

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY
&
KOKUGAKUIN UNIVERSITY, TOKYO, JAPAN**

**SEVENTEENTH
ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY**



THE ORIGINS OF MYTHOLOGY

**In Honor of Michael Witzel
on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday**

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

August 27-30, 2024

**Kokugakuin University, Shibuya Campus
Bldg. 6, Room 6B13 (Basement Floor),
Tokyo, Japan**

PROGRAM

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27

09:00 – 09:30 PARTICIPANTS WELCOMING & REGISTRATION

09:30 – 10:00 OPENING ADDRESSES

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION: JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

CHAIR: KAZUO MATSUMURA

10:00 – 10:30 MICHAEL WITZEL
Harvard University, USA
ARCHAIC JAPANESE SUN AND MOON DEITIES

10:30 – 11:00 PAOLO BARBARO
Lille University, France
REFLECTIONS ON THE MULTIPLE LAYERS IN JAPANESE
MYTHOLOGICAL HISTORIES OF THE 8TH CENTURY AND ON THEIR PROTO-
HISTORIC EDITING

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

11:30 – 12:00 TAKESHI KIMURA
University of Tsukuba, Japan
JAPANESE MYTHS BETWEEN COMPARATIVE STUDIES AND INDIGENOUS
PERSPECTIVES

12:00 – 12:30 MARKO PIŠEV
University of Belgrade, Serbia
THE JAPANESE “OTHER” IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH KOREAN HORROR
CINEMA

12:30 – 14:00 *Lunch Break*

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

MYTHOLOGY OF ANCIENT EGYPT, MESOPOTAMIA, AND TIBET

- 14:00 – 14:30** KEIKO TAZAWA
The Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo, Japan
SNAKE, SHOOTING STAR, AND ORDER: MYTHICAL INTERPRETATIONS
OF THE TALE OF THE SHIPWRECKED SAILOR
- 14:30 – 15:00** VLADIMIR V. EMELIANOV
Saint Petersburg State University, Russia
SUMERIAN ABU AND SHAMANIC OBO
(A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SUMMER FESTIVALS)
- 15:00 – 15:30** IWAO ISHIKAWA
Nakamura Hajime Eastern Institute, Japan
THE ETYMOLOGY OF A TIBETAN WORD *PHYVA*: THE TRANSMISSION OF
THE CULT OF FUXI (伏羲) TO TIBET

15:30 – 16:00 *Coffee Break*

JAPANESE, KOREAN, AND SIBERIAN MYTHOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

- 16:00 – 16:30** DANILO TRBOJEVIĆ
[via Zoom] *The Institute of Ethnography SASA, Belgrade, Serbia*
NATURE, TECHNOLOGY, IMAGINATION:
TRACING THE CONFLUENCE OF DEMONIC LORE AND POSTMODERN
SHIFTS IN HAYAO MIYAZAKI'S FILMS AND SERBIAN VILLAGE FOLKLORE
- 16:30 – 17:00** MIYUKI ONOE
Toho High School, Attached to Toho University, Japan
THE LEGEND OF YONORAN AND SEONYO IN KOREA
- 17:00 – 17:30** KLAUS ANTONI
[via Zoom] *Tübingen University, Germany*
JAPANESE "SONGS OF ANTIQUITY" (*KODAI-KAYŌ*) AND LAFCADIO
HEARN'S ROMANTIC NATIONALISM

17:30 – 18:00 MARE KÕIVA & RAHEL LAURA VESIK
Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia
THE ANIMAL PROTECTORS

18:30 – Reception

Restaurant Capricciosa
150-0011 Tokyo, Shibuya City,
Higashi, 1-chōme-3-1

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: DAVID WEISS

MYTHOLOGY OF SOUTH ASIA

09:00 – 09:30 KYOKO AMANO
Kyoto University, Japan
WHY AND WHEN DID THE GODS GO TO HEAVEN?
THE LINEAGE OF MYTHOLOGY IN VEDIC INDIA AND THE BACKGROUND
OF HEAVENLY ORIENTATION

09:30 – 10:00 YAROSLAV VASSILKOV
[via Zoom] *Independent Researcher, Front Royal, VA, USA*
MAIDENS' RITE OF DIVINATION WITH A MIRROR IN THE
MAHĀBHĀRATA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

10:00 – 10:30 SIGNE COHEN
[via Zoom] *University of Missouri, USA*
THE ṚBHUS' CUP, THE BUDDHA'S BOWL, AND THE HOLY GRAIL

10:30 – 11:00 EIJIRO DŌYAMA
Osaka University, Japan
ANOTHER INDO-IRANIAN MYTH OF THE HIDDEN SUN: SALVAGING THE
FALLEN SUN AND TRITA AS A PRIEST

11:00 – 11:10 **POSTERS DISCUSSION SESSION I:**
[via Zoom] ANA R. CHELARIU
 Independent Researcher, New Jersey, USA
 THE MYTH FORMATION AND THE SILENT GODDESS

11:10 – 11:40 *Coffee Break*

INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

11:40 – 12:10 KRZYSZTOF TOMASZ WITCZAK
 University of Lodz, Poland
 JAPANESE KAPPA AND GREEK KAMPE: TWO WATER MONSTERS IN
 COMPARISON

12:10 – 12:40 MARCELLO DE MARTINO
 Inalco-CeRMI, France
 THE GOD OF THE ARYĀḤ

12:40 – 14:30 *Lunch Break*
Business Lunch for the IACM Board of Directors
and Conference Organizers

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION:

**INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY: COMPARATIVE STUDIES, SCHOOLS, AND METHODOLOGY &
POSTERS DISCUSSION SESSION**

CHAIR: STEVE FARMER

14:30 – 15:00 GREGORY HAYNES
 Mother Tongue Journal, Cambridge, MA, USA
 NATURAL PHENOMENA IN MYTHICAL INTERPRETATION

15:00 – 15:30 BORIS OGUIBÉNINE
 Strasbourg University, France
 TRIADS IN COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

15:30 – 16:00 *Coffee Break*

- 16:00 – 16:30**
[via Zoom] HASMIK H MAYAKYAN & TIGRAN MIKAYELYAN
Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia
 THE SYMBOLIC MYTHOLOGICAL ROLE OF DRAGONS IN THE
 ICONOGRAPHY OF SOME ARMENIAN AND CHINESE CARPETS
- 16:30 – 17:00**
[via Zoom] MISLAV JEŽIĆ
University of Zagreb & Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatia
 THE MYTH OF THE CREATION THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF THE
 PRIMORDIAL MAN: ITS MEANING AND ITS IMPACT
- 17:00 – 17:30**
[via Zoom] EMILY LYLE
University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
 A STUDY OF FOUR MYTHOLOGICAL THEFTS WITHIN THE LAURASIAN
 STORY LINE THROUGH COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT INDO-EUROPEAN
 SOURCES
- 17:30 – 18:00** **POSTERS DISCUSSION SESSION II:**
- MARKÉTA DVOŘÁKOVÁ
Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic
 THE PHENOMENON OF TRANSCENDENCE IN THE NOVELS OF FRANZ
 WERFEL
- TIAGO GARCIA FERRER
Independent Researcher, UK
HE WHO DEVOURS MEN: A NOVEL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF
 DRAGONS
- REHUEL NIKOLAI SORIANO
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
 WHEN EAST MEETS WEST: THE SPIRITUAL QUEST AND ASIAN SPIRIT IN
 CAPCOM'S DRAGON'S DOGMA SERIES

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, EXPERIMENTAL INTERPRETATIONS, AND THE LARGE-SCALE COMPARISONS

CHAIR: KIKUKO HIRAFUJI

09:00 – 09:30

[via Zoom]

ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIĆ

UFRN, Natal, Brazil

HERO'S JOURNEY: FROM SARGON TO BLADE RUNNER

09:30 – 10:00

[via Zoom]

MAXSON MCDOWELL, JOENINE ROBERTS & ALEXANDRA ROTH

C. G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology, USA

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FOR THE MEANING OF SATURN WHO DEVoured HIS CHILDREN

10:00 – 10:30

LOUISE S. MILNE

University of Edinburgh & Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, UK

FIGURATION AND TEMPORALITY IN THE ENTANGLED PREHISTORIES OF MYTH AND DREAMS

10:30 – 11:00

STEVE FARMER

The Systems Biology Group, Palo Alto, CA, USA

THE WITZELBOT AND BEYOND: LARGE CONTEXT-WINDOW LLMs IN HISTORICAL, PREHISTORICAL, AND SCIENTIFIC-MEDICAL RESEARCH

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:00

DAVID WEISS

Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan

THE VIENNA SCHOOL IN JAPAN: CULTURE CIRCLE THEORY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE STUDY OF JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY

12:00 – 12:30 KAZUO MATSUMURA
Wako University, Tokyo, Japan
A PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF ATSUSHIKO YOSHIDA'S MYTHOLOGICAL
THEORY

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch Break

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: LOUISE MILNE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES & MICHAEL WITZEL'S WORK

14:00 – 14:30 KRZYSZTOF GUTOWSKI
Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
COGNITIVE AND EVOLUTIONARY READING OF MICHAEL WITZEL'S 'THE
ORIGINS OF THE WORLD'S MYTHOLOGIES'

14:30 – 15:00 NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA
Princeton University, USA
PROBING THE BOUNDARIES OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY:
ADDRESSING BRUCE LINCOLN'S CRITIQUE OF MICHAEL WITZEL'S
APPROACH AND THE FIELD OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

15:00 – 15:30 YURI BEREZKIN
[via Zoom] *Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography,
St. Petersburg, Russia*
TOWARDS THE WORLD-WIDE DATABASE OF MYTHOLOGY AND
FOLKLORE: A UNIQUE STORY

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

MYTHOLOGY OF EURASIA: SIBERIA, URAL, AND CHINA

16:00 – 16:30 ELWIRA KACZYŃSKA & KRZYSZTOF TOMASZ WITCZAK
University of Lodz, Poland
ALEXANDER GWAGNIN ON THE GOLDEN WOMAN AND BELIEFS OF THE
URALIC NATIONS

- 16:30 – 17:00** JINGHUA HUANG
Yunnan University, China
THE GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL MYTHOLOGY: EXPLORING
VARIOUS MYTHOLOGIES IN YUNNAN, CHINA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
HISTORICAL COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY
- 17:00 – 17:30** CHUJING YANG
Yunnan University, China
THE ORIGIN MYTH OF LISU WRITING: WANG RENBO AND THE LISU
SYLLABIC SCRIPT HE CREATED IN THE 1920S
- 17:30 – 17:45** **FILM SCREENING:**
HYPNOS (2021) BY LOUISE S. MILNE
- 17:45 – 18:00** CONCLUDING IN-PERSON SESSIONS

19:00 – Conference Banquet

Yebisu Beer Hall
150-0022 Tokyo, Shibuya City,
Ebisuminami, 1-chōme-1-1

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30

All papers are presented online via Zoom

FRIDAY AFTERNOON SESSION: MYTHOLOGY AROUND THE WORLD

MODERATOR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

- 15:00 – 15:30** NATALIA KORNEEVA
Independent Researcher, Moscow, Russia
MADHUPARKA AT THE RITUAL OF RECEIVING KING SOMA AS A GUEST OF HONOR (*ATITHI /ĀTITHYEṢṬĪ*) DURING SOMA-SACRIFICES: TEXTS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS OF ON-SITE PERFORMANCES
- 15:30 – 16:00** MHACHANI OVUNG
Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune, Maharashtra, India
MYTH AND ORAL TRADITIONS AMONG PRELITERATE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OF NAGALAND, IN NORTHEAST INDIA: A SUPPLEMENTARY TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
- 16:00 – 16:30** SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM
Independent Researcher, Chicago, IL, USA
TRANSGRESSIVE SACRALITY AND THE SEMBLANCE OF HUMOR: REPPRESSED LAUGHTER IN AMERINDIAN MYTHOLOGY
- 16:30 – 16:45** *Coffee Break*
- 16:45 – 17:15** FRANCESCO BRIGHENTI
Independent Researcher, Venice, Italy
TIGROANTHROPY IN MONSOON ASIA: TIGER SPIRITS, SHAMANS, ANCESTORS, AND SHAPESHIFTERS IN SOUTH AND MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRADITIONS
- 17:15 – 17:45** JULIETA ROTARU
Institut National des Langues et Littératures Orientales, École Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France
THE ORIGINS OF GYPSY OATHS

17:45 – 18:15

MARCIN LISIECKI

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun, Poland

DEMONOLOGY AND FOLK MAGIC IN THE FOLKLORE IN NORTHERN
MAZOVIA. THE CASE OF THE CITY OF NASIELSK

18:15 – 18:45

APRIL QUIN

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland

'LOVE FROM THE OTHER SIDE': A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
JAPANESE MYTH OF IZANAGI AND IZANAMI AND THE GREEK MYTHS OF
HADES AND PERSEPHONE, AND ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

18:45 – 19:00

CONFERENCE CLOSING REMARKS

ABSTRACTS

WHY AND WHEN DID THE GODS GO TO HEAVEN? THE LINEAGE OF MYTHOLOGY IN VEDIC INDIA AND THE BACKGROUND OF HEAVENLY ORIENTATION

KYOKO AMANO
Kyoto University, Japan

In the Black Yajurveda-Samhitās of the Veda, which were composed in ca 900-700 BCE, rich myths are narrated to elucidate the origins, legitimacy, and efficacy of ritual acts. These myths often incorporate specific motifs, allowing for variations to be created depending on the context. As such motives, the following three introductory sentences are well-known: *prajāpatiḥ prajāḥ asṛjata* ‘Prajāpati created creature’, *indra vai vṛtram ahan* ‘Indra slew Vṛtra’, *devās ca vā asurās cāspardhanta* ‘The gods and Asuras fought each other.’ Adding to these three, *devāḥ svargaṃ lokam āyan* ‘The gods went to the heavenly world’ can be identified as a fourth. This myth is characterized by the interchangeability of the subjects, alternating between *ādityas* ‘the Ādityas’ and *aṅgirasas* ‘the Aṅgiras.’

In the Black Yajurveda-Samhitās, description of each ritual forms a chapter. The choice of motifs varies between chapters, contributing to the emergence of a lineage connecting them. The religious ideology discernible from motif in each chapter tells the background in which the ritual of this chapter was formulated. In this paper, I investigate the myth of *devāḥ svargaṃ lokam āyan* ‘The gods went to the heavenly world’ to examine how the heavenly orientation in Vedic ritual unfolded from its religious foundations. This analysis deepens the inquiry into diverse cultural background of Vedic texts.

**JAPANESE “SONGS OF ANTIQUITY” (KODAI-KAYÔ)
AND
LAFCADIO HEARN’S ROMANTIC NATIONALISM**

KLAUS ANTONI

Tübingen University, Germany

The earliest form of Japanese poetry is found in the form of lyrically linked stanzaic songs, known as the “songs of antiquity” (*kodai-kayô*), dating back to the early eighth century. These songs were woven into the mythical and legendary prose of the first imperial chronicles, *Kojiki* (712 AD) and *Nihonshoki* (720 AD) and were also included in the first anthology of poetry, *Manyôshû* (c. 759 AD). In their language and themes, these lyrical songs (*uta*) reference the earliest period of Japanese oral tradition.

Outside of Japan, the literary traditions of ancient Japan became known primarily at the end of the 19th century through the efforts of Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), a writer who, as a journalist and author of highly popular books on Japan, profoundly influenced the perception of the country. Through his exotic and romanticized accounts, Hearn shaped the Western view of ancient Japan at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. During this imperialist era, the West was captivated by an “Orientalist” exoticism and a fascination with the romanticism of the foreign, finding in Japan a suitable canvas for projection.

Hearn catered to the exotic expectations of audiences in Europe and North America with his stories of Japan, which often resembled a fairy tale kingdom rather than a depiction of the real country. This was despite the ongoing modernization efforts of Japan at the time, technologically, socially, militarily, and politically, in alignment with the Western powers.

Hearn was captivated by an idealized image of a pre-modern, supposedly authentic Japan. His admiration for this ideal led him, after marrying Koizumi Setsu (1868-1932) in 1891, to obtain Japanese citizenship and adopt the poetic term “*yakumo*”, the opening phrase of the very first of the mythical songs of antiquity, as his personal name. Henceforth, he became known in Japan as Koizumi Yakumo, expressing his deep respect for his new home in Japan, particularly the Izumo region, where the “Eight Clouds” (*yakumo*) rise.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MULTIPLE LAYERS IN JAPANESE MYTHOLOGIES OF THE 8TH CENTURY AND ON THEIR PROTO-HISTORIC EDITING

PAOLO BARBARO
Lille University, France

Drawing inspiration from a little-cited paper published in French in 1966 by Yoshida Atsuhiko, where he claimed with good reasons that an interesting portion of myths found in the mythographies that were edited in Japan during the 8th century has a southern and Austronesian origin, this paper tries to sketch the common thread that binds numerous studies and researches on Japanese mythology, including those of Lévi-Strauss, Michael Witzel, Scott Littleton, Takeo Matsumura, Tairyō Ōbayashi, François Macé and Alain Rocher. They all – from different perspectives and with different methods – sustained the existence of components of different origin in the corpus of myths written down during the 8th century. The presentation tries to show the reasons why some of them, and in particular some Austronesian themes and some Indo-European *topoi*, are probably the results of contacts and exchanges that took place during proto-historic times, while other are older layers whose similarities with other Eurasian and American mythologies have a phylogenetic origin.

TOWARDS THE WORLD-WIDE DATABASE OF MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE: A UNIQUE STORY

YURI BEREZKIN
*Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography,
St. Petersburg, Russia*

The research project I have been engaged in since the 1970ies is based on ideas of Franz Boas emphasized in his papers published between 1895 and 1915. Between two world wars, the historical orientation of American anthropology was replaced with the psychologist and neoevolutionism. For both of these trends, the comparative study of traditional narratives and the investigation of regional peculiarities and not global regularities were of no interest. Because of this, the database of American (and not only) mythology and folklore was created recently in St. Petersburg and not much earlier in the country where the necessary publications were and are more available than they are in Russia.

My position is based on three assumptions. Firstly, it is a representation of history not as a tendency towards increasing complexity but as a series of rare

events that interacted with an uncertain number of other rare events. This claim should not be reduced to absurdity but the universal trend to increasing complexity has so different realizations in particular societies that it is reasonable to ignore it in a study. Secondly, it is the understanding of oral traditions as an autonomous sphere of culture which interdependence with other spheres is weak. Because of this, analytical units selected from oral traditions are excellent markers of migrations and cultural contacts. Unlike genes, such units are transmitted not only from ancestors to descendants but also between genetically remote populations. Thirdly, the research must be based on the database of world mythology and folklore as complete as it could be and not on selected cases that fit well the adopted conception.

I think that prof. Michael Witzel shares the first two of these assumptions. Concerning the database, its creation (during the last 15 years together with Evgeny Duvakin) was a result of unique circumstances of my scientific career and its development was in a way independent from my plans and intentions at any given time.

HERO'S JOURNEY: FROM SARGON TO BLADE RUNNER

ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIĆ
UFRN, Natal, Brazil

When Otto Rank published his groundbreaking *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* in 1909, he was referring to an already rich tradition of interpretations of journeys of many mythical figures, and the heroic tasks that they had to accomplish. In this paper, I trace several mythic journeys, beginning with the ancient Akkadian king Sargon, proceeding with several important rulers/ chiefs (like the Mexican Quetzalcóatl and Navaho divine twins, Killer of Monsters and Child Born from Water – in a version published by Joseph Campbell), and ending with the journey completed by a “Blade Runner,” Rick Deckard. History, psychoanalysis, myth, and popular culture all combine in providing the answers to some of the fundamental debates about the relationship between human and non-human realms. As Freud wrote in 1921, and Lévi-Strauss half a century later, poets who told these stories were essentially writing about themselves, but also providing us with important elements for interpreting their cultures and their societies. Different realms are sometimes combined in a single individual (like the Norse Thor, during his journey to the land of the giants) or divided between several actors (like in the Native American divine twin's hero myths). The questions that these journeys open relate not only to the establishment and

preservation of the cosmic order, but also point to the dilemmas about humanity (what is it that makes us human?), as well as our place in the changing world.

TIGROANTHROPY IN MONSOON ASIA: TIGER SPIRITS, SHAMANS, ANCESTORS, AND SHAPESHIFTERS IN SOUTH AND MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRADITIONS

FRANCESCO BRIGHENTI

Independent Researcher, Venice, Italy

Archaic beliefs about weretigers as physical shapeshifters are widespread among Austroasiatic-speaking tribal groups in eastern India (e.g., the Munda), Burma, and Indochina. Similar beliefs form a little-studied aspect of the non-tribal magical lore of Buddhist populations influenced by (pseudo-)Tantric doctrines and practices in Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia. It is curious to note that a historical intertwining of (pseudo-)Tantrism and beliefs in feline therianthropy, or tigroanthropy, is found only in Mainland Southeast Asia and on the island of Java, while in India, the homeland of Tantra, there is practically no trace of such a connection—not even within the Śaiva and Śākta traditions of Hinduism, in which the tiger plays a prominent symbolic and religious role. Other Austroasiatic-speaking tribal groups in northeastern India (the Khasi and Lyngngam) and the Malay Peninsula (the Batek and Jahai Negritos) preserve a more markedly shamanistic complex of beliefs in tigroanthropy revolving around the concept of psychic shapeshifting—that is, the merging of one's soul with that of a tiger familiar, or alter ego, during nighttime. Additionally, in the Malay Peninsula, Austroasiatic-speaking shaman-healers and spirit-mediums are believed to be closely related to tiger spirit-guides during both their initiatory crises and ritual performances, and the most eminent among them are believed to turn into immortal 'soul-tigers' after death. Also in Cambodia, certain Austroasiatic-speaking ethnic groups (e.g., the Somrai) have their own 'tiger-spirit-mediums.' Some Austroasiatic-speaking tribal communities of southern Vietnam also have a tradition of individual laymen forming psychic alliances with ancestral 'soul-tigers' in dreams. Given its virtual absence in both Hindu and Buddhist literary and ritual traditions of South Asian provenance, I propose that the origins of the tigroanthropy trope in Mainland Southeast Asia lie within the Neolithic Austroasiatic culture complex (formed after 4kya according to recent archaeogenetic, paleolinguistic, and archaeological research) of northern Indochina and southern Yunnan, which may have included an already developed prehistoric 'possession' complex in which tiger spirits, tiger ancestors, 'tiger shamans,' and tiger shapeshifters (i.e., weretigers, whether conceived as 'physical' or 'psychic' shapeshifters) played a prominent role. The importance of

the tiger as a shamanic, magical animal possessing a spirit as potent as that of humans in early Austroasiatic animistic traditions may also explain the unusual historico-linguistic phenomenon that linguist Paul K. Benedict facetiously dubbed the “Tiger Invasion of Southeast Asia,” which refers to the massive and continued incorporation of the reconstructed Proto-Austroasiatic word for ‘tiger,’ *klaʔ, or its derivatives, into numerous Tibeto-Burman languages, even at the proto-branch level—and perhaps into Proto-Hmongic and Proto-Tai-Kadai as well.

THE MYTH FORMATION AND THE SILENT GODDESS

ANA R. CHELARIU

Independent Researcher, New Jersey, USA

In the efforts to study the origin of myth, some fundamental questions should be addressed: is it possible to understand myth formation within the prehistoric human society with today’s frame of thinking? Could we envision what contributed to the process of human creativity in representing the primordial myth thousands of years ago, and reaching valid conclusions? More so, what role the silent prehistoric goddesses, portrait in many clay statues, played in the formation of mythical concepts? How did the patriarchal mentality of researchers in comparative mythology from the last decades contributed to the way we understand mythical concepts formulated their work? These are some of the questions that will be address in this paper, with special attention to the Cucuteni Tripylia statues in conjunction to the symbolic elements recorded by Marija Gimbutas

THE RBHUS' CUP, THE BUDDHA'S BOWL, AND THE HOLY GRAIL

SIGNE COHEN

University of Missouri, USA

This paper will use the thorny question of the possible connections between the cup(s) of the Vedic R̥bhus, the bowl(s) of the Buddha, and the Holy Grail of medieval European legends to investigate larger theoretical issues in comparative mythology.

I will discuss Leopold von Schroeder's attempt to trace the Grail legends back to the Vedic Soma ritual, Scott Littleton's thesis that the Arthurian legends were brought both to Europe and Japan by the Iranian Sarmatians and have their origins in the Nart sagas, and the theories of R. S. Loomis, Elizabeth Jenkins and others that the origin of the Grail legends are to be found in Celtic mythology.

My paper will use the intriguing parallels between the R̥bhus' single cup that becomes four, the Buddha's four bowls that become one, and the Grail – with its likely connections to the four treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann – to examine the relative strengths of four explanatory models: 1) Cultural diffusion, 2) Common Indo-European origin, 3) Common Eurasian origin, and 4) Jungian archetypes

THE GOD OF THE ĀRYĀH

MARCELLO DE MARTINO

Inalco-CeRMI, France

Did the Indo-Europeans have a deity who personified their people? How did the Indo-Europeans identify themselves in relation to other populations? It should be remembered that regarding the Indo-Iranian term *arya- a long controversy arose between Paul Thieme and Georges Dumézil who contested the interpretation offered by the German Indologist in his 1938 essay *Der Fremdling im R̥gveda* regarding the Sanskrit terms *ari*, *arya*, *aryaman* and *ārya* which all would have referred to the semantic sphere of “foreigner” from which that of “hospitable” would have derived: the French comparatist provided this interpretation in his article *Le nom des «Arya»* of 1941, which he reflected in his essay *Le troisième souverain* of 1949, where for the French comparatist the Sanskrit term *arya* would have been an ethnonym that identified the “Aryan” peoples, i.e. the *Aryāḥ*, while its derivative *Aryaman* would have designated their patron god; Thieme replied “with great vivacity” to Dumézil's

“sacrilegious” criticisms of 1949 first in a short article published in 1957 in which he treated the Sanskrit term *ari* as “*Fremde*” and then in a monograph of November of that same year entitled *Mitra and Aryaman*: however, Thieme did not bring convincing arguments to the hypothesis in his essay, as Dumézil himself demonstrated in an article published in “*Journal Asiatique*” in 1958 and in some of his extemporaneous observations on Thieme’s *Mitra and Aryaman*. Dumézil intended to take up the whole question dealt with in his *Le troisième souverain* of 1949 in a new essay entitled *Les souverains mineurs des Indo-Européens* thanks also to the ideas that his Dutch colleague Jan de Vries had given him on some Germanic deities who could be compared with *Aryaman*, as can be seen from the correspondence between the two scholars: in my contribution I intend to make the comparison that Dumézil did not.

ANOTHER INDO-IRANIAN MYTH OF THE HIDDEN SUN: SALVAGING THE FALLEN SUN AND TRITA AS A PRIEST

EIJIRŌ DŌYAMA

Osaka University, Japan

Nearly 20 years ago, Michael Witzel (2005) reconstructed the Laurasian myth of the Hidden Sun, the myth of releasing sunlight (dawn) from a cave, by comparing the ancient Indian and Japanese myths among others.

It is well known that there is another type of Indian myth of the Hidden Sun, as Gotō (1991; 2006) reconstructed: one of the twin gods *Aśvins*/*Nāsatyas*, *Nāsatya* = *Hesperus*, rescues and loads the sun fallen into the western ocean on a ship and leads it back to the eastern shore, and the other twin, *Aśvin* = *Lucifer*, overtakes and loads the sun on a chariot which, drawn by horses, traverses the sky toward the western end of the world. He further pointed out that *Aśvins*’ heroic deed of salvaging *Bhujyu* from the ocean and carrying him to a dry land over three nights and three days also represents an old myth of rescuing the sun. On the other hand, we find another similar myth where *Indra* or *Aśvins* help(s) a man called *Paura* swimming (drowning) in water. Interestingly, these two myths of *Bhujyu* and *Paura* correspond to *one* Iranian myth: a hero called *Θraētaona* and goddess *Anāhitā* help *Pāruua* (≡ Ved. *paura-*) fly from the ocean and come back to his home over three days and three nights. This fact shows that these Indian and Iranian myths go back to the common Indo-Iranian times (Oettinger 1988).

This paper attempts to reconstruct the original Indo-Iranian myth of rescuing the sun and to trace its developments in each of the Iranian and Indian branches. I particularly focus on the figure who rescues Bhujyu or Pā^rruua ~ Paura. Closer examination suggests that a priest called Trita in India and Θrita (> Θraētaona) in Iran also played an important role in the original myth.

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THE PHENOMENON OF TRANSCENDENCE IN THE NOVELS OF FRANZ WERFEL

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Using narrative analysis I compare the literary devices used to portray this theme in three of his best-known novels, each of them set in a different culture and time period: *Hearken Unto the Voice*, which focuses on the prophetic calling of Jeremiah, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which depicts the Armenian resistance against the 1915 genocide, and *The Song of Bernadette*, Werfel’s unique take on the miracle of Lourdes. Despite the cultural and historical differences, similar constitutive motifs can be traced in all three novels: dimensions of a different order of being, initiation, suffering/sacrifice of the initiated and his/her own transformation. The purpose of this comparison is to describe the motifs of transcendence as a literary category in a specific narrative, and to glimpse what these motifs have in common on a general level.

SUMERIAN ABU AND SHAMANIC OBO (A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SUMMER FESTIVALS)

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The paper provides a comparative analysis of the summer festivals Abu and Obo, associated with a religious building of unclear etymology. Sanctuaries with similar names are found in the religions of peoples who spoke the languages of the Afroasiatic, Altai and Sino-Caucasian macrofamilies. The author of the paper suggests that the word abu/obo itself marked a pyramid-shaped stone mound above the burial, which served to implement certain religious ideas. Products were poured into the pit through special grooves. At the same pit, communication between spirits and priests/shamans took place. Since summer is a time of drought, the priests asked the spirits for rain and coolness. The lighting of torches, sports games, hymns and dances were dedicated to this purpose.

The fifth month of the standard Babylonian calendar (July-August) is called *Abu*. The name of the month was borrowed by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. And the translation of this name is a serious problem for Assyriologists and Semitologists. First of all, it is not clear how the second cuneiform sign is read - bu or pu. It is unclear what language this word comes from. Its etymology is unclear. And it is completely unclear whether this word represents the name of an object or a ritual. Currently, there are the following versions of the origin of Abu: 1) from the common Semitic abu "father"; 2) from Akkad. *apu* "bundle of reeds"; 3) from Sumerian a-pa₄ "water (for) the ancestor" - the name of a special groove through which liquid and granular bodies flowed underground, intended as a sacrifice to the ancestor; 4) from the Sumerian ab "window, nest" (in particular, ab-kur-ra "window of the Nether World", from which a dead person emerges onto the earth). All evidence associated with the festival which name came from Semitic languages. For the first time in the form *a-ba-i* the word is found in a text from Ebla (XXV century BC). Since the Ur III, in July-August or the following month, in the cities of southern Mesopotamia and in Syrian Emar, an ezen abum "abum festival" was held, associated with the remembrance of ancestors. An Old Babylonian text from Sippar speaks of offering 3 liters of oatmeal to the entrance to *abu*. One Assyrian text says to dig up the *ab/pu* and then pour honey, oil, beer and wine into the slot for the gidim (dead bodies). Then you must stand with your feet on this *ab/pu* and kiss the ground near it (CAD A 2, 201). Consequently, this word marks a certain gap dug in the ground and serving as a channel for the spirits of the dead to receive food. The text from

Shubat-Enlil furthermore tells us that on the 14th day of the month of *Abu*, sacrifices should be made to the god of the Nether World Nergal and his consort Belet-abi “Lady of Abu”, who was the mistress of the sacred territory called “the Land of *Abu*” (Cohen, 1993, 260-261; Cohen, 2015, 271-274). The festivals of the 27th day of the month *Abu* in Nippur and Emar are equally dedicated to the spirits of the dead, and in Nippur the offering *abu* is replaced by the offering to dur-kug “Sacred Mound”, from which we can conclude that *abu* and dur-kug are names for two parts of one sacred ways.

A researcher of the calendars of ancient Mesopotamia, M.E. Cohen, draws, in our opinion, the correct conclusion: “The term *ab/pum* may not necessarily have referred to actual burial mounds, but perhaps just to a mound (perhaps one per temple as at Emar) constructed not for the purpose of covering the dead, but only as a conduit to the netherworld, i.e., no bodies may have been buried there. Obviously, even if no bodies were buried under the *ab/pum*, the concept surely evolved from the burial mound of dirt and/or rocks which covered the hole in which the deceased was interred. The occurrence of an *ab/pu* in a temple may be somewhat analogous to the Sacred Mound (dug-kug) at Nippur and other cities, which may also have covered a passageway to the netherworld” (Cohen, 1993, 261). This is all the more likely because the Sumerian *dud/r* (obsolete reading *dul*) “mound” corresponds to Tibet. *dur* “grave”. The famous *dur*-^dBilgames “mound of Bilgames”, dedicated to the main character of the month *Abu*. In this month, sports games dedicated to Bilgames/Gilgamesh were held in Nippur. The games were held by torchlight, and the city's youth competed in wrestling and athletic exercises for 9 days. During the same 9 days, the townspeople visited cemeteries and poured libations to their deceased ancestors. This festival was called *ezen-gidim-ma* “feast of spirits” (Emelianov, 2021, 16-18).

It is quite obvious that the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia themselves did not know the etymology of the word *abu*. In one case they write the name of the holiday *ezen-giš-gi* “festival of the bundle of reeds,” meaning *apu* “bundle of reeds.” In another case, they wrote the festival *abum* with the word *a-pa₄-um*, meaning *a-pa₄* “drainage groove” (Cohen, 1993, 260-261). This happens if the word does not come from any of the local languages. In Hebrew there is a word *’ob*, which means both a leather wineskin, a spirit, and a necromancer who communicated with spirits. There is an attempt to connect this basis with the ancient Egyptian *Ab(w)t* “ancestor; image” (Hays, Le Mon, 2009, 1-4). Meanwhile, linguistic comparative studies are well aware of the Sino-Caucasian basis for this word and its derivatives: Proto-Sino-Caucasian: *p̥Vm̥ “earth; grave”; Sino-Tibetan: *bīm; Yenisseian: *baʔŋ “grave, tumulus”; Tibetan: ābum “tomb, sepulchre”; Burmese: *pum* “heap; grave, tumulus”; Kachin: *bum₂* “a mountain”; Lushai: *phūm* “to bury, to inter” (The tower of Babel web). We are talking, as we now understand, about a structure like a pit and a hill covering it.

This structure was a channel through which energy and food communication was carried out between the living and the spirits of the dead. It is quite possible that this word is one of the so-called Boreal, i.e. found in several macrofamilies.

In this regard, it is interesting to compare the data of the Sumerian-Akkadian *abu* with the data of the famous shamanic festival ob/ovo (Chinese aobao). The obo itself is a pyramidal mound of stones. These pyramids have a domed circular shape and are located above cones of compressed earth. Obo is the site of ceremonies for the worship of Heaven and the spirits of ancestors, which are usually held at the end of summer. Believers place a tree branch or stick in the obo and tie a blue hadag, a ceremonial silk scarf, to the branch, symbolizing the open sky and the heavenly spirit Tengri, or Tenger. They then light a fire and offer food to the spirits, followed by a ceremonial dance, prayers (worshippers sit on the northwest side of the obo) and a feast with food left over from the offering. Since ancient times, the cult of veneration of obo has been widespread in the territories of Mongolia, Tibet, Altai and Siberia, as well as in China. It is accompanied by sports competitions in wrestling and archery. The obo ceremony is held during the summer months, when the lord of spirits is believed to descend from heaven. The visible sign of convergence should be drizzling rain, rainbows and favorable dreams (Pozdneev, 1887, 403-405). Obos are very ancient structures, the oldest of them date back to 3000 BC. (Evans, Humphrey, 2003, 192-211). In the book by A.M. Pozdneev, the adaptation of the ancient cult of Obo to Buddhism is stated: "In Mongolia, Obo, in which dragons are honored, inviting a whole host of lamas for this, now appears in a modified form, in which everything is associated by lamas with Buddhist cosmology. Obo, honored by the lamas, now represents not one pile of stones, like the shamanists, but as many as thirteen: the middle one is the largest and, according to the interpretation of the lamas, it marks Mount Sumeru; from it, on the cardinal points, there are smaller piles - they signify four tibs: on the sides of these last there are even smaller piles - these are eight small tibs. All this, however, is already an invention of a later time, which should include the composition of prayers and the establishment of rituals in which the honor of the god is now performed" (Pozdneev, 1887, 404). In mid-July or mid-August, Japan celebrates the Obon festival (from Sanskrit Ullambana "hanging upside down" in the sense of "suffering"). It is also dedicated to the memory of deceased ancestors. At this time, people experience the suffering of their ancestors, who turned into hungry ghosts, and feed them with sacrifices. Torches are lit for them, fruits are brought to them on the altars of Shinto shrines, and aromatic resins are burned. The festival usually ended with the solemn ceremony of toro nagashi: colorful paper lanterns with candles are floated along the river or sea, showing souls a safe path to the kingdom of the dead (Ullambana web).

It can be assumed that the Sumerian *ezen abum* “festival of *abu*”, as well as the name of the fifth month *Abu*, reflect a very ancient religious practice adopted by many peoples of Eurasia, who spoke the languages of the Afroasiatic, Nostratic and Sino-Caucasian macrofamilies. As far as we can judge now, this practice consisted of the following:

1. There were ideas about the exit of the spirit of a deceased ancestor at the end of summer to the world of the living for food. Their implementation was the construction of a pit topped with a pyramidal hill.
2. Products were poured into this pit using special grooves. At the same pit, communication between spirits and priests/shamans took place.
3. Since summer is a time of drought, the priests asked the spirits for rain and coolness.
4. Lighting of torches, sports games, hymns and dances were dedicated to this purpose. If the Semites, Sino-Tibetans and Altaians preserved the practice in full, then the Japanese, having moved to the islands, no longer preserved the cult of the building itself, and only some elements of the festival remained in their religion.

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THE WITZELBOT AND BEYOND: LARGE CONTEXT-WINDOW LLMs IN HISTORICAL, PREHISTORICAL, AND SCIENTIFIC-MEDICAL RESEARCH

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In early 2024 public discussion of large language models (LLMs) suddenly shifted from speculation about the next batch of commercial chatbots to a much deeper question: how to maximize the size of LLM "context windows," which reflect the largest amount of data an LLM can hold in memory or operate on simultaneously.

This shift in discourse followed the release in late winter and spring of 2023-24 of three major papers on Google's new Gemini 1.5 family of LLMs. Some of those papers claimed that Google can now build powerful multi-modal LLMs with context windows several orders of magnitude larger than any ever released by Google's rivals. At times those claims were accompanied by the boast that Gemini 1.5 models can produce remarkably intelligent results with far fewer errors and lower energy use than those of any rival.

Skepticism concerning those claims started showing up weeks after they were made in major preprints and AI developers' informal Web discussions. In this talk I'll look at the grounds of this skepticism and suggest ways that large context window LLMs in the future can be vastly improved by minor changes to their architecture or training methods.

I'll start by describing a specialized LLM combined with a RAG (Retrieval Augmented Generation) model I've helped design with the unique needs of premodern researchers in mind. We code-named our project the "WitzelBot" since its design was guided by the unusually complex computational needs of Michael Witzel's research in Vedic studies, archaeology, genetics, and comparative philology, religion and mythology.

I'll also discuss spinoffs using the WitzelBot's basic design that can help resolve major conflicts in dozens of scientific fields including medical studies of the origins, prevention, and treatment of chronic inflammatory diseases and accelerated aging. At the end I'll describe novel data-mining techniques based on our design capable of globally tracking the biological impacts in plants, humans, and other animals of micro- and nanoplastic pollution and other toxins in the planet's man-made "exposome."

Along the way I'll discuss reasons why none of the LLMs currently being developed by Google/Alphabet, Microsoft, OpenAI, Amazon, Palantir, Facebook/Meta, or Musk's new xAI corporation, etc. can provide the basis for serious historical or prehistorical research, even when the code is distributed free of charge and is supposedly 100% "open source."

***HE WHO DEVOURS MEN:
A NOVEL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF DRAGONS***

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Dragons are one of the most widespread creatures in world mythology, appearing in a wide variety of cultures across time and space. Despite this prevalence Dragons have received relatively little scholarly attention, and so a proper definition for the term "Dragon" remains controversial. In this paper I argue that the previous definitions for "Dragon" range from limited to detrimental and instead I propose a new definition based on the Nahua term *Tecuani*. By taking inspiration from Nahua thought and culture I aim to offer novel insights into these most marvelous Dragons, along with doing my part slowly decolonize the field.

**COGNITIVE AND EVOLUTIONARY READING OF MICHAEL WITZEL'S
'THE ORIGINS OF THE WORLD'S MYTHOLOGIES'**

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Michael Witzel in his book "The Origins of the World's Mythologies" presented a spectacular attempt to reconstruct the history and development of mythologies. He based this reconstruction on the historical-comparative method. However, a convincingly presented historical process requires supplementing with aspects such as: human motivation, social models of the spread of ideas, reasons for choosing some ideas, beliefs and myths at the expense of others. In the summary of the book, M. Witzel puts forward many hypotheses about the universality of myth and its functions.

The aim of the paper is to formulate hypotheses and attempt to supplement the picture presented by M. Witzel with theories and models provided by cognitive

linguistics and cognitive and evolutionary theories of religion. First of all, reflections will be presented on different models of creating metaphors and conceptual metonymies in the myths of Laurasia and Gondwana, the evolutionary determinants of the success of Laurasian myths and - little explored by Witzel - the problem of the connection between rituals and the expansion of mythical content. The presentation has the character of research preliminaries and a loud formulation of questions about a possible synthesis of Witzel's historical-comparative theory with cognitive and evolutionary science of religion.

NATURAL PHENOMENA IN MYTHICAL INTERPRETATION

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The use of nature symbolism in mythical interpretation is controversial: its misapplication by nineteenth century authors like Max Müller created a negative over-reaction that persists down to the present day. This paper provides a brief history of the controversy between Müller and Andrew Lang, his chief opponent, and suggests the limitations of both arguments. Various schools of mythical interpretation are outlined: the Naturalist, Ritualist, Functionalist, and Structuralist schools, but it is argued that none of these alone is adequate. Only a multi-lateral approach considering all of these perspectives is capable of providing a satisfying understanding of the overall meaning. The Greek myth of Leda and the Swan is used as a paradigmatic example of how all of these various schools of mythical interpretation can complement each other. Among these, nature symbolism is one critical aspect that cannot be neglected.

THE SYMBOLIC MYTHOLOGICAL ROLE OF DRAGONS IN THE ICONOGRAPHY OF SOME ARMENIAN AND CHINESE CARPETS

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Worship of Dragon is distinctive to beliefs of various peoples, and it has found its unique manifestation in many aspects of culture of these peoples. The Armenian and Chinese peoples are no exception, stylized images of dragon in their carpets had special expressions, carrying a specific ritual and symbolic significance. The symbolic depiction of dragon is so common in Armenian carpet art that special types of carpets are called 'dragon carpets'.

In the Armenian beliefs, the dragon is associated with thunder and lightning, the elements of nature, it is considered the rivals of the Sun-god, or the absorbser of the sun, because of which solar eclipses occur. The hero with sun characteristics, Vahagn in Armenian mythology, who is also called dragon slayer, fights against dragon. Sometimes the sun also appears as a girl who is kidnapped by dragons, which is well manifested in the Armenian folklore and epic heritage, or the dragon is the one who seals off the sources of heavenly waters, etc. The concept of dragon in the Armenian beliefs is fully identical with the dragon cult common among other Indo-European peoples, which has been discussed in the scientific literature frequently. One type of the Armenian carpet *Khndzoresk* reflects the symbolic representation of the Sun-and-dragon battle. The Chinese carpet art also depict dragons continually. The most popular dragon-related mythological motif in the iconography of Chinese carpets is the the dragon and phoenix battle.

Remarkably, carpets with a similar motif were also weaved in historical Armenia, but with a unique interpretation, and here the influence of the popular Chinese theme and motif is evident. However, according to scholars, they have unique zoomorphic interpretation and style typical for the Armenian zoomorphic carpets. It should be noted that in the iconography of Armenian medieval tombstones we meet motifs of fight between dragon-snake and other animals.

**THE GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL MYTHOLOGY:
EXPLORING VARIOUS MYTHOLOGIES IN YUNNAN, CHINA
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORICAL COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY**

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Michael Witzel's research paved the way for transforming comparative mythology into world mythology. This paper will mainly focus on the effects of this transformation on the study of local myths.

The first topic is the systematic construction of world mythology. The central idea is to understand myth as a global phenomenon, not just comparing different local myths. The research from *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* accomplished the construction of myth systems that span both time and space and cross groups. The system facilitates the flexible interpretation of myths in various cultures and encourages a re-evaluation of their significance. The global elucidation of myths makes the mythological nature of humans explicitly visible, and the possibility of life communities can be achieved.

Secondly, interdisciplinary collaboration is a key aspect of research practices. Historical comparative mythology focuses on exploring the entire existence of the world through knowledge collaboration and methodological assistance. The focus of this research system is on constructing relationships between diverse knowledge and methods, not on adopting an increasing number of methods.

Local mythology's global significance is the third point. Based on the research perspective and knowledge system of Historical comparative mythology constructed by Michael Witzel, I will conduct a reinterpretation of the diverse myths in Yunnan Province, China. The local significance of Yunnan myths must be interpreted holistically by integrating natural geography, climatic ecology, historical archaeology, social culture and so on. When understanding the diverse myths in the Yunnan region in relation to the world myth system, their openness and fluidity of significance at a global level will be revealed.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF A TIBETAN WORD *PHYVA* THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CULT OF FUXI (伏羲) TO TIBET

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According to current studies on Old Tibetan, the letter “*a chung*” and the subjoined letter “*wa sur*” were pronounced at that time. The former was a voiced velar fricative, while the latter was /w/ glide. This knowledge could lead us to a new interpretation of old Tibetan documents and to making surprising discoveries. With the help of this knowledge, I came across a fresh sight to see that creator deities in Tibet and China, *Phyva* and *Fuxi*, overlapped. The pronunciations of Old Tibetan *Phyva*’i, which could be seen as an ancestral word *Phyva*, and [buwk xiǎ/xi] or *[biǔk] *[χia] (Early Middle Chinese and Old Chinese for *Fuxi*) would be very similar to each other, if the first syllable of the latter lost the *-k* ending. Wen Yiduo (聞一多) shows many variants of the myth about humans arising after the Flood from a pair of brother and sister, from Taiwan in the east to central India in the west. Some of brothers who appeared in these stories have the name of *Fuxi* or the variants of it. It is notable that the first syllable ending *-k* in their names was lost in myths from the groups of Miao people in Guizhou in Southwest China and northern Vietnam. The situation of geographical distribution of *Fuxi* myth and geographical distance to Tibet nominate Miao’s *Fuxi* as the first candidate to the original word of *Phyva*’i. It is possible that old central Tibetan in prehistoric times identified Miao’s *Fuxi* with their ancestral god *Yab-bla-bdag-drug*, accepting Yin-Yang rituals for descendants increasing without the Flood myth, which was not fit for the Tibetan worldview. Therefore, they could derive a common noun *phy(v)a* “auspiciousness”, “luck” from the deity’s name *Phyva*’i.

THE MYTH OF THE CREATION THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF THE PRIMORDIAL MAN: ITS MEANING AND ITS IMPACT

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Professor Michael Witzel in his comprehensive and challenging synthesis ‘The Origins of the World Mythologies’, introducing the creation myths, says (p. 117): ‘In addition to the emergence of the world from darkness and primordial waters there also are the seemingly aberrant versions of a primordial giant or egg.’ And in the chapter on historical changes from the late Paleolithic to state societies (p. 401 ff.) he starts saying: ‘We must therefore postulate that primordial sacrifice in hunters’ societies equals that of the primordial (androgynous) deity (Pangu, Puruṣa, Ymir, Remus), who was killed and dismembered and who was identified with the hunter in the hunt of large animals.’ He continues that such archaic, if transformed sacrifice is celebrated in living religions until today. And claims (p. 410): ‘In the end, some 75 percent of humanity still fervently adhere to one form of Laurasian belief or the other – even though they do not know it.’ Professor Hajime Nakamura in his book ‘A Comparative History of Ideas’ in the chapter on the search for the absolute, in the part discussing cosmogony, also starts with the topic of ‘Creation from the Primordial Man’. It is my intention in this paper to analyze the texts they refer to, the Vedic *Puruṣasūkta* and the variant of the myth in the *Aitareya-Upaniṣad*, to compare them with other Indo-European texts, especially the largely unnoticed Ancient Greek parallels, and to look more closely to the precise sense of the myth they present, and to the pathways of influence – notwithstanding important innovations – they have had on religions and culture up to our time.

ALEXANDER GWAGNIN ON THE GOLDEN WOMAN AND BELIEFS OF THE URALIC NATIONS

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Alessandro Guagnini, an Italian born in Verona and ennobled in Poland as Alexander Gwagnin (1571), was the author of three historical and geographical works with very similar themes and contents: [1] *Sarmatiae Europaeae descriptio* (Cracow 1578, with a pre-edition in 1574; Speyer 1581; Basel 1582); [2] *Rerum Polonicarum libri tres* (Frankfurt 1584) and [3] *Chronica Sarmatiae Europaeae* in ten books, which was ultimately not published, but became the basis for a Polish translation entitled *Kronika Sarmacyji Europskiej* (Cracow 1611). In his works, Gwagnin describes numerous states and countries of Eastern Europe, paying attention to the religions and cultures of individual nations. He also discusses pagan religions, especially the cult of the Golden Woman among unbaptized Uralic tribes living in Siberian Asia.

In our work we would like to present Gwagnin's description of religions of Uralic nations in comparison with today's situation. Gwagnin says that the Cheremis people (or the Mari), as well as the Mordvins and the Wakhians adopted the Islam religion, whereas today the Mari people practise Russian Orthodox Christianity or their native paganism in syncretic forms. In another place, Gwagnin stresses that some Mordvins prefer Islam (Mahometanism), and some of them remain the pagan idolaters. He treats the Komi-Permiacs as having been baptized in the Orthodox rite by St. Stephen, the bishop of Perm (ca. 1340–1396), but many Komi folklore tales preserve clear traces of shamanism and paganism. The Pechora people adopted the Christian Orthodox religion about 1518. Gwagnin informs us that the Obdoria and Kondora inhabitants, as well as the Vogul (i.e. Mansi) and Ostyak (i.e. Khanty) tribes, who live on the banks on the Ob River (i.e. in Siberian Asia), worship an ancient idol, which the Muscovites call "the Golden Woman" (Rus. *Zolotaja baba*). This idol represented an old woman holding a boy on her lap. It is obvious that the Russians associated the statue of the golden woman with the Virgin Mary holding her baby. As Alexander Gwagnin never visited the Trans-Ural areas, we intend to indicate his possible source of information (used when writing his chronicles).

JAPANESE MYTHS BETWEEN COMPARATIVE STUDIES AND INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

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This paper delves into the tangled realm of comparative studies on Japanese myth, examining the interplay between transmission and autogenesis to reexamine what comparative mythological studies have explored. It highlights the complexities inherent in analyzing Japanese mythologies, acknowledging both the potential for fruitful comparative studies and the challenges of navigating a fragmented landscape of scholarship. This paper argue necessity to keep a balance between comparative perspectives and indigenous perspectives. Traditionally, mythological scholars have often assumed that similarities between Japanese myths and those found elsewhere indicate transmission from outside sources. For instance, Atsuhiko Yoshida posited a connection between the Greek myth of Orpheus and the Japanese myth of Izanagi, suggesting a potential transmission of motifs. Similarly, Taryo Obayashi proposed a link between the Hainuwele myth of Indonesia and Japanese mythology, pointing to historical movements of people across the South Pacific as a possible transmission route. These theories underscore the importance of considering cultural exchanges and migration in the study of mythological narratives. On the other hand, some scholars, like Yoshinori Yasuda, argue for the transmission of mythic motifs from China to Japan, highlighting the cultural connections between the two regions. Meanwhile, Toji Kamata explores the possibility of African influences on Japanese mythology, referencing motifs like Perseus and Andromeda.

On the other hand, a kind of indigenous studies of Japanese myth have also shown very important mythological strata of Japanese mythic narratives.

THE ANIMAL PROTECTORS

MARE KÕIVA & RAHEL LAURA VESIK
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Ivar Paulson (1958b) concludes in his research that faith and the animal soul were important throughout northern Eurasia. Based on Hultkrantz (1953: 497), a researcher of North American Indian cultures, Paulson proposes that an individual animal soul can become the protective soul of a particular species and

refers to the existence of such protective spirits of a particular animal species, essentially all over South, Central and North America, North and Central Asia, and several European regions, including Scandinavia (Paulson 1961: 178). Takako Yamada's treatment of the Ainu people's gods of animals and fish also offers additions to the Gilyaks, Nivkhs, Orochs, and Tungusic peoples, as well as the Yakuts, Buryats, Khantys, etc., and indicates that the protective spirit in these cultures is a mediator between humans, fish and other animals, but can also take up the role of mediator between humans and guardian spirits while, for example for the Ainu, this function is carried out by the goddess of water (Yamada 2013: 133).

Using broad corpus of texts, we focus on the pluralistic nature and multiplicity of the concept of animal protection spirits, to their appearance and rituals connected with them in different cultures. We will also introduce different schools in the study of mythology about the animal protectors.

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MADHUPARKA AT THE RITUAL OF RECEIVING KING SOMA AS A GUEST OF HONOR (ĀTITHI /ĀTITHYEṢṬI) DURING SOMA-SACRIFICES: TEXTS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS OF ON-SITE PERFORMANCES

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Madhuparka — a mixture of honey and curdled milk or of honey, curdled milk and ghee etc. — is a traditional offering for the guest of honor. As ritual's key offering, Madhuparka along with *arghya* (perfumed water with flowers, herbs etc.) is the name of the entire ceremony of respectful reception of the guest-*atithi*. The guest is also honored with water for feet (*padya/pādyā*), water for sipping (*ācamāniya*), a grass seat (*āsana/kūrca/viṣṭara*), and finally with a cow. Prescriptions for Madhuparka are given in the *Gr̥hyasūtras* and *Dharmasūtras*, and as well as in *Kausikasūtra*. Except of Lāṭyāyana-śrautasūtra and two sūtras of Baudhāyana-śrautasūtra there is no any trace of it in the Śrautasūtras.

At Soma-sacrifice the yajamāna welcomes chosen priests at his home with Madhuparka and it can be also carried out at *Ātithyeṣṭi* (*ātithyā iṣṭi*) – the ritual of receiving king Soma as a guest of honor when soma stalks are brought to the place of Soma-sacrifice. *Ātithyeṣṭi*

performed on the second day of the Agniṣṭoma (for other Soma-sacrifices it depends on the days of preliminary ceremonies). As in the case of other modifications of sacrifices (*vikṛti*), the instructions for performing Ātithyeṣṭi are reduced to describing some of its features along with prescriptions for the Agniṣṭoma. Despite the fact that Ātithyeṣṭi is an integral part of all Soma-sacrifices, even these features are given only in the Agniṣṭoma's prescriptions.

However, not all rituals can be reconstructed from the texts because some of them are still performed according to a living tradition. Madhuparka at the ritual of receiving king Soma as the guest-*atithi* at Ātithyeṣṭi is one of such occasions; and nowadays this ceremony is only performed by the Nambudiri Brahmins.

The paper presents a reconstruction of Ātithyeṣṭi including Madhuparka ceremony based on the prescriptions found in the Śrauta- and Gṛhyasūtras, Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas, as well as on the field research of the author and video recording of the actual performance of this ritual.

DEMONOLOGY AND FOLK MAGIC IN THE FOLKLORE IN NORTHERN MAZOVIA. THE CASE OF THE CITY OF NASIELSK

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The article presents the material from the field research I conducted in the northern Mazovia region in Poland, mainly in the city of Nasielsk and its surrounding villages. From a reasonably rich collection of interviews, I have selected fragments that refer to the verbal folklore preserved in the memory of the inhabitants of Nasielsk and the surrounding areas. To more accurately extract and present oral legend, the article is divided into two parts.

In the first part, I deal with topics related to folk demonology and belief in the operation of “unclean forces” among the inhabitants of the local community.

The second part is devoted to magic-related narratives and ways to counteract magic.

I also show the changing trends among the two generations of residents of Nasielsk and its surrounding villages, proving changes in the understanding of local folklore and its displacement by content from other parts of Poland.

**A STUDY OF FOUR MYTHOLOGICAL THEFTS
WITHIN THE LAURASIAN STORY LINE
THROUGH
COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT INDO-EUROPEAN SOURCES**

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Indo-European mythology is a subdivision of Laurasian mythology as defined in Michael Witzel's book, *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* (2012). As such it would share the distinguishing features of Laurasian mythology while it could also have elements that separated it from other branches within the Laurasian area. Using the tools of comparative study – distinguishing similarities and differences and assessing their relevance within a specific model – this paper explores the evidence for mythological thefts in the Indo-Iranian, Germanic, Celtic and Greek cultures. Witzel notes that the thefts can be by either humans or gods (pp. 53, 154) and mentions heavenly drink in connection with the gods (p. 64) while discussing the theft of fire mainly within the human realm as the activity of a culture hero (pp. 64, 154-8). If the thefts are placed among the gods, they can be connected to four feats of the young hero-king god (e.g. Indra, Thor) by which he dominates the old gods. Related items in Witzel's listing of the features of the Laurasian story line (p. 64) are: 'current gods defeat or kill their predecessors', 'heaven is pushed up', 'killing the "dragon" (and use of heavenly drink)'. Employing a cosmological approach which takes account of the four levels of the universe, I tentatively propose the sequence: propping up heaven and stealing soma as a plant, putting out the burning eye of an old sun and stealing fire, removing an obstruction to the flow of the world river and stealing a first drink from it, and killing a bull from the sea and stealing a cauldron. Hopefully, further exploration along these lines may lead to a refining of the Indo-European strand in the Laurasian scheme for use in the more extended comparisons called for by Witzel's overall theory.

A PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF ATSUHIKO YOSHIDA'S MYTHOLOGICAL THEORY

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The late Atsuhiko Yoshida (1934-2023) was an eminent, internationally well-known mythologist of Japan. After obtaining a master's degree at the University of Tokyo on the influence of mystery religions upon Christianity, Yoshida, obtaining a scholarship from the French government, first studied Roman religion under the supervision of Robert Schilling at the University of Strasbourg. There he came to know the writings of Georges Dumézil and being fascinated by his theory of the tripartite ideology of the Indo=Europeans, visited him in Paris. With Dumézil's approval, Yoshida attended Dumézil's lectures and under his supervision presented papers on the influence of the Indo=European tripartite ideology upon the formation of ancient Japanese mythology. Three papers on this topic appeared in the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* between 1961 and 1963. He then successively presented papers on Greek mythology, thus obtaining high reputation as Japanologist, Indo=Europeanist as well as Hellenist. Returning to Japan, he began to publish works on mythology in Japanese. These numerous publications however are not well known outside Japan. Thus, in order to correctly evaluate the academic contributions of Yoshida, it will be necessary to provide information on Yoshida's writings in Japanese. Comments will also be given on his influence collaboration with other scholars and his disciples.

After returning to Japan at the end of 1960's, Yoshida gradually shifted his research from the Greek and Indo-European mythologies to Japanese mythology. At first, he presented his theory of the Indo-European impact on Japanese mythology which he had presented in French in Japanese so that Japanese people would be aware of his contributions. He then shifted his methodology more in the direction of ethnology, anthropology, archaeology, and Jungian psychology and analyzed Japanese mythology from hitherto unknown angles. In a sense Yoshida, a Hellenist and Indo=Europeanist in the West, transformed himself into a Japanologist in his homeland. This shift may have been the result of close collaboration with other scholars such as Taryō Ōbayashi, C. Scott Littleton, and Hayao Kawai.

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FOR THE MEANING OF SATURN WHO DEVoured HIS CHILDREN”

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This paper combines symbolism with logic-driven experimental science. The myth of Saturn who devoured his children finds parallels world-wide in other cannibal gods including Yamauba (Japanese), Rona long-teeth (Polynesian), and Dzunukwa (Kwakwaka'wakw). A psychoanalyst might interpret Saturn as a *father complex*: a tangle of unresolved thoughts, emotions and images internalized by a child from a father's unconscious, which tangle, driven by fear or envy, may later devour the grown child's potential. Evidence for this interpretation, however, is only anecdotal, while other interpretations like 'Father Time,' 'wrath of God,' or 'belly of the whale,' also seem credible. Can we only *guess* at the meaning of a myth? An experimental test of a myth's meaning would seem a contradiction in terms and has not previously been reported. Recently, however, McDowell, Roberts, and McRoberts reported an experimental system that falsified or confirmed the interpretation of a dream. In an online participatory class, we interpreted a dream text alone, without any knowledge of the dreamer beyond age and gender. Highly specific predictions that arose from this interpretation were then tested against subsequently-obtained information about the dreamer. If these predictions were confirmed, this was objective evidence that our interpretation was accurate. In about 100 iterations of this experiment, confirmation has been reliably repeated. Eight iterations have so far been documented and the research is ongoing. There exists extensive evidence that dreams and myths employ homologous symbolic images. One dream explicitly retold the myth of Saturn as a devouring father complex, which interpretation we tested and confirmed as above. This evidence supports the 'father-complex' interpretation not only of the dream but also of the myth. Other documented iterations support the interpretation of other mythic images. If a myth's meaning can be deciphered by experiment, this could affect our relationship to myth.

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<https://philpapers.org/rec/MCDTDO-13>

**FIGURATION AND TEMPORALITY
IN THE
ENTANGLED PREHISTORIES OF MYTH AND DREAMS**

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The strongest Paleolithic evidence for the existence of mythological discourse – as a product of both language and (visual) figuration – is the strange imagery present in a small fraction of Paleolithic figurative art: depictions of hybrid or “impossible” creatures, of the kind long associated also with dreams. The faculty of dreaming itself (the construction of virtual memories on waking) must be as old as consciousness itself, as dream-experience is a consequence of having both language and figuration (memory and representation), together with a sense of temporality (awareness of time). As soon as narrative records begin (2nd millennium), it is clear that the phenomena of dreams were already strongly linked to mythic discourse. Before then, all the evidence for dream and myth in the prehistoric era is visual.

In this category, we have both surviving figurative works and archaeological evidence (e.g. from burial sites). This paper re-examines this evidence in the light of two theoretical approaches relevant for understanding the evolution of myth: 1) that “ordinary” (apparently realistic) figuration is itself mythic/oneiric – i.e. not just the material that retroactively looks “fantastic”; 2) the relevance of numerosity – also an aspect of figuration – as the faculty of mind central to the development of time-based representations (e.g. dreams), and an essential ingredient for the integration of figuration as mythic discourse (for example, in ritual activity). The discussion will use examples drawn from well-known and recently discovered prehistoric visual works, and from the earliest literary texts, with a view to illuminating the roles of figuration, temporality and dream-experience in the evolution of mythological discourse.

TRIADS IN COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

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The purpose of my paper is to reevaluate the assumption that the triadic arrays are an efficient structural pattern in the comparative approach. It is attested in the Indo-European mythologies but is also widely known beyond. The works of several authors serve as markers of this trend (names are listed in alphabetical order): Dumézil, Gonda, Haudry, Toporov, Witzel, and Yoshida. The main focus of the paper is on the work of Yoshida that provides an excellent example of an interlace of the Indo-European and a Non-Indo-European, specifically, Japanese mythology. The intertwining of seemingly unrelated mythological systems prompts discussing a set of old problems: are we dealing with common origins, with influences, or with borrowing?

THE LEGEND OF YONORAN AND SEONYO IN KOREA

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In one volume of *Samugunnyusa* 三国遺事, a history book written in Korea at the end of the 13th century by the high priest Iryong, there is an episode of Yonoran and Seonyo. According to the story, they lived on the east coast of Silla, and at 157 A.D. a moving rock brought them to Japan where the people made him their kings of the land. The light of the sun and moon disappeared in Silla when they left, and the king of Silla sent a messenger to the couple who was the cause of the phenomenon to ask to return. Yonoran, however, refused to return, saying that it was Heaven that had brought them to this land. Instead, he gave the messenger a silk cloth woven by Seonyo and told him to worship Heaven. When the messenger went back and the people did as Yonoran said, the light of the sun and moon returned.

I would like to examine the relationship between Silla and Japan in ancient times as conveyed by this legend, based on other documents and archaeological data.

**MYTH AND ORAL TRADITIONS AMONG PRELITERATE INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITY OF NAGALAND, IN NORTHEAST INDIA:
A SUPPLEMENTARY TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

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The present paper illustrates and explores uncatalogued oral literature of the ethnic community in Nagaland and how this has aided in navigating archaeological investigation and interpretation. In the absence of a native script to record the past events among the ethnic community, the oral narratives come to its rescue. These intangible oral traditions are a storehouse and cultural assets. The story of origin, route of migration, the establishment of villages, clans, traditional social and religious norms, and all aspects associated with human life in the past are mostly known through oral narration. Having no original written records of the past, the ethnic groups of Nagaland trace their roots and give identity to their originality exclusively based on oral narratives. Myth is a harmonious composition of sacramental accounts which in a way exhibits, the relationship of the present population with that of their ancestors. Lately, in Archaeological research, there is an evident switch from extensive investment in the scientific norm in research methodology, and the intensity of the present scholarship relying on the historical contents of the myth is witnessed in reconstructing the past. There is an expanding inquisitiveness in adopting and employing oral traditions as a methodology and source to trace and authenticate archaeological sites and their interpretation. This is so because most of the time archaeological sites are associated with traditional anecdotes and customs. The implementation of this unconventional approach in archaeology reveals the abstruse past and recreates the moments. Myths and oral traditions are often inundated with prejudices. It is usually considered nothing but an exaggerated persuasive fictional story engulfed in superstitious beliefs. It undeniably has rhetorical connotations but it also must be accepted that in a community with no written account, accommodating and employing this can provide an explanation for the landscape and the cultural objects.

**THE JAPANESE “OTHER”
IN
CONTEMPORARY SOUTH KOREAN HORROR CINEMA**

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Two recent horror films directed by South Korean filmmakers – Na Hong-jin's “The Wailing” (released in 2016) and Jae-hyun Jang's “Exhuma” (2024) – blend the theme of supernatural evil with religion, folklore, myth and history: especially the history of Korean-Japanese relations. In both films, the representation of malevolent otherworldly forces is predominantly linked to the Japanese “Other”. The central question of this paper is whether such an (un)problematic “othering” along cultural and ethnic lines can be considered as pure entertainment, and if not – what political meaning does it have. In my attempt to address this problem, I will focus on description and interpretation of a plethora of cultural symbols surrounding the Japanese “monstrous Others” in both films. By demonstrating how are they constructed, contextualized and treated in both film narratives, I will reach certain conclusions concerning the specific genre approach to politically sensitive topics.

**‘LOVE FROM THE OTHER SIDE’:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE JAPANESE MYTH OF IZANAGI AND IZANAMI
AND THE GREEK MYTHS
OF HADES AND PERSEPHONE, AND ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE**

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Although Japanese and Greek mythologies are situated on different continents, there are clear reflections and root inspirations that can be recognised in select myths from each of these ancient cultures. This is something that can be seen especially in Creation myth and within the Laurasian school of mythology, and can be identified in the tales of Izamagi and Izanami in Japanese myth to those of Gaia and Ouranus in Greek. However, many parallels can also be drawn between the relationship and story of Izamagi and Izanami and that of both Hades and Persephone, and the human figures of Orpheus and Eurydice. The connections between the male-female dichotomy, as well as the power imbalance between the godly pairings, across both Japanese and Greek

mythology in the narratives mentioned, is something worthy of discussion, as it breaks away from simply the root myth of creation being a similarity across various cultures. Ties to the Underworld, lovers separated by death and the subsequent quest to recover that lost love, are not themes isolated to any one collection, yet also differ greatly in their resultant narratives and representations in traditional and contemporary narratives. The tales of Izanagi and Izanami, as well as Hades, Persephone, Orpheus and Eurydice are impacted greatly by the progression of gender and feminist outlooks in contemporary society in modern retellings.

This talk will cover the similarities between the traditional Japanese myth of Izanagi and Izanami and that of the Greek myths of Hades and Persephone as well as Orpheus and Eurydice, and how they were both influenced by their ancient societies. Contemporary retellings of their myths, and their parallels with regards to gender and feminism, in the novel *The Goddess Chronicles* (2013) by Natsuo Kirino and the musical *Hadestown* (2019) by Anaís Mitchell will also be discussed.

THE ORIGINS OF GYPSY OATHS

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Historically, oaths were common rituals in India, the Central Asia, Near East, and the Mediterranean world, regions where Romani people lived and developed their culture. Today, these oaths are part of a complex ritual system that influences family and civic behaviour in Romani communities due to their promissory value. They also play a central role in traditional judicial procedures, contributing to conflict resolution through their probatory value.

This is a part of ongoing research into the origins of Indian institutions. I propose that the Gypsy oath is one of the few institutions inherited from the Indian tradition of oath-taking. The function and syntax of Indian oaths have been analysed by philologists over the centuries, from the Vedic to the Epic literature. There is no consecrated term in Indo-European for “swear” and “oath” (Benveniste 1948: 81) and the meaning of the OIA root AMi- that has evolved from ‘to seize’, through ‘touching firmly’ (of an object, for taking an oath) to ‘swear’ (Mayrhofer 1992, EWAia I: 97), provides insight into the core morphology of one such ritual. While Romani has not inherited this root, consistent terms and expressions were established in South-eastern Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries –from what we can document so far–, which persist

in all Romani dialects spoken in Europe. The majority use a word derived from *sov-* (*solax/culax* [solah/t̥solah/], var. *sovel*, *sovli*, *sovlax*, etc (f) or *solaxa/culaxa* (n.invar.)), which is etymologically connected with the Sanskrit *śap-*, cf. Prakrit *savaha* ‘to curse, to swear an oath’ (Miklosich 1878, sub voce). In Gurbet and Sepečides ‘to take an oath’ is expressed by verbal phrase *soil hani* and *xal sovel*, or *solax xal*, respectively, literally ‘to eat an oath’, probably remnants of a ritual meal (v. Marushiakova and Popov 1997 (3-4): 165 for such practice). This usage aligns with Benveniste’s note (1984: 82) on the use of the verbal phrase in all current Persian dialects *swgnd khwrdn* ‘to swear’, literally ‘eat (or drink) *swgnd*’, wherein *swgnd* is explained by Avestic *saokanta-* ‘sulphur’, referring to the ordeal of the person swearing the oath. The presentation will focus on one aspect: the reconstruction of ordeals in Gypsy oaths and potentially their Indian mythological configurations embedded in the morphologies derived from the religious practices of Christianity and Islam.

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WHEN EAST MEETS WEST: THE SPIRITUAL QUEST AND ASIAN SPIRIT IN CAPCOM’S DRAGON’S DOGMA SERIES

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This study delves into the underlying mythological elements and overarching plot structures employed in Capcom’s action role-playing games *Dragon’s Dogma* and *Dragon’s Dogma 2*. It considers role-playing games not merely as aesthetic objects that provide pleasure but also as texts that act as “mirrors” reflecting the communities from which they originate. This dual perspective highlights the commitment of game creators—that while video game studios pursue financial success, the ultimate reception of their works hinges on a

symbiotic balance between craftsmanship and social consciousness. Despite being presented as typical Western high-fantasy, this study posits the existence of hidden Japanese and Asian literary influences in character depiction and narrative structure. The methodology involves close reading, watching, and playing to extract these concealed elements. The theoretical foundation of this paper is based on Cultural Myth Criticism, which defines myth as a narrative that encompasses one or more extraordinary events with transcendent, sacred, and supernatural references. These narratives typically lack historical evidence and are associated with an absolute cosmogony or eschatology, whether individual or collective. It distinguishes myth from other correlates of the imaginary such as fantasy, science fiction, and esotericism. Furthermore, Archetypal Theory, which suggests that narratives—ancient or modern—are shaped by archetypes residing in the collective unconscious of the brain, is utilized in the extraction of recurring mythological images and structures. The findings reveal that creators used western-medieval aesthetics in characters as “veils” to mask the Asian/Japanese spirit embedded within the texts; that Shinto and Buddhist ideas are present despite its Westernized plot; and that all stories and quests lead to a typical Asian/Japanese grand narrative.

SNAKE, SHOOTING STAR, AND ORDER: MYTHICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TALE OF THE SHIPWRECKED SAILOR

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This paper discusses an ancient Egyptian literature *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* from the comparative mythological perspectives. The tale is a narrative of adventure in which a loyal follower tells his master, who is sailing back to Egypt with failure of mission by the king and therefore despondent, about his experience as a shipwrecked sailor to comfort and encourage his master.

The tale takes the form of a tale within a tale within a tale. It starts with follower's supportive words to his master and then he moves on to telling his similar experience during the mining expedition by sea years ago. He is faced with a major storm and is brought by sea wave to an island where he encounters a giant human-headed snake. The description of the snake indicates that it is a mythical existence. Then, this snake starts to talk about shooting star, probably meteorite, which brought snake's brothers and relatives to destruction by fire. The mention of snake's daughter here is puzzlingly allusive. It depends how an Egyptian word, *ini*, should be understood. Recent research points out that this disaster to the

snake and daughter could be a myth of origin of the order, namely *Maat* in Egyptian, which is central concept both to the Egyptians' idea about the universe and to their code of ethics.

In the situation described above, the present paper will investigate the relationship of snake, shooting star and the order hoping to shed light on the mythical interpretation and function of this tale.

**NATURE, TECHNOLOGY, IMAGINATION:
TRACING THE CONFLUENCE OF DEMONIC LORE AND POSTMODERN SHIFTS IN
HAYAO MIYAZAKI'S FILMS AND SERBIAN VILLAGE FOLKLORE**

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Over the past 18 years, I have explored rural communities in Serbia and the Balkans, delving into their folk culture, belief systems, and particularly demonological folklore. Initially, these narratives seemed distinct from historical ethnographic records in both depth and breadth. However, insights from local informants led me to see that rather than fading away, the worlds of “them” and “demons” transform under modern influences. These transformations are shaped by the communities, nature, and societal changes, placing even remote villages within the context of a postmodern world. Surprisingly, parallels arose between these findings and the works of Miyazaki—like “Princess Mononoke” and “Spirited Away”—where villagers tied the fading of certain demonic figures to technological and ideological shifts in their cultural and metaphysical landscapes. Much like Miyazaki's films, the folklore narratives leverage these entities not just to tell stories about them but to reflect on broader societal and ontological shifts. This research, therefore, seeks to explore how traditional and modern narratives merge, creating a hybrid perspective where ancient beliefs help interpret and rationalize the rapid transformations of our global landscape. Through my research into rural folklore and contemporary representations of traditional motifs in film and popular culture, I aim to explore our enduring fascination with demons. Specifically, I investigate how these figures serve as mediums through which we engage with, critique, and construct the reality around us.

MAIDENS' RITE OF DIVINATION WITH A MIRROR IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Long time ago the present author described in a publication (Vassilkov 1999: 455-56) the episode preserved in some MSS of the Southern recension but ignored by the compilers of the Mahābhārata's Critical edition. A girl comes to the aśoka-grove, stands at the foot of an aśoka-tree, takes a branch covered with flowers in one hand, holds a mirror in another hand and looks into the mirror trying to see there the face of her future husband.

This paper will contain a brief review of the divination rites with the help of reflecting surfaces all around the world. Attention will be paid to the contemporary scientific experiments demonstrating the emergence of illusory objects as a result of gazing into the mirror (scrying) under certain circumstances. Some traces of the acquaintance with catoptromancy and hydromancy are found in Vedic tradition of the Brāhmaṇa period (900 – 500 BCE). The divination rites with the use of mirrors and children as mediators or mediums became widespread in Śaivite and Buddhist tantrism.

Maidens' rites of divination with a mirror, similar to the rite, described in the Mahābhārata, are well known in folk traditions of Europe. In this paper the attempt will be made to disclose some traces of similar rites in the traditions of Iranian-speaking peoples as the closest language relatives of ancient Indo-Aryans.

TRANSGRESSIVE SACRALITY AND THE SEMBLANCE OF HUMOR: REPPRESSED LAUGHTER IN AMERINDIAN MYTHOLOGY

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Lévi-Strauss' cycle of *Repressed Laughter* depicts a recurrent episode across Amazonian mythology where a solitary hunter encounters a jaguar, monkey, or bat in the wilderness. If he laughs at its comic behavior the beast devours him. If the human suppresses this urge, he is adopted and taught its secrets to return eventually to his tribe as culture-hero. Having demonstrated that clown and trickster are exemplars of transgressive sacrality (TS), Laura Makarius shows that this initiatory test instead aims to confirm the hunter's propensity towards

taboo-violation and thus a worthy candidate to receive these privileged gifts. While attesting to the universal depreciation of profane laughter across South American tribal societies, Lévi-Strauss singles out instances in mythology where explosive laughter is paradoxically exalted as “sacred.”

My PhD thesis on “Abhinavagupta’s Conception of Humor” (1984) demonstrated that the public laughter provoked by the ritual clown is due to the spectators’ inability to identify without reservation with his violation of taboos. Comic behavior simultaneously evokes positive (“yes”) and negative (“no”) affects that neutralize each other such that their combined nervous energies are physically discharged. Identifying fully with the transgressor hence precludes laughter. Though the “great brahmin” jester (*vidūṣaka*) is the primary locus of the comic, Abhinava declares that he deploys the mere “semblance of humor” on stage.

The monkey mediates the opposition between jaguar and man. Whereas the feared jaguar behaves ridiculously only in the liminal context of the human encounter, the monkey is an intrinsically funny figure. In the Hindu context, the *vidūṣaka*, repeatedly assimilated to a monkey, likewise mediates conceptually and aesthetically between the terrifying Śiva-Bhairava as the embodiment of TS and the law-abiding spectators. The transgressive Pāśupata ascetic, who was obliged to make profane onlookers laugh, also practiced the explosive sacred laughter (*aṭṭahāsa*) that defined his patron deity Śiva-Rudra as transgressor.

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<https://www.svabhinava.org/HumorPhd/Appendix/index.php> (notes #7 & #8)
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**THE VIENNA SCHOOL IN JAPAN:
CULTURE CIRCLE THEORY AND ITS IMPACT
ON THE STUDY OF JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY**

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Culture circle theory was one of the most influential approaches in German-speaking ethnology from around 1910 to the 1930s. It emerged in opposition to evolutionism and attempted to trace similar culture elements (including both material and immaterial culture as well as forms of social organization) to a common origin rather than explaining them as the result of independent development. In Vienna, the catholic priest Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954) used this framework to write a universal history of humankind by developing an intricate scheme of primordial, primary, and secondary culture circles, whose mixture brought forth high cultures. Oka Masao (1898–1982) studied ethnology

in Vienna during the 1930s and applied the concepts of culture circles and cultural strata to the study of Japanese prehistory and mythology. He identified a number of distinct cultural strata in ancient Japanese culture which he connected to different waves of immigration from the Asian continent and the South Pacific region. While he did not publish his ideas in Japanese until the end of the war, his model of ethnogenesis had a huge impact in the postwar era, when Japanese ethnologists searched for ways to overcome the imperialistic narratives of the recent past, and remained influential until the end of the twentieth century. Based on Oka's Viennese dissertation and his postwar publications, this paper analyzes Oka's reception of culture circle theory and situates it within its historical context. The paper also traces Oka's influence on later scholars such as his student Ōbayashi Taryō (1929–2001), a professor of cultural anthropology at the University of Toyko who traced the heterogeneous roots of Japanese mythology in his work.

JAPANESE KAPPA AND GREEK KAMPE: TWO WATER MONSTERS IN COMPARISON

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Kappa represents a river or marine beast, half-man, half-reptile, which appears to be very popular in the Japanese folklore. It is usually depicted as blue, green or yellow-green monster which has a carapace on its back (like a turtle), webbed feet (like a frog) and a mouth full of sharp teeth (like a crocodile). Its front legs resemble human hands. This monster is very strong (stronger than an adult man) and can become harmful and dangerous to people, when it is not respected as an aquatic deity or a supernatural entity (*yokai*). It is frequently believed that there are numerous kappas, but the young ones are usually friendly towards other creatures and people. They prefer cucumbers and love sumo wrestling. The adult kappas, which live alone, are often accused of attacking humans in water. They can drown people and animals in water, as they like to drink blood and eat some body parts, e.g. bellies, livers or genitals.

Greek *kampe* (called *campa* or *cappa* in Latin) represents a female monster living in the depths of the ocean. Lycophron of Chalkis believes that there are many large monsters called *kampai* devouring shipwrecked people and fishermen by their sharp teeth. These beasts are extremely strong and difficult to overcome. Only gods or demigods (e.g. Zeus, Dionysus or Briareus) can defeat them. According to the ancient Greek mythographers, Kampe was the guard of Cyclopes and hundred-armed giants in Tartarus. Kampe was described not only

as an actual sea creature of enormous size, but also as a fantastic hybrid composed of several dangerous animals. By contrast, *Cappa* is explained as a hippocampus (or a fantastic equine version of it) in some Latin glossaries or even as a bull-snake monster (in Ovid's *Fasti*).

My main purpose is to analyze critically basic accounts on Greek Kampe and Japanese Kappa, as well as to point out some similarities and differences in the mythical and folklore tales operating in two separate worlds (in Greece and Japan).

ARCHAIC JAPANESE SUN AND MOON DEITIES

MICHAEL WITZEL
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The character and origins of the Sun goddess Amaterasu, “she who shines down from heaven,” has been discussed at length. Some Japanese scholars have assumed that her martial character is the remnant of an earlier male deity.

In my brief, experimental talk this will be investigated on the basis of J. Kurylowicz's fourth axiom: “When the old form and the new form are both in use, the former remains in secondary function and the latter takes the basic function.”

That is, the old form (moon deity) remains in secondary function and the new form (Amaterasu) takes the basic function (sun deity); thus: Moon -> male; Sun -> female.

PROBING THE BOUNDARIES OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY: ADDRESSING BRUCE LINCOLN'S CRITIQUE OF MICHAEL WITZEL'S APPROACH AND THE FIELD OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

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Does Comparative Mythology exist as a scholarly field? Does it have any distinct set of methods? Does it have a reliable way to select data for analysis?

Building on my talk presented during the IACM-2019 conference in Tartu, this paper addresses Bruce Lincoln's appraisal of the whole field of comparative mythology and, specifically, his critique of Michael Witzel's work. I analyze Bruce

Lincoln's take and evaluate the validity of his method in the context of other critical approaches to comparative mythology and its methodologies.

THE ORIGIN MYTH OF LISU WRITING: WANG RENBO AND THE LISU SYLLABIC SCRIPT HE CREATED IN THE 1920S

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The Lisu 傣僳, who live mainly in southwestern China, Myanmar, Thailand, and India, did not develop their own writing system until the early 20 th century. There are four kinds of Lisu script were created during 20 th century, and this article will focus on the Lisu syllabic script created by Wang Renbo 汪忍波, a Lisu from Weixi County 维西县 in 1923.

Chinese linguist Zhou Youguang 周有光 believes that the Lisu syllabic script belongs to the Chinese character-based alphabetic syllabic writing in the creation stage of the Sinosphere. Lisu researcher Mu Yuzhang 木玉璋 believes that Wang Renbo used pictographic, ideographic, derivational and morphological methods to create characters even if he didn't realize it. The Lisu syllabic script is similar to the Naxi Dongba script 纳西 东巴文, the Geba script 哥巴文, the Malimasha script 玛丽玛莎文 and so on. It also borrowed some Chinese characters.

In Lisu non-literate period, there were sacred narratives explaining why they did not have characters. After Wang Renbo created the Lisu syllabic script in the 1920s, sacred narratives about the process of his creation began to circulate. This article will start with the above two kinds of myths, combining with Wang Renbo's autobiography, and try to discuss from the following two levels:

First, although the time span between the two kinds of sacred narratives is relatively large, both the sacred narratives point to an explanation of "origin": the former explained the "origin of no characters", while the latter explained the "origin of having characters".

Secondly, in the early 1920s, we can see that as Wang Renbo created the Lisu syllabic script, myths about his creation process also emerged. In addition, Wang Renbo himself also recorded the process of how he created in "Wang Renbo's Autobiography", and according to scholars, the sentences he wrote down when

he first created are from the “Ancient Song of Sacrifice to Sky”:

During my break from farming, I didn’t smoke but was lost in the sad memories of the past. I couldn’t help crying. After a long silence, I found a smooth hard stone nearby, took off the needle from my hat, and recited the opening words of the sacred song I was familiar with in my mind, and wrote them down:

光	丁	日	乃	血	回	光	Li	jjuat	ol	nat	mat	dy	li,
光	丁	日	乃	回	乃	回	Li	jjuat	ol	nat	wat	ngax	bbai.
光	丁	日	乃	回	血	月	Li	jjuat	ol	nat	wat	mat	so.
回	月	日	乃	乃	乃	大	Wat	so	ol	nat	pvt	ddi	gguax,
天	乃	乃	血	乃			Han	ddi	pvt	mat	ngax.		
乃	乃	乃	大	光			Ddyt	shit	ddyt	gguax	li,		
乃	乃	日	乃	回	乃	回	Ddyt	shit	ol	nat	wat	ngax	bbai.
回	回	日	乃	回	回	大	Shit	nix	olnat	bbot	bbot	gguax.	
回	白	日	乃	回	白	大	Lat	wut	ol	nat	luxwut	gguax,	
回	白	日	乃	回	几	回	Lut	wut	ol	nat	qair	neit	dde,
回	几	日	乃	回	乃	六	Qairneit	olnat	heint	ruax	rot.		
乃	丁	日	乃	乃	乃	乃	Ddi	jjuat	ol	nat	maiq	eilssat.	
乃	丁	日	乃	乃	乃	乃	Ddi	jjuat	ol	nat	maiq	gguar	li.

(Wang Renbo’s posthumous work, provided by Yu Xiangren 余向仁, translated by Mu Yuzhang, “Collection of Documentary Materials on Lisu Syllabic Script” 傈僳族 音节文字文献资料汇编, 1995, P5).

We can see that: on the one hand, there were the sacred narratives that emerged along with Wang Renbo’s creation, and on the other hand, there was Wang Renbo’s own record of the process of his creation. Whether it is the “emergence with the creation” or the “creation with the afflatus”, both remind us: “...the human sciences have taught us to recognize an authentic expression of man: myth says with utmost seriousness something that is of essential importance” (Dardel, 1984, P226). And that actually points to the essence of Myth.

However, this article attempts to investigate as comprehensively as possible all the sacred narratives and records, aiming to get closer and closer to the essence of Myth.