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Nomina nuda tenemus: The God Elyon (*ʿlyn*)

The aim of this paper[1] is to investigate the character of Elyon, "Most High", and his spatial allocation ("most high" in reference to what). *ʿly*(*w*)*n* (elyon) is an adjective in Ancient Hebrew (epigraphic and biblical) denoting "upper, most high", and is used for upper storeys and upper ponds, but it is also one of the less frequent divine designations for the God of the Hebrew Bible.[2] Corresponding forms of the Northwest Semitic adjective are attested in two other sources, both times for a deity, in the Old Aramaic inscription from Sfire (*ʿlyn*), and in the fragments of Philo of Byblos (ἐλιοῦν with writing variants and translation into Greek as ὕψιστος, "most high"). The adjective *ʿly*(*w*)*n* in its everyday use denotes a spatial classification. Therefore, the divine designation is often taken as referring to the allocation of the deity as "most high" in relation to a pantheon, a divine counsel, or to human worshippers,[3] though the metaphorical potential of the adjective is unquestionable and was certainly explored. The semantic transparency[4] of this divine designation is also a factor complicating its interpretation: as *ʿly*(*w*)*n* is a common adjective (though the evidence for this use is restricted to Ancient Hebrew), it is not necessarily a proper name, but might also be an epithet of a deity with a different proper name. Only semi-transparent (such as Šadday in Biblical Hebrew) or opaque names (such as Anat in Ugaritic) are *a priori* recognisable as proper names. It is therefore necessary to ask in every single case if *ʿly*(*w*)*n* is to be considered as an epithet or as a proper name. Allusions to the semantic dimension of the adjective are not necessarily evidence against the classification as a proper name.

1 This article is part of a greater project of research on Elyon / Most High as name / title in the ancient Levant and the Hebrew Bible; Zernecke forthcoming. I would like to thank the organisers of the inspiring conference, Corinne Bonnet and her team, who made it possible to have so many intensive and lively discussions, and again Corinne Bonnet and the anonymous reviewers for important suggestions. Special thanks are also due to Mark S. Smith and Reinhard G. Lehmann. Kristin Schlegel, Frithjof Gruben and Louisa Thomsen provided help with the manuscript.

2 References to *ʿly*(*w*)*n* as everyday adjective in Hebrew: Epigraphic: Arad(6):25 (*HAE* I, 393–395); Biblical: Gen 40, 17; Dtn 26, 19; 28, 1; Jos 16, 5; 1Kön 9, 8 (text critically debated); 2Kön 15, 35; 18, 17; Jes 7, 3; 36, 2; Jer 20, 2; 36, 10; Ez 9, 2; 41, 7; 42, 5; Ps 89, 28; Neh 3, 25; 1Chr 7, 24; 2Chr 7, 21; 8, 5; 23, 20; 27, 3; 32, 30; as divine designation in combinations: Gen 14, 18. 19. 20 (*ʾl ʿlywn*). 22 (*yhwh ʾl ʿlywn*, text critically debated); Num 24, 16; Dtn 32, 8; 2Sam 22, 14; Jes 14, 14; Ps 7, 18 (*yhwh ʿlywn*); 9, 3; 18, 14; 21, 8; 46, 5; 47, 3 (*yhwh ʿlywn*); 50, 14; 57, 3 (*ʾlhym ʿlywn*); 73, 11; 77, 11; 78, 17. 35 (*ʾl ʿlywn*). 56 (*ʾlhym ʿlywn*); 82, 6; 83, 19 (predicative use); 87, 5; 91, 1. 9; 92, 2; 97, 9 (predicative use); 107, 11; Thr 3, 35. 38. Cf. also *qdyšy ʿlywnyn* in Biblical Aramaic (Dan 7, 18. 22. 25. 27).

3 E.g. Elnes/Miller 1999a, 293.

4 Terminology (transparent / semi-transparent / opaque proper names) according to Nübling/Fahlbusch/Heuser 2012, 54–56; introduced into the discussion of divine names and titles by Zernecke 2013, 232–233; for divine designations in the Hebrew Bible cf. Surls 2017, 14–19.

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The attestations of *ʿlyn* / Elyon (the vocalisation is depending on the local linguistic environment) in Sfire and Philo as divine designation are often noted only in passing in discussions of the biblical evidence.[5] However, they are of crucial importance for the question if there was the concept of an independent deity of the name of *ʿlyn* / Elyon in the Levant from the Iron Age to Hellenistic and Roman times. The Hebrew Bible as tradition literature is the result of a long and complex process of composition, transmission, edition, harmonisation, and finally canonisation. Especially for issues touching the character and names of the God of the Hebrew Bible, a reworking or reframing of biblical texts according to theological developments is to be expected. The Sfire inscription on the other hand as a text from a precise political situation and an archaeological context – though only the outline of both is known at best – is a fundamentally different type of source. To a lesser degree, this is also valid for the fragments of Philo of Byblos, which are only preserved as quotations in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea. For the sake of methodological clarity, it is therefore necessary to discuss these types of sources separately, independently of the biblical material which shall be studied elsewhere.[6]

Both sources are disconnected, there is a huge gap in place, in time, and in language between the Old Aramaic inscription from 8th century BCE Northern Syria and the Greek fragments of Philo from the 1st century CE, transmitted in an even later text. As these documents are the only evidence for *ʿlyn* / Elyon as divine designation besides the biblical texts with their additional methodological problems, it needs to be asked very cautiously if there could be a common concept behind both. This is not impossible, as Philo, the later source, transmits a wealth of earlier traditions especially of Northwest Semitic and Anatolian mythology, which are furthermore only known from Ugaritic or Anatolian sources.[7] Besides, some deities are attested in different Levantine political entities of the Bronze and Iron Ages and into the Hellenistic period, such as El or (later) Baal Šamem. The probable differences in the concepts behind one divine name in different places and times are usually intangible. But the scarcity of sources does not preclude to ask if the two attestations of the divine designation *ʿlyn* /

5 In the discussion of divine designations in the Bible, Elyon / "Most High" has rarely been in the focus of attention. Often, Elyon is seen as a short version of El Elyon, so that Elyon is interpreted as a particular form of the widely known god El (whose name is also semantically transparent, as it means "god" in Canaanite languages and Ugaritic); cf. Schmid 1955, 197; Lack 1962, 59–64; Stolz 1970, 152, 157; Cross 1973, 51–52; Smith 2010, 13, 135; cautiously Kottsieper 2013a and Kottsieper 2013b. But El Elyon is only mentioned in two biblical texts (Gen 14; Ps 78), which are not anymore considered as being very old; e.g. Niehr 1990, 65; Granerød 2010, 129–132 for Gen 14 or the relevant insertion Gen 14, 18–20; Hossfeld 2000, 426–430 for Ps 78. Besides, combined divine names consisting of El and a second element (El Šadday, El Roi, El Olam, El Bet-El) for localised El-deities seem to be characteristic of biblical literature; they neither have a sufficient basis in extra-biblical sources nor do they fit El's character as known from inscriptional material; Zernecke in print.

6 Zernecke forthcoming.

7 Cf. e.g. López-Ruiz 2010, 84, 94–95.

Elyon have anything in common and if similar or even shared conceptions can be detected behind both. The disparity of the sources makes it essential to discuss every attestation on its own before asking for possible points of convergence.

1 *ʿlyn* in the Old Aramaic Inscription From Sfire (*KAI* 222)

The earliest reference to *ʿlyn* as divine designation known so far occurs on Stele I of the Old Aramaic Sfire inscriptions (*KAI* 222), concluded between King Bar-Gaʾyah (Bar-Gayah) of KTK and King Matiʿʾel (Matiel) of Arpad.[8] Bar-Gayah is the stronger party, he has all the benefits and Matiel all the obligations. Arpad was the capital of the Aramaic state Bēt Guš / Bīt Agūsi, which was turned into an Assyrian province in 740 BCE. This year is therefore *terminus ante quem* for the treaty and the inscription.[9]

Tab. 1: *KAI* 222, lines 7–13.

[7] . . . *wʿdyʾ ʾln zy gzr br gʿ*[*yh*	[7] . . . And concerning these obligations, which Bar-Ga[yah] concluded
qdm ʾšr] [8]*wmlš*	[in the presence of Aššur] [8] and Mullissu
wqdm mrdk wzrpnt	and in the presence of Marduk and Zarpanitu
wqdm nbʾ wt[*šmt*	and in the presence of Nabû and T[ašmetu
wqdm ʾr wnš][9]*k*	and in the presence of Erra and Nus][9]ku
wqdm nrgl wlṣ	and in the presence of Nergal and Laṣ
wqdm šmš wnr	and in the presence of Šamaš and Nur
wqdm s[*n wnkl*	and in the presence of S[în and Nikkal
wq][10]*dm nkr wkdʾh*	and in the pre][10]sence of *nkr* und *kdʾh*
wqdm kl ʾlhy rḥbh wʾdm[. . .	and in the presence of all the gods of Raḥbah and Adam[. . .
wqdm hdd zy ḥ][11]*lb*	and in the presence of Hadad of A][11]leppo
wqdm sbt	and in the presence of the Seven / Sibitti

8 Ronzevalle 1931 (Stele I, *editio princeps*), *KAI* 222; Rössler 1983, 178–189; Lemaire/Durand 1984; Fitzmyer 1995; Schwiderski 2004, 402–404; Kitchen/Lawrence 2012, No. 87, 911–934. For considerations about the nature of the kingdom of KTK, see Naʾaman 2016.

9 Lipiński 2000, 216–218; Koch 2008b.

Tab. 1 (continued)

wqdm ʾl wʿlyn	and in the presence of El and Elyan
wqdm šmy[*n wʾrq*	and in the presence of Hea[ven and Earth
wqdm mṣ][12]*lh wmʿynn*	and in the presence of (the) A][12]byss and (the) Springs
wqdm ywm wlylh	and in the presence of Day and Night
šhdn kl ʾ[*lhy ktk wʾlhy ʾr*][13][*pd*	– all the god[s of KTK and the gods of A][13][rpad] (are) witnesses (to it)

The Sfire stelae attest to the only Aramaic international treaty text known to date. Its form has been interpreted as an amalgam of Assyrian, Hittite, and genuine Aramaic traditions.[10] It contains a list of divine witnesses who guarantee the stipulations.[11]

ʾl and *ʿlyn* (El and Elyan)[12] are mentioned towards the end of the list. The document is broken, the left part of the lines is reconstructed with the help of other lists, as it follows Assyrian conventions.[13] One such Assyrian list is of paramount importance: a king Mati-ilu of Arpad, perhaps identical to the Matiel from *KAI* 222, was party in an Assyrian vassal treaty with Assur-nerari V (754–745) in 754 BCE. As this document is preserved in fragments,[14] two international treaties are known which the kings of Arpad (possibly the same king Matiel) concluded with superior powers. Both documents contain lists of divine witnesses. A comparison of both lists shows parallels and differences.

Both lists are organised in pairs, often god and goddess, but not consistently. They begin with the highest Assyrian deities at the top; in this part, both lists have many parallels. Apart from their different length, the most striking differences are the position of Mulissu, the change of place of Šamaš and Sîn and the position of Nergal and Laṣ. After the Seven / Sibitti, both lists differ completely. In Sfire, the last deities mentioned are El, Elyan, Heaven, Earth, Abyss, Springs, Day and Night. The Assyrian treaty has no Assyrian but rather Levantine deities in the corresponding positions.[15] There are no parallels to the Sfire inscription in this part of the list, as far as the broken tablet is legible. In the long and rich tradition of Assyrian god-lists, the Seven / Sibitti are often positioned at the end.[16] It is plausible to assume

10 Koch 2008a, 77–78.

11 Text and reconstruction according to Fitzmyer 1995, 42–43.

12 Elyan is supposed as Aramaic vocalisation of *ʿlyn* without Canaanite Shift, Fitzmyer 1995, 75.

13 Barré 1985; Fitzmyer 1995, 71–73.

14 *SAA* 2, 8–13 (text: *SAA* 2, 2); further translations: Borger 1983, 155–158; Kitchen/Lawrence 2012, No. 90, 939–948.

15 *SAA* 2, 13.

16 Barré 1983, 19, 25, 132, 146 n. 35; Fitzmyer 1995, 74. The deities preceding the Seven in the Sfire inscription are hardly known (*nkr*, *kdʾḥ*), debated ("all the gods of Raḥbah and Adam", cf. Fitzmyer 1995, 43, 73–74; Kitchen/Lawrence 2012, 919) or at least not exclusively Assyrian (Hadad of Aleppo), as Aleppo apparently belonged to Matiel's territory (Lipiński 2000, 207).

that after the deities of the stronger party – Assur – from Assur to the Seven, Dagan, [M]uṣurunna, M[elqart] and the following are the deities of the weaker party, Matiel of Arpad.[17] They are not mentioned in Sfire; in their place stand El,

Tab. 2: The lists of divine witnesses in both treaties.

Sfire I A 7–14 (Bar-Gaʾyah and Matiʿʾel)	**SAA 2, 2 VI 6–26 (Aššur-nerari V. and Mati-ilu)**
[Aššur] and Mullissu	Aššur, King of Heaven and Earth
	Anu and Antu
	Illil and Mullissu
	Ea and Damkina
	Sin and Nikkal
	Šamaš and *Nur*
	Adad and Šala
Marduk and Zarpanitu	Marduk and Zarpanitu
Nabû and T[ašmetu	Nabû and Tašmetu
	Ninurta and Gula
	Uraš and Ninegal
	Zababa and Babu
	Nergal and Laṣ
	Madanu and Ningirsu
	Humhummu and Išum
Erra and Nus]ku	Girra and Nusku
Nergal and Laṣ	
Šamaš and Nur	
S[în and Nikkal]	
nkr and *kdʾh*	
all the gods of Raḥbah and Adam[? . . .	

17 Koch 2008a, 61, referring to the stele *KAI* 201 dedicated to Melqart, possibly by a king of Arpad, attesting to the veneration of this god in the region.

Tab. 2 (continued)

	Ištar, Lady of Ninive
	Ištar, Lady of Arbela
	Adad of Kurbail
Hadad of A]leppo	Hadad of Aleppo
	Palil, who marches in front
the Seven / Sibitti	the valiant Seven
El and Elyan	Dagan and [*M*]*uṣ*uruna
Hea[ven and Earth	M[elqart and Eš]mun
(the) A]byss and (the) Springs	Kub[aba and Kar]huha
Day and Night	Hadad [. . .] and Ramman of [Damascus]
	. . .
all the god[s of KTK and the gods of A][13][rpad](are) witnesses (to it)	

Elyan, Heaven, Earth, Abyss, Springs, Day, and Night.[18] Matiel's gods would then appear in the concluding summary only (all the god[s of KTK and the gods of A][rpad](are) witnesses (to it)).[19] Such a mere summary of the deities of the weaker party is customary in Hittite treaties.[20] This is not wholly out of place and time in northern Syria in the 8th century, as in this region many elements of cultural continuity from Hittite times are known.[21] The "Assyrianising" beginning of the Sfire list is then to be interpreted as the gods of unknown KTK. If the influence of Hittite and Assyrian traditions are correctly evaluated and if we indeed know Matiel's or Arpad's gods from the Assyrian treaty, El, Elyan, Heaven, Earth, and the following must have been understood differently and cannot be Arpad's gods. This leads to the question who these gods are for the authors and parties of the Sfire treaty in their conceptualisation of the world and a pantheon.

A parallel to divine Heaven, Earth, Day, Night and other such entities cannot be found in Assyrian treaties, but again for the first time in the Hittite treaty tradition. Especially their naming at the end of lists of divine witnesses in treaties seems to have been a very long-lived tradition which appears again much later and far beyond the Anatolian or Northern Syrian scope: traces of it can still be found in the

18 For the scope of this paper, *šmy*[*n w'rq*, *mṣ*]*lh wm'ynn*, *ywm wlylh* are translated as Heaven and Earth, Abyss and Springs, Day and Night; their character as names or appellatives is not discussed.

19 Barré 1983, 25–29, Koch 2008a, 61. Differently: Voigt 1994, 66; Niehr 2014, 151–152.

20 Koch 2008a, 61, who also claims other peculiarities of the Sfire inscriptions as Hittite legacy (52–78).

21 Koch 2008a, 27–29.

treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia in the Second Punic War from 215 BCE, transmitted in Greek by Polybius.[22] The end of the Sfire god-list has plausibly been interpreted according to this custom.[23]

El and Elyan are positioned between the deities from the Assyrian tradition and the divine "natural entities". They are not among Arpad's deities in the Assyrian treaty. So it is well in order to look again at the Hittite treaty tradition. The god-lists in these documents are usually tripartite. Between the high gods and a summary at the beginning and the "natural entities" at the end stands a third group, the olden gods: a group of most often 12 deities, who were seen as members of an earlier generation of gods with knowledge from primeval times.[24] The olden gods were conceptualised as the ancestors of the ruling gods in the netherworld. Memory and experience were attributed to them because of their age, they were understood as not taking action anymore.[25] In rituals, it was their function to carry away impurity.[26] El and Elyan are in the position of these ancient ancestor-gods. If they are indeed a Hittite tradition, then there should be common traits between them and the Hittite olden gods.

As Elyan is unknown elsewhere, only El's position can be studied. In the mythical texts from Ugarit, El is the patriarch of the gods, his children. He is old and connected to the primeval times. He blesses, is wise and close to humans.[27] He also has a certain connection to the netherworld, as the dead king goes to El. The living king is connected to storm-gods, not El.[28] In the first millennium, El is rarely mentioned in inscriptions which makes it difficult to assess the concepts linked to him.[29] He seems to be most prominent in Aramaic literary texts, like Aḥiqar and also Tell Dēr ʿAllā (Combination I, line 2).[30] Matiel and Hazael of Damascus are the only Aramaic kings whose names contain the theophoric element El. Hadad is more common in the names of kings, but El-names are well attested in other classes of society.[31] Possibly El was "lord of all other gods" above the states and their territorial deities.[32] El is an old god, not involved in the politics of the states; their ruling gods are his children. His age, his not being a member of the ruling generation and his "international" character give him a

22 Barré 1983, 30, 35–37; Koch 2008a, 62 n. 246.

23 Barré 1983, 27–29; Koch 2008a, 62; Niehr 2014, 151–152.

24 Barré 1983, 27–28, 35; Elnes/Miller 1999b, 643; Haas 1994, 114; Wilhelm 2009, 63, 68–70.

25 Wilhelm 2009, 74; Elnes/Miller 1999b, 641; Wilhelm 2002, 64; Cross 1977, 332.

26 Archi 1990, 116; Wilhelm 2009, 73–74.

27 Herrmann 1999, 275; Kottsieper 2013a.

28 Kottsieper 2013a.

29 Compare e.g. Niehr 1990, 17–24 and Kottsieper 1997, 46–50.

30 Kottsieper 1997, 27–42. For Tell Dēr ʿAllā (*KAI* 312), see Hoftijzer/van der Kooij 1976 (*editio princeps*), and the recent reconstruction Blum 2008.

31 Kottsieper 1997, 42–47.

32 Kottsieper 1997, 44.

position which is close to the Hittite olden gods.[33] In the Assyrian treaty, probably Dagan is placed at the top of the national pantheon of Arpad, but El must have been prominent, as Matiel is named after him. And El is associated to the otherwise unknown deity Elyan.

We have only the names, but understanding the list in the Sfire treaty in analogy to lists of divine witnesses in the Hittite tradition, El and Elyan are in the position of the olden gods, who are not part of the ruling generation and can therefore guarantee international treaties. In any case, Elyan is the proper name of a deity of his own in this text, there is no indication that it is an epithet for another deity.[34]

2 Elioun in the Fragments of Philo of Byblos

The second extra-biblical source for Elyon is very difficult to assess. A god Elioun (with textual variants) is mentioned in the fragments of the Phoenician history by Philo of Byblos which are transmitted in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Philo was a historian of the late first and early second century CE, who is also known from other sources, but none of his works has survived. He is mentioned by several authors.[35] Eusebius quotes at length from his nine books of "Phoenician History" (ἡ Φοινικικὴ ἱστορία).[36] Philo claims that this is not his original work, but that the real author was Sanchuniaton, who lived before the Trojan War and whose authority was a certain Taautos (the name is linked to the Egyptian god Thoth) who invented writing.[37] To add to the problems of the source, Philo follows Euhemerism, a Hellenistic philosophical concept which claims that the gods really were humans of an early age who were venerated after their death.[38] Philo's intention seems to have been to show that the Phoenician traditions are

33 However, the names of the olden gods are not attested as theophoric elements in personal names, Cross 1977, 332.

34 Levi della Vida 1944, 3; Pope 1955, 55; Rendtorff 1966, 281–282; Fitzmyer 1995, 75. Differently: *w* in *ʾl wʿlyn* as *waw explicativum*: Schmid 1955, 179–180; Elnes/Miller 1999a, 294–295; cf. Cross 1973, 51; Barré 1983, 26; Niehr 1990, 21 n. 27 as more probable; alternatively Kottsieper 2013b (*ʿlyn* as plural: "the most high ones").

35 Lauber 2008; Baumgarten 1981, 31–35.

36 Eusebius mentions nine books, Porphyrius only eight. Eusebius might have quoted Philo from Porphyrius (Röllig 2001, 31), but the difference in the number of books militates against this assumption, Carriker 2003, 149–150 and n. 42.

37 Jacoby 1958, 804, 22–805, 1 = Eusebius *Praep. evang.* I, 9, 23–24; Taautos can be interpreted as Egyptian Thoth / Greek Hermes. For Taautos cf. Baumgarten 1981, 68–72; for Sanchuniathon Baumgarten 1981, 42–51, for both Attridge/Oden 1981, 3–9.

38 Attridge/Oden 1981, 7; Baumgarten 1981, 38–39; Lauber 2008; Smith 2010, 255–260. If Philo's source already contained Euhemerism, it could be dated as Hellenistic; cf. Baumgarten 1981, 92 and n. 94. This cannot be proven.

really more ancient and better than the Greek ones, as the Greeks and especially Hesiod misunderstood everything.[39]

It is difficult to judge where the fable starts in this history of claimed traditions. In all probability, Eusebius did not invent Philo. And Philo can be considered a source for the 1./2. century CE, but certainly not for the antediluvian (or rather antetrojan) age Philo allegedly claims for his Sanchuniathon-Taautos. The fragments of Philo-Sanchuniathon-Taautos, quoted by Eusebius, are derived from a tradition which is broken several times. The connection to Hesiod is explicit.[40] This is why the value of the fragments as a source is not easy to assess. For a long time, they were considered as entirely worthless. But the discovery of Ugaritic, Hittite, and Hurrian texts changed this.[41] Their parallels to Philo in contexts in which he differs from the Greek traditions[42] are too numerous to be only coincidence: Philo must have had at least some ancient traditions. A fact transmitted in these fragments should have been judged as ancient in Philo's Hellenistic time (if Eusebius quotes correctly[43]), but tells us nothing about Pre-Hellenistic Phoenician beliefs.[44] A higher age of the traditions can only be claimed in a few points where they are corroborated by other sources.

The following paragraph is the beginning of a new section in the fragments. It contains a succession myth, succeeding generations of deities depicted as humans because of Philo's Euhemerism:

> (14) At the same time as these [last] is born a certain Elioun, called Hypsistos (ὕψιστος) / Most High, and a female (15) called Berouth, and they lived near Byblos. From these is begotten Epigeios Autochthon / terrestrial native (16), whom they later called Ouranos / Heaven, so that from him the element above us, (17) on account of its exceeding beauty, is called Ouranos. To him (18) a sister is begotten of the above-mentioned parents and was correspondingly called Ge / Earth, and on account of [her] beauty, (19) he [= Philo] says, they named the earth, which also bears this name, after her. But their Father Hypsistos, having died in an encounter (20) with wild animals, was sanctified, and his children offered libations and sacrifices to him. (21) And Ouranos, succeeding to his father's sovereignty, takes his (22) sister Ge to wife, and has four children by her: El who is also Kronos, and (23) Baitylos, and Dagon (who is Grain), and Atlas.[45]

At the beginning of the history of gods, there is Elioun, whose parentage is not mentioned. His name is explained for a Greek audience: Ἑλιοῦν καλούμενος Ὕψιστος,

39 Ribichini 1999, 154–155.

40 Jacoby 1958, 813, 11–22 = Eusebius *Praep. evang.* I, 10, 40–41. Baumgarten 1981, 214–217, 235–242; Attridge/Oden 1981, 60–61, 93.

41 López-Ruiz 2010, 84.

42 Baumgarten 1981, 237–238; see 1–6 for the history of research. Sanchuniathon cannot be contextualised; differently: Albright 1968, 195; Eissfeldt 1952, 70. It is impossible to assess if Philo's sources were Pre-Hellenistic, but they certainly contained ancient material. Cf. Barr 1974/5, 33–40.

43 Eusebius is usually considered as reliable, Attridge/Oden 1981, 2 n. 5.

44 Ribichini 1999, 165; Baumgarten 1981, 264–266; Attridge/Oden 1981, 9; Clifford 1990, 56.

45 Jacoby 1958, 809, 14–23 = Eusebius *Praep. evang.* I 10, 15–16; translation following Baumgarten 1981, 181.

"Elioun, called Hypsistos / Most High". Despite textual variants of the name (Ἑλιοῦν, ἑλιούμ, ἑλιούμ, ἑνούμ, Ἐλιοῦμ),[46] especially in combination with the Greek translation Hypsistos, "Most High", it is evident that this is *ʿly(w)n* / Elyon in Greek letters.[47] Elioun is introduced as a proper name and then translated into Greek. The same happens in this paragraph with "Dagon who is grain". Not all Semitic names get a Greek counterpart in the fragments, for example Berouth is left untranslated. Another strategy applied to the names is the identification with Greek gods: El with a Greek case ending is identified with Kronos (Ἦλον τὸν καὶ Κρόνον, "Elos, who is also Kronos"). The identifications are derived from the function or the character of the deity.[48] But most names are Greek only.

Philo's Elioun most probably is an independent deity of his own. In Philo's time and culture, Hypsistos was a frequent epithet of Zeus, but Zeus is a member of a later generation in the genealogy as brother of Elos / Kronos.[49] As Philo refers explicitly to Hesiod, it is interesting to compare this genealogy to Hesiod's theogony. The theogony ends with the ruling of Zeus who is a son of Kronos who is a son of Ouranos and Ge. Philo's Elos / Kronos is also a son of Ouranos and Ge who are children of Elioun and Berouth. The names of the successive divine rulers are identical.[50] But Philo knows one additional earlier generation, the gods Elioun and Berouth.

Tab. 3: The generations of gods in Philo and Hesiod.

Philo	Hesiod
Elioun = Hypsistos & Berouth	–
Epigeios Autochthon = Ouranos & Ge	Ouranos & Ge
Elos = Kronos	Kronos & Rhea
Zeus Demarous & / ‹=›[?] Adados & Astarte	Zeus & Hera

46 Jacoby 1958, 809; Attridge/Oden 1981, 46.

47 Attridge/Oden 1981, 86; Baumgarten 1981, 184; Colpe/Löw 1994, 1041–1042. The expected Greek equivalent *ἐλιουν is not attested in the manuscripts. The writing with ου attests to the sound chance from /ā/ to /ō/ via the Canaanite Shift frequently to /u/ in Phoenician, Friedrich/Röllig/Amadasi Guzzo 1999, §§ 70, 206.

48 Smith 2010, 254; 252–255 for the translation of deities in Philo, for the intellectual background, 268–270. Ribichini 1999, 157–162 classifies the deities according to possible Greek equivalents.

49 Different Zeus figures are mentioned in the fragments. Zeus Demarous' parentage is plural: Kronos / El gave his mother, pregnant from Ouranos, to Dagon (Jacoby 1958, 810, 10–14 = Eusebius *Praep. evang.* I 10, 18), this blurring of parentage is one of several aspects linking him to the Ugaritic Baal; Baumgarten 1981, 195–197; cf. Ayali-Darshan 2013.

50 Zeus Demarous, possibly identical to Adados, together with Astarte as current rulers are only named in a successive fragment (Jacoby 1958, 811, 24 = Eusebius *Praep. evang.* I 10, 31), originally apparently unconnected to the fragments cited so far. This is explicitly mentioned in its introduction: Jacoby 1958, 811, 23 = Eusebius *Praep. evang.* I 10, 30. The identification of Zeus Demarous with Adados depends on a textual conjecture, the emendation of καὶ to ὁ καὶ, Baumgarten 1981, 219; rejected by Attridge/Oden 1981, 91.

This first generation is considered by some as Philo's invention.[51] But another succession myth indicates that Philo might have had a source in this case, a tradition which is known from *CTH* 344, the "Song of Going Forth",[52] the first part of the Hurrian-Hittite cycle of Kumarbi from the 2nd millennium BCE,[53] much older than Hesiod and often discussed among the traditions received by him.[54] This text has a structural parallel to Philo where Philo differs from Hesiod and knows four generations of divine rulers, Alalu, Anu, Kumarbi and the storm-god.[55]

Tab. 4: The generations of gods in *CTH* 344, Philo and Hesiod.

CTH 344	Philo	Hesiod
Alalu	Elioun = Hypsistos & Berouth	–
Anu	Epigeios Autochthon = Ouranos & Ge	Ouranos & Ge
Kumarbi	Elos = Kronos	Kronos & Rhea
Storm-god	Zeus Demarous & / ‹=›[?] Adados & Astarte	Zeus & Hera

The Anatolian counterpart of Philo's Elioun as first ruling god is Alalu. There are several parallels between the younger generations of deities in Hesiod and the Anatolian tradition: Ouranos (= Heaven) is related to Anu, which is the Mesopotamian name of the god of heaven, who is one of the olden gods in the Hittite tradition.[56] Kumarbi is associated to grain. In Ugarit, he is connected to Enlil and El.[57] The final ruler is a storm-god like Baal / Hadad.[58] There are so many and diverse parallels between Hesiod and the Kumarbi tradition that Hesiod is considered to be dependent on Anatolian material, though the way of transmission is speculative.[59] Philo is situated between Hesiod and the Anatolian texts. It is plausible to assume that he

51 Lack 1962, 50–56; Elnes/Miller 1999a, 294; Kottsieper 2013b.

52 Van Dongen 2012, 71–73.

53 Güterbock 1946; Hoffner 1998, 40–42 with translation; cf. Haas 1994, 82–99; Haas 2006, 130–176; Haas 2011, 181–199; Ünal 1994, 828–830; Bauer/Görke/Lorenz/Rieken 2015, 162–166.

54 Güterbock 1946, 115; West 1966, 28; West 1999, 276–277, 279–280; Haas 2006, 136–137; López-Ruiz 2006; López-Ruiz 2010, 87, 99–101 who sees the Phoenicians as intermediaries; Rutherford 2009, 22; Haas 2011, 287–288. Bernabé 1989 however emphasises the differences.

55 The name of the storm-god is often given as Teššub. According to van Dongen 2012, 34, the logographic writing leaves open which storm-god is meant, the phonetic complements suggest Tarḫunna-, the Hittite storm-god.

56 Haas 1994, 114.

57 Haas 1994, 168–169; Haas 2006, 131–132.

58 Schwemer 2008, 3–8, 17–22.

59 Possible ways of transmission: Güterbock 1946, 111, 115; West 1999, 626–627; Rutherford 2009, 31–35; Scully 2015, 51–52; cf. López-Ruiz 2006, 94–100.

does not depend on Hesiod only but really knows an ancient tradition which has a god Elioun / Elyon at the beginning of the history of the gods.

Behind Elioun / Elyon stands most probably the tradition of an independent deity because of formal parallels between the three theogonies, *CTH* 344, Hesiod, and Philo. As in the case of the Sfire god-list, we know little more than the name: Elioun has a wife whose name is related either to the city Beirut or to wells or to both,[60] he is venerated in Byblos, his children are Ouranos and Ge and he dies in an encounter with wild animals. His children found a cult with libations. The information about Alalu, his Hurro-Hittite parallel, is equally scarce: he is king in heaven for nine years, then defeated by Anu, his cup-bearer, then he flees "to the dark earth". Nine years later Anu is also defeated by his cup-bearer Kumarbi, who is Alalu's offspring. Anu flees to the sky, but Kumarbi manages to get hold of him, bites off his genitals and swallows them. By this, he gets pregnant with several deities, the future storm-god among them.[61]

In both traditions, there is a first divine ruler who is the ancestor of the gods, but obsolete for the rest of the story and the present situation of the pantheon. In both traditions, he is related to the underworld. But they differ in all other aspects: Elioun is killed by wild animals and venerated, Alalu is defeated and flees into the netherworld. Nevertheless: it is plausible that there is a common tradition behind both texts, and Philo's Elioun can be considered a reminiscence of Alalu.[62]

3 Conclusion

Despite the disparity of the sources for an independent deity *ʿlyn*, it is probable that both share a common conception of Elyon / Elyan / Elioun. Both lead to Anatolian texts via structural parallels – to the lists of divine witnesses in Hittite treaties and the genealogy of gods in the cycle of Kumarbi. Both converge in leading to the same deity, as Alalu, the first king of gods, is one of the olden gods in Hittite treaties.[63]

60 A personification of Beirut as Beroë (Βερόη) is known besides in Nonnos of Panopolis, *Dionysiaka* (5th century CE); Fornaro 2000, 995–997; Faulkner 2017.

61 Haas 2006, 134–135; van Dongen 2012, 34.

62 Pope 1955, 56; Schatz 1972, 209–210; Pope/Röllig 1983, 283; West 1999, 286. Elnes/Miller 1999a, 294 contest this argumentation: "the Hurro-Hittite Alalu, though sharing the same hierarchical relationship to other gods as Elioun, does not display much similarity in character [. . .]. Thus, although we find clear reference to ʿElyôn as an autonomous deity in Philo's Elioun, similar cosmologies in the ancient Near East do not appear to have shared this view. In fact, closer inspection of Philo's account betrays a conflation of traditions that may not be true to their earlier forms. [. . .] It appears that contemporary cosmological conceptions have been absorbed into Philo's account of more ancient traditions. His understanding of Elioun as an independent deity may reflect first century influences." They do not explain these possible influences.

63 Haas 1994, 114; Wilhelm 2009, 63.

The information about the deity Alalu alone is scarce.[64] The olden gods are in the netherworld as ancestors of the ruling gods.[65] Because of their age, they have great knowledge of earlier things, their memory goes back to the beginning of the created world. But this knowledge is not connected to power, it is the currently ruling storm-god who is powerful.[66]

To interpret the deity Elyon / "Most High" as equivalent to the Hittite Alalu leaves open the question of the possible spatial meaning of the name. In neither text, there is an indication what this name is referring to, "most high" to whom or to what this deity is thought to be. The designation seems to be independent of Hypsistos / "most high" as epithet of Zeus. It is difficult to understand why an ancestor god in the netherworld should have the name *ʿlyn* / Elyon, "Most High". The only circle in which Elyon might have been thought to preside would have been among the olden gods. In the Hittite treaties, also Anu, the god of heaven, and therefore connected rather to the sphere above than below, is one of the olden gods. As Elyon is in Sfire mentioned before heaven and earth and is the father of Ouranos in Philo's fragments, "most high" might also refer to his being prior or even above heaven (in whichever sense). Alternatively or additionally, Elyon could have had a connotation of "the Remote One". The character of Elyon as ancestor of the gods and possibly remote makes it plausible why there are only Philo's allusions to cultic veneration and why his name is so far unattested as theophoric element in the Northwest Semitic onomasticon.[67] In any case, we do not know much and always have to keep in mind the distance between the Hurro-Hittite Alalu, the Aramaic Elyan, and Philo's Elioun. Nevertheless, the attestations corroborate each other, so that one single underlying tradition can be assumed.

Via Anatolia, the conception of a deity Elyon / Elyan / Elioun (*ʿlyn*) could be unearthed from an Old Aramaic source from Northern Syria and a Greek Hellenistic source with a probable Phoenician background. There is not much information about this god, and the different cultures may have connected different ideas with him. As the sources are so diverse, it is not feasible to reconstruct an "Elyon-myth" or even an "Elyon-theology"; little more is known about the ancient Levantine god Elyon but his name.

Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus.[68]

64 Haas 2011, 184 interprets Alalu as precosmic god from a Mesopotamian tradition; this is contested by Wilhelm 2009, 66. López-Ruiz 2010, 92 sees Alalu as "possibly a chthonic entity". For van Dongen 2012, 36–37 Alalu in *CTH* 344 is a god of agriculture, an olden god close to Anu, linking the beginning of the content of the song to its opening, the invocation of the gods.

65 Wilhelm 2009, 69–71.

66 Wilhelm 2009, 64, 68–69.

67 This is usual for the olden gods, Cross 1977, 332.

68 Eco 1990, 982.

Abbreviations

CTH– Laroche, Emmanuel (1971), *Catalogue des textes hittites*, Paris. https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/CTH/ (Seen: 12.8.2022).

HAE– Renz, Johannes / Röllig, Wolfgang (1995), *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*. Band I: Johannes Renz. *Die althebräischen Inschriften*. Teil 1: Text und Kommentar, Darmstadt.

KAI– Donner, Herbert / Röllig, Wolfgang (1968 / 2002): *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. Vol. 1, Wiesbaden, fifth edition 2002. Vol. 2, Kommentar, Wiesbaden 1968.

*SAA*2 – Parpola, Simo / Watanabe, Kazuko (1988), *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, Helsinki (State Archives of Assyria 2).

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