with the designation of the snake in Rev 12:9, which is named devil (Διάβολος) and Satan (ὁ Σατανᾶς).

With the aforementioned sources from the various cultures of the Ancient Near East, passed down for over four millennia, it becomes obvious that a snake with seven heads as the embodiment of an enemy is a common motif and cannot be traced back to a specific culture.

The special description of John in his Revelation as a δράκων μέγας or a θηρίον with seven heads clearly reflects older sources from Mesopotamia and also the descriptions from the city of Ugarit. This motif of John can be explained with the use and the function of this specific type of enemy over the centuries in the Near East: In all the aforementioned sources, a seven-headed snake is an enemy of God. Through the number seven, the totality of its strength was tried to be expressed. John did not develop or even invent this motif, but accessed very old ideas of a common mythical background. For that reason, special explanations for the seven heads can be rejected. The snake and the beast of Revelation can clearly not be traced back to one specific culture or to one god or being. The heads of these composite beings surely did not depict e.g. seven Roman emperors from Tiberius to Domitian, as we have to bear in mind, that the number seven is only achieved by eliminating Galba, Otho, and Vitellius from the list. Because of the widespread motif, other special identifications of the snake, e.g. with the reptile of the Garden of Eden, the Egyptian Pharaoh, or gods as Tiāmat or the snake Python, as it was suggested by various scholars, can also be rejected for the above-mentioned reasons. We can see the beings with seven heads in Revelation as what they were understood as in antiquity: The embodiment of the totality of evil, which has to be defeated and beaten by (a) god. And this specific embodiment has a history of its motif from the Early Dynastic Period in Mesopotamia, to sources from Ugarit, into the Psalms of the Old Testament, and finally into the Revelation of John. With these sources, which are passed down through several centuries and emerge from different cultures, we can say that the motif of a seven-headed being as an enemy of God

⁶⁷ Cf. García Valdés et al. 2006, 195; 217 and 403.

⁶⁸ Cf. Lindsay 1957, XII, 4, 20.

⁶⁹ Cf. Mommsen 1895, 12.

⁷⁰ This is Ash. S. 112 (=K 3082+K 3086+Sm 2027), Rs. 5, cf. Borger 1956, 112.

⁷¹ For the symbolism s. Reinhold 2008a, 27–34; for Egypt s. Rochholz 2002.

⁷² S. Mounce 2009, 245–246; Otto 2005, 337–340/344–345 for sources.

can be understood as a common topic in the Ancient Near East and its different cultures. The enormous historical symbolism connects these various cultures and especially even the history of Jews and Christians in the first century CE. As these early Christians are based on Jewish traditions, we can expect that a seven-headed being was also known in this tradition, but was not passed down in biblical texts. As it was shown, there is a possibility that the Hebrew *Tannīn* (תַּנִּינִי) can be understood as a creature with seven heads, but this specific number is

not mentioned in Ps 74:13. If we understood a *Tannīn* (תַּנִּינִי) as a seven-headed being, especially by a comparison with sources from other cultures, Jews and Christians shared the same tradition of this threat for god in the first century CE, but build this up on older traditions from Mesopotamia, which were already developed during the third millennium BC.

Bibliography

Adler 1935

A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon (Lexicographi Graeci 1; Leipzig 1935)*.

Albani 2010

M. Albani, Daniel. *Traumdeuter und Endzeitprophet (Biblische Gestalten 21; Leipzig 2010)*.

Bachmann 2000

M. Bachmann, *Die Johannesoffenbarung*, in: K.-W. Niebuhr (ed.), *Grundinformation Neues Testament (UTB 2108; Göttingen 2000)* 346–370.

Baethgen 1892

F. Baethgen, *Die Psalmen (HKAT II,2; Göttingen 1892)*.

Bauer 1996

D. Bauer, *Das Buch Daniel (NSKAT 22; Stuttgart 1996)*.

Bauks 2008

M. Bauks, *Chaos / Chaostkampf*, wibilex 2008 (<http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/15897>, 22nd January 2020).

Beagley 1987

A. J. Beagley, *The 'Sitz im Leben' of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies (BZNW 50; Berlin/New York 1987)*.

Berger 1995

K. Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums. Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Tübingen ²1995)*.

Billerbeck 1999

M. Billerbeck, *Seneca – Hercules furens. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar (Mnemosyne Supplementum 187; Leiden/Boston/Köln 1999)*.

Black – Green 2009

J. Black – A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia. An illustrated Dictionary (London 1992)*.

Blount 2009

B. K. Blount, *Revelation. A Commentary (NTL; Louisville, Kentucky 2009)*.

Böcher 1988

O. Böcher, *Die Johannesapokalypse (ErFor 41; Darmstadt ³1988)*.

Böcher 2010

O. Böcher, *Johannes-Offenbarung und Kirchenbau. Das Gotteshaus als Himmelsstadt (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2010)*.

Borger 1956

R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien (AfO, Beiheft 9; Graz 1956)*.

Bousset 1906

W. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis (Göttingen ²1906)*.

Braun-Holzinger 2013

E. A. Braun-Holzinger, *Frühe Götterdarstellungen in Mesopotamien (OBO 261; Fribourg/Göttingen 2013)*.

Briggs – Briggs 1925

C. A. Briggs – E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms (Edinburgh 1925)*.

Broer 2001

I. Broer, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament (Würzburg 2001)*.

Cassuto 1967

U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Transl. By Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem 1967).

Charles 1920

R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John with Introduction, Notes and Indices, also the Greek Text and English Translation* (Edinburgh 1920).

Collins 1993

J. J. Collins, *Daniel. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis 1993).

Collins 2001

J. J. Collins, *Current Issues in the Study of Daniel*, in: J. J. Collins – P. W. Flint (eds.), *The Book of Daniel. Composition and Reception* (VTSup 83,1; Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001) 1–15.

Cooper 1978

J. S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur. An-gim dím-ma* (AnOr 52; Roma 1978).

Dahood 1968

M. Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100* (AB 17; New York 1968).

Dietrich – Loretz 1999–2000

M. Dietrich – O. Loretz, *Baal, Leviathan und der siebenköpfige Šlyt in der Rede des Todesgottes Môt* (KTU 1.5 I 1–8 II 27a–31), *Aula Orientalis* 17–18, 1999–2000, 55–80.

Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995

M. Dietrich – O. Loretz – J. Sanmartin, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and other Places* (KTU: second, enlarged Edition) (ALASPM 8; Münster 1995).

Donner 1967

H. Donner, *Ugaritismen in der Psalmenforschung*, *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 67, 1967, 322–350.

Douglas van Buren 1946

E. Douglas van Buren, *The Dragon in Ancient Mesopotamia*, *Orientalia NS* 15, 1946, 1–45.

Dover 1968

K. J. Dover (ed.), *Aristophanes – Clouds* (Oxford 1968).

Duhm 1922

B. Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (HKAT 14; Tübingen ²1922).

Ebach 1984

J. Ebach, *Leviathan und Behemoth* (Philosophische Positionen 2; Paderborn 1984).

Ernst 1967

J. Ernst, *Die eschatologischen Gegenspieler in den Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (BU 3; Regensburg 1967).

Fajen 1999

F. Fajen, *Oppianus – Halieutica. Einführung, und Text, Übersetzung in deutscher Sprache* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1999).

Fekkes 1994

J. Fekkes III, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation. Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (JSNTSup 93; Sheffield 1994).

Feuillet 1962

A. Feuillet, *L'Apocalypse. État de la question* (StudNeot Subsidia 3; Paris 1962).

Fischer-Elfert 2015

H. W. Fischer-Elfert, *Magika Hieratika in Berlin, Hannover, Heidelberg und München (Ägyptische und Orientalische Papyri und Handschriften des Ägyptischen Museums und Papyrussammlung Berlin 2; Berlin/München/Boston 2015)*.

Flusser 1972

D. Flusser, *The four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel*, *Israel Oriental Society* 2, 1972, 148–175.

Förg 2013

F. Förg, *Die Ursprünge der alttestamentlichen Apokalyptik (ABG 45; Leipzig 2013)*.

Frankfort 1935

H. Frankfort, *Early Dynastic Sculptured Maceheads*, *Analecta Orientalia* 12, 1935, 105–121.

Freedman 2006

S. M. Freedman, *If a City is Set on a Height. The Akkadian Omen Series Šumma Alu ina Mēlê Šakin, Volume 2: Tablets 22–40 (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 19; Philadelphia 2006)*.

Friesen 2001

S. J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John. Reading Revelation in the Ruins (Oxford 2001)*.

García Valdés et al. 2006

M. García Valdés et al., *Claudius Aelianus – De Natura Animalium (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana; Berlin 2006)*.

de Garis Davies 1953

No. de Garis Davies, *The Temple of Hibis III: The Decoration (PMMA, Egyptian Expedition 17; New York 1953)*.

Goedicke 1971

H. Goedicke (ed.), *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright (Baltimore 1971)*.

Gunkel 1986

H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen (GHAT 2,2; Göttingen 1986)*.

Hadorn 1928

W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes (THKNT 18; Leipzig 1928)*.

Halpern 1987

B. Halpern (ed.), *Traditions and Transformations: Turning Points in Biblical Faith (Winona Lake, Indiana 1981)*.

Hansen 1987

H. G. Hansen, *The Fantastic World of Sumerian Art; Seal Impressions from Ancient Lagash*, in: A. E. Farkas – P. O. Harper – E. B. Harrison (eds.), *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds. Papers presented in Honor of Edith Porada (The Franklin Jasper Walls Lectures 10; Mainz 1987) 53–63*.

Heimpel 1968

W. Heimpel, *Tierbilder in der sumerischen Literatur (Studia Pohl 2; Roma 1968)*.

Herdner 1963

A. Herdner, *Corpus des Tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939 (Mission de Ras Shamra 10; Paris 1963)*.

Herkenne 1936

H. Herkenne, *Das Buch der Psalmen (Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments V,2; Bonn 1936)*.

Horner 1924

G. W. Horner (ed.), *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the southern Dialect, otherwise called Sahidic and Thebaic with critical Apparatus, Literal English Translation, Register and Notes of Fragments (Oxford 1924)*.

Hossfeld – Zenger 2000

F.-L. Hossfeld – E. Zenger, Psalmen 51–100 (HTKAT; Freiburg/Basel/Wien ²2000).

Huber 2016

K. Huber, Drache, wibilex 2016 (<https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/47864>, 22nd January 2020).

Jenks 1991

G. C. Jenks, The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth (BZNW 59; Berlin 1991).

Kahler 2008

B. Kahler, A four-legged Creature with seven Snake-Heads depicted on a Cylinder Seal of Tell Asmar, Iraq, in: Reinhold 2008a, 71–76.

Kaplony 1963

P. Kaplony, Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit (ÄgAbh 8; Wiesbaden 1963).

Karrer 2012

M. Karrer, Übersetzungen des Textes nach dem Codex Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus und Ephraeni Rescriptus, in: Labahn – Karrer 2012, 399–473.

Keel 2001

O. Keel, Drachenkämpfe noch und noch im Alten Orient und in der Bibel, in: S. Hahn – S. Metken – P. B. Steiner (eds.), Sanct Georg. Der Ritter mit dem Drachen (Kataloge und Schriften des Diözesanmuseums für christliche Kunst des Erzbistums München und Freising 24; Freising 2001) 14–26.

King 1902

L. W. King, The Seven Tablets of Creation London 1902).

Kittel 1929

R. Kittel, Die Psalmen (KAT 13; Leipzig ⁵1929).

Klauck 1992

H.-J. Klauck, Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon und der Kaiserkult der Johannesoffenbarung, Biblica 73, 1992, 153–182.

Koch 1980

K. Koch, Das Buch Daniel (ErFor 144; Darmstadt 1980).

Kollmann 2007

B. Kollmann, Zwischen Trost und Drohung – Apokalyptik im Neuen Testament, in: B. U. Schipper – G. Plasger (eds.), Apokalyptik und kein Ende? (Biblich-Theologische Schwerpunkte 29; Göttingen 2007) 51–73.

Kowalski 2004

B. Kowalski, Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes (Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge 52; Stuttgart 2004).

Kraft 1974

H. Kraft, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (HNT 16; Tübingen 1974).

Kraus 1989

H.-J. Kraus, Psalmen (BKAT 15,2; Neukirchen-Vlyun 1989).

Künzl 2015

E. Künzl, Löwenmensch und Schlangendrachen. Fabeltiere und Mischwesen in Vorzeit und Altertum (Regensburg/ Mainz 2015).

Labahn – Karrer 2012

M. Labahn – M. Karrer (eds.), Die Johannesoffenbarung. Ihr Text und ihre Auslegung (ABG 38; Leipzig 2012).

Lambert 1971

W. G. Lambert, The Converse tablet: A Litany with Musical Instructions, in: Goedicke 1971, 335–353.

Landsberger 1923

B. Landsberger, Ein astralmythologischer Kommentar aus der Spätzeit babylonischer Gelehrsamkeit, *Archiv für Keilschriftforschung* 1 (1923), 43–48.

Landsberger 1934

B. Landsberger, Die Fauna des alten Mesopotamien nach der 14. Tafel der Serie HAR.RA.ḪUBULLU (ASAW, *Phil.-Hist. Klasse* 42, 6; Leipzig 1934).

Larkin 1919

C. Larkin, *The Book of Revelation. A Study of the Last Prophetic Book of Holy Scripture* (New York 1919).

Lattke 2001

M. Lattke, Oden Salomos. Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar, Teil 2: Oden 15–28 (NTOA 41,2; Fribourg/Göttingen 2001).

Lebram 1984

J.-C. Lebram, *Das Buch Daniel* (ZBKAT 23; Zürich 1984).

Leonhardt 2009

R. Leonhardt, *Grundinformation Dogmatik. Ein Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch für das Studium der Theologie* (Göttingen 2009).

van Lerberghe – Voet 1999

K. van Lerberghe – G. Voet (eds.), *Languages and Cultures in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm. Proceedings of the 42th RAI* (Leuven 1999).

Lewis 1996

T. J. Lewis, CT 13.33–34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (1996), 28–47.

Liberman 1999

G. Liberman, *Alcée – Fragments, Tome II* (Collections des Universités de France, Série grecque 392; Paris 1999).

Lindsay 1957

W. M. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi. Etymologiarum sine originem, Libri XX, Tomus II* (Oxford 1957).

Lipinski 1984

E. Lipinski, לוייתן, in: G. J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren – H.-J. Fabry (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, Band IV* (Stuttgart 1984) 521–522.

Lohmeyer 1926

E. Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT 16; Tübingen 1926).

Lupieri 1999

E. F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 1999).

Marshall 2001

J. W. Marshall, *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse* (SCJS 10; Waterloo 2001).

Marshall 1993

P. K. Marshall (ed.), *Hygini – Fabulae* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1993).

Mbosowo 2010

D. E. Mbosowo, *Understanding the Book of Revelation: The Mystery of the Book of Revelation is finally revealed* (Washington 2010).

McBeath 1999

A. McBeath, *Tiamat's Brood: An Investigation into the Dragons of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London 1999).

Meiser 1974

A. Meiser, *Die Psalmen* (ATD 14/15; Göttingen 1974).

Mertens 1971

A. Mertens, *Das Buch Daniel im Lichte der Texte vom Toten Meer* (SBM 12; Stuttgart 1971).

Michel 2004

S. Michel, *Die Magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit* (Studien aus dem Warburg-Haus 7; Berlin 2004).

Miglio 2013

A. E. Miglio, *A Study of the Serpent Incantation KTU2 1.82: 1–7 and its Contribution to Ugaritic Mythology and Religion*, 13, 2013, 30–48.

Miller 1984

F. J. Miller, *Ovid – Metamorphoses, Vol. II: Books IX–XV* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London 1984).

Mommsen 1985

T. Mommsen, *C. Iulii Solini – Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* (Berlin 1895).

Montgomery 1950

J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh²1950).

Morris 2002

L. Morris, *Revelation* (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids, Michigan 2002).

Mounce 2009

R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2009).

Moyise 1995

S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup 115; Sheffield 1995).

Nestle – Aland 2017

E. Nestle – K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graecae post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle editione vicesima septima revisa communiter ediderunt Barbara et Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger* (Stuttgart²⁸2017).

Niehr 2006

H. Niehr, ܢܝܢܐ, in: G. J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren – H.-J. Fabry (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament XV* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2006) 726–732.

Niehr 2015

H. Niehr, *Texte aus Syrien: Mythen und Epen aus Ugarit*, in: B. Janowski – D. Schwemer (eds.), *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge 8: Weisheitstexte, Mythen und Epen* (Gütersloh 2015) 177–301.

Nougayrol et al. 1968

J. Nougayrol et al., *Ugaritica V. Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d’Ugarit, commentaires des textes historiques (Première Partie)* (Mission de Ras Shamra 16; Paris 1968).

Oeming – Vette 2010

M. Oeming – J. Vette, *Das Buch der Psalmen. Psalm 42–89* (NSKAT 13/2; Stuttgart 2010).

Oldfather 1956

C. H. Oldfather, *Diodorus of Sicily, Vol. II: Books II–IV* (The Loeb Classical Library 303; Cambridge, Massachusetts/London 1956).

Orthmann 1975

W. Orthmann, *Der alte Orient* (Berlin 1975).

Page 1962

D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962).

Pientka-Hinz 2011

R. Pientka-Hinz, s.v. Schlange A. In Mesopotamien, in: E. Ebeling – E. F. Weidner – M. Streck (Hgg.), *Realexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie XII: Šamuḫa – Spinne* (Berlin et al. 2011) 202–218.

Preuß – Berger 2003

H. D. Preuß – K. Berger, *Bibelkunde des Alten und Neuen Testaments 2, Zweiter Teil: Neues Testament* (UTB 972; Tübingen/Basel 2003).

Pritchard 1954

J. B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, New Jersey 1954).

Race 1997

W. H. Race, *Pindar – Olympian and Pythian Odes* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London 1997).

Radt 2004

S. Radt (ed.), *Strabons Geographika, Bd. III: Buch IX–XIII: Text und Übersetzung* (Göttingen 2004).

Reddish 2001

M. G. Reddish, *Revelation* (Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, Georgia 2001).

Redditt 1990

P. L. Redditt, *Daniel. Based on the New Revised Standard Version* (NCBC; Sheffield 1990).

Reinhold 2008a

G. G. G. Reinhold (ed.), *Die Zahl Sieben im Alten Orient. Studien zur Zahlensymbolik in der Bibel und ihrer altorientalischen Umwelt* (Frankfurt et al. 2008).

Reinhold 2008b

G. G. G. Reinhold, *Die Zahl Sieben als Zahl der Vollendung: Der Sabbat, Antworten auf die Fragen nach seinem Ursprung*, in: Reinhold 2008a, 27–34.

Reynolds 1999

F. Reynolds, *Stellar Representations of Tiāmat and Qingu in a Learned Calendar Text*, in: van Lerberghe – Voet 1999, 369–378.

Ritt 1986

H. Ritt, *Offenbarung des Johannes* (Würzburg 1986).

Ritt 2009

H. Ritt, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Band 3* (Freiburg et al. 2009), 995–998.

Otto 2005

E. Otto, *שָׁמֹחַ*, in G. J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren – H.-J. Fabry (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament XIV* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2005) 336–367.

Rochholz 2002

M. Rochholz, *Schöpfung, Feindvernichtung, Regeneration. Untersuchung zum Symbolgehalt der machtgeladenen Zahl 7 im alten Ägypten* (ÄAT 56; Wiesbaden 2002).

Roloff 2002

J. Roloff, *Die Adaption der Tiervision (Daniel 7) in frühjüdischer und frühchristlicher Apokalyptik* (BAW, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 2002/2; München 2002).

Sachau 2006

E. Sachau, *Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Hildesheim/Zürich/New York 2006).

Scheider 1954

H. Scheider, Das Buch Daniel. Das Buch der Klagelieder. Das Buch Baruch (Herders Bibelkommentar 9,2; Freiburg 1954).

Schenke – Bethge – Kaiser 2001

H.-M. Schenke – H.-G. Bethge – U. U. Kaiser (eds.), Nag Hammadi Deutsch, 1. Band: NHC I,1–V,1 (GCSNF 8; Berlin/New York 2001).

von Schirnding 2012

A. von Schirnding, Hesiod – Theogonie. Werke und Tage (Berlin 2012).

Schmidt 1905

C. Schmidt, Koptisch-agnostische Schriften I: Die Pistis Sophia. Die beiden Bücher des Jeû. Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 13; Leipzig 1905).

Schmidt 1934

H. Schmidt, Die Psalmen (HAT 1,15; Tübingen 1934).

Schnelle 2002

U. Schnelle, Einleitung in das Neue Testament (UTB 1830; Göttingen 2002).

Schroer – Keel 2005

S. Schroer – O. Keel, Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient. Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern, Band 1: Vom ausgehenden Mesolithikum bis zur Frühbronzezeit (Fribourg 2005).

Scott 1949

E. F. Scott, The Book of Revelation (London 1949).

Seybold 1996

K. Seybold, Die Psalmen (HAT I,15; Tübingen 1996).

Sickenberger 1940

J. Sickenberger, Erklärung der Johannesapokalypse (Bonn 1940).

Smith 1872

J. Smith, Plain Thoughts on the Sealed Book (London 1872).

Smith – Pitard 2009

M. S. Smith – W. T. Pitard, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Volume II: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3–1.4 (VTSup 114; Leiden/Boston 2009).

Sommerstein 2008

A. H. Sommerstein, Aeschylus – Persians, Seven against Thebes, Suppliants, Prometheus Unbound (The Loeb Classical Library 145; Cambridge, Massachusetts/London 2008).

Tate 1990

M. E. Tate, Psalms 51–100 (World Biblical Commentary 20; Dallas, Texas 1990).

Teissier 1987

B. Teissier, Glyptic Evidence for a Connection between Iran, Syrio-Palestine and Egypt in the Fourth and Third Millennia, Iran 25, 1987, 27–53.

Theis 2014

C. Theis, Magie und Raum. Der magische Schutz ausgewählter Räume im Alten Ägypten nebst einem Vergleich zu angrenzenden Kulturbereichen (ORA 13; Tübingen 2014).

Theis 2017

C. Theis, Schminkpaletten mit zwei Köpfen. Reale Vorbilder aus der Natur?, Göttinger Miszellen 253, 2017, 131–136.

Theis 2019

C. Theis, Die siebenköpfige Schlange im Vorderen Orient, in: M. Brose – P. Dils – F. Naether – L. Popko – D. Raue (eds.), *En détail – Philologie und Archäologie im Diskurs. Festschrift für Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert* (Beihefte ZÄS 7; Berlin/Boston 2019) 1123–1136.

Theis – Wilhelmi 2015

C. Theis – L. Wilhelmi, Tradieren, in: T. Meier – M. R. Ott – R. Sauer (eds.), *Materiale Textkulturen. Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken* (Materiale Textkulturen 1; Berlin/München/Boston 2015) 709–721.

Thomas 1995

R. L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22. An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago 1995).

van Uchelen 1986

N. A. van Uchelen, *Psalmen, deel II (41–80)* (Nijkerk 1986).

Uehlinger 1995

C. Uehlinger, Drachen und Drachenkämpfe im alten Vorderen Orient und in der Bibel, in: B. Schmelz – R. Vossen (eds.), *Auf Drachenspuren. Ein Buch zum Drachenprojekt des Hamburgischen Museums für Völkerkunde* (Bonn 1995) 55–101.

Uehlinger 1999

C. Uehlinger, Leviathan, in: K. van der Toorn – B. Becking – P. W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible. DDD. Second extensively revised edition* (Leiden/ Boston/ Köln 1999) 511–515.

Wälchli 2012

S. H. Wälchli, *Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen. Eine Studie zur Rede vom Zorn Gottes in den Psalmen im Kontext des Alten Testaments und des Alten Orients* (OBO 244; Fribourg/Göttingen 2012).

Waldstein 2001

M. Waldstein, Das Apokryphon des Johannes (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1 und BG 2, in: Schenke – Bethge – Kaiser 2001, 95–150.

Waldstein – Wisse 1995

M. Waldstein – F. Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John. Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (NHMS 33; Leiden/New York/Köln 1995).

Ward 1910

W. H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* (Publications of the Carnegie Institution of Washington 100; Washington 1910).

Wiggermann 1992

F. A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits. The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen 1992).

Wikenhauser 1959

A. Wikenhauser, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes übersetzt und erklärt* (RNT 9; Regensburg 1959).

Wilson 1993

J. C. Wilson, The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation, *New Testament Studies* 39, 1993, 587–605.

Witulski 2007a

T. Witulski, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und Kaiser Hadrian. Studien zur Datierung der neutestamentlichen Apokalypse* (FRLANT 221; Göttingen 2007a).

Witulski 2007

T. Witulski, *Kaiserkult in Kleinasien. Die Entwicklung der kultisch-religiösen Kaiserverehrung in der römischen Provinz Asia. Von Augustus bis Antoninus Pius* (NTOA/StUNT 63; Göttingen 2007).

Yarbro Collins 1981

A. Yarbro Collins, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation: The Problem of its Date*, in: Halpern 1981, 377–403.

Yarbro Collins 2001

A. Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, Oregon 2001).