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**EIGHTEENTH
ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY**



**COMMUNICATING WITH SPIRITS:
BEYOND THE HUMAN WORLD**

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

June 2-5, 2025

**Shinyang Humanities Hall
Bldg 4, Room 302 (3rd Floor)
Seoul National University
Seoul, Korea**

PROGRAM

MONDAY, JUNE 2

08:45 – 09:15 **PARTICIPANTS WELCOMING & REGISTRATION**

09:15 – 9:30 **OPENING ADDRESSES**

MONDAY MORNING SESSION: KOREAN MYTHOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

CHAIR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

09:30 – 10:00 SOUL CHO & CHARLES LA SHURE
Seoul National University, Republic of Korea
THE FLOWER THIEF OF SEOCHON FLOWER GARDEN IN JEJU ISLAND
MYTHOLOGY

10:00 – 10:30 PAOLO BARBARO
Independent Researcher, Kyoto, Japan
CROSSING THE RIVER OVER TURTLES AND CROCODILES: ANALYSIS
OVER A CIRCUMPACIFIC MOTIF

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:00 – 11:30 MIHYE KIM
Seoul National University, Republic of Korea
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEJU FOLK BELIEFS AND ONGGI

11:30 – 12:00 MIYUKI ONOE
Toho High School, Attached to Toho University, Japan
AMENOHIBOKO: GOD CONNECTING JAPAN AND KOREA

12:00 – 13:30 *Lunch Break*

MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: LOUISE MILNE

MYTHOLOGY OF EASTERN EURASIA

13:30 – 14:00

[via Zoom]

GERARD P. CONCEPCION

University of the Philippines Diliman

SOME NOTES ON SPIRIT COMMUNICATION IN URBAN MANILA:
FOLK CATHOLICISM AS RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

14:00 – 14:30

ONDŘEJ PAZDÍREK

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

MORAL DISCOURSE CONCERNING COMMUNICATION WITH THE REALM
OF THE DEAD OR SPIRITS IN EARLY MODERN CATHOLIC MISSIONS TO
EAST ASIA

14:30 – 15:00

MICHAL SCHWARZ

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

LINGUO-RELIGIOUS COMPLEXES IN EASTERN EURASIA

15:00 – 15:30

Coffee Break

SHAMANIC PRACTICES IN ASIA AND THE AMERICAS

15:30 – 16:00

CHUJING YANG

Yunnan University, China

EMBODIED MEDIATORS OF TIME AND SPACE: A STUDY ON SHAMANS
AND RITUALS IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE DRUNG RIVER

16:00 – 16:30

[via Zoom]

LUCIE VINSOVA

Independent Researcher, Pilsen, Czech Republic

STAR SONGS: HOW HUMAN VOICE IS USED IN COMMUNICATION WITH
THE SPIRIT WORLD OF STARS, PLANTS, AND ANIMALS

SLAVIC MYTHOLOGY

16:30 – 17:00

[via Zoom]

DANILO TRBOJEVIĆ

The Institute of Ethnography SASA, Belgrade, Serbia

BEYOND THE LIVING: HUMAN COEXISTENCE WITH SPIRITS AND THE UNDEAD IN SERBIAN RURAL BELIEF

17:00 – 17:30

[via Zoom]

BRANISLAV ŽIVKOVIĆ

ELTE University of Budapest, Hungary

SPIRITS OF THE MINE: KOPALCI AND KOBOLDS – A GEOMYTHOLOGY IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN TRADITIONS

MYTHOLOGY AROUND THE WORLD

17:30 – 18:00

[via Zoom]

TIAGO GARCIA FERRER

University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

MISOTHERY AND AMBIVALENCE: THE TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND DRAGONS

18:30 – Reception

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: DAVID WEISS

MYTHOLOGY OF SOUTH ASIA IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

09:00 – 09:30

[via Zoom]

YAROSLAV VASSILKOV

Independent Researcher, Front Royal, VA, USA

MYTHOLOGY IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: DIVERSITY OF SOURCES

09:30 – 10:00

[via Zoom]

SIGNE COHEN

University of Missouri, USA

THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

10:00 – 10:30

[via Zoom]

MAMATA NANDA

Pondicherry University, India

I HAD A DREAM OF LORD JAGANNATH:

THE POLITICS FOR A SUCCESSOR BY THE GAJAPATI RULERS

10:30 – 11:00

[via Zoom]

SUNIL PARAB

Sindhu Veda Research Foundation, India

COMMUNICATING WITH HEROES & ANCESTORS IN THE CONTEXT OF

INDIAN MYTHOLOGY & FOLKTALES

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY I

11:30 – 12:00

[via Zoom]

ANA R. CHELARIU

Independent Researcher, New Jersey, USA

GODS HEAVENLY FEAST DISRUPTED BY TRICKSTERS AND MONSTERS:

AN INDO-EUROPEAN MOTIF IN A ROMANIAN CHRISTMAS CAROL?

12:00 – 12:30

BORIS OGUIBÉNINE

Strasbourg University, France

THE MOTHER TRUTH

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch Break

**Business Lunch for the IACM Board of Directors
and Conference Organizers**

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION:

CHAIR: KAZUO MATSUMURA

INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY II

14:00 – 14:30

NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

Princeton University, USA

OVER THE SEA TO SKY

14:30 – 15:00 ARMEN PETROSYAN
[via Zoom] *Institute of Archeology and Ethnography, Yerevan, Armenia*
TWINS AND CITIES IN INDO-EUROPEAN PAST

ARMENIAN & GREEK MYTHOLOGY

15:00 – 15:30 HASMIK HMAKYAN
[via Zoom] *Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia*
DANCES IMITATING ANIMALS AND TRAINED ANIMALS IN ARMENIAN
RITUAL AND FESTIVE TRADITIONS

15:30 – 16:00 PETRA VOGLER
[via Zoom] *Ludwigsburg University of Education, Germany*
THE ORACLE OF DELPHI: HER STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PAST
AND PRESENT

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee Break*

16:30 – 18:30 **PANEL: MATERIALS, METHODS, AND DATA USAGE IN MYTHOLOGY RESEARCH**

PANEL COORDINATOR & CHAIR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

[Hybrid Format] SEBASTIANO MOSTI
 San Raffaele University in Milan, Italy
FROM THE LANGUAGE OF GODS TO THE BARBARISM OF REFLECTION.
THE RELEVANCE OF GIAMBATTISTA VICO'S MYTHOLOGY TODAY

KAZUO MATSUMURA
Wako University, Tokyo, Japan
TOSHIO TAKAGI AND HIS *COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY*

INNA VESELOVA & ANDREY STEPANOV
The Propp Centre: Humanities-Based Research in the Sphere of Traditional Culture, Saint Petersburg, Russia
A CORPUS OF FOLKLORE PROSE THROUGH THE PRISM OF PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE

SUN LILI

University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China

COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY AS A METHODOLOGY: TAKING MICHAEL
WITZEL AND YE SHUXIAN'S RESEARCH AS AN EXAMPLE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: MICHAL SCHWARZ

THE LARGE-SCALE COMPARISONS

09:30 – 10:00

[via Zoom]

KAI KINOSHITA

Independent researcher, Tokyo, Japan

LEGACY OF DEATH: FEMALE SACRIFICE AND POSTHUMOUS VOICE IN
MYTH

10:00 – 10:30

REHUEL NIKOLAI SORIANO

Central Luzon State University, Philippines

FEVER DREAMS, ARCHETYPAL MANIFESTATIONS, AND THE MYTHIC
DIALECTIC OF ORDER AND CHAOS

MYTHOLOGY OF CHINA

10:30 – 11:00

[via Zoom]

JINGHUA HUANG

Yunnan University, China

A MULTI-SPECIES NARRATIVE: A STUDY ON *MUD PHAF MIL PHAF* OF
THE LAHU PEOPLE IN SOUTHWESTERN CHINA

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:00

[via Zoom]

MENG CHENG

Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China

ON THE CREATIVE REALIZATION OF FOLK AESTHETICS IN VIDEO GAME:
A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE MYTHOLOGICAL VIDEO GAME *BRIGHT BIRD*

12:00 – 12:30
[via Zoom]

POSTERS DISCUSSION SESSION

ANNA ADAMYAN

Nanjing University, China

THE SPIRITUAL AND SUPERNATURAL: ROLE OF DOGS IN ARMENIAN TRADITION

SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM

Independent Researcher, Chicago, IL, USA

LEGEND OF THE WHITE SNAKE: TRADITION AND TRANSGRESSION IN CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch Break

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

KOREAN MYTHOLOGY II

14:00 – 14:30

JEONG-AE PARK

Kangwon National University, South Korea

FROM TRAGIC FIGURES TO REVERED DEITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DEIFICATION OF KING DANJONG AND MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE

14:30 – 16:00

PANEL: MODERN POLITICAL USES OF MYTHOLOGY

PANEL COORDINATOR & CHAIR: STEVE FARMER

**[Hybrid
Format]**

STEVE FARMER

The Systems Biology Group, Palo Alto, CA, USA

MYTHOLOGY, NEO-FASCISM, AND THE GROWING THREATS OF HUMAN EXTINCTION

DAVID WEISS

Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan

CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN JAPAN AND KOREA: THE ROLE OF MYTHICAL STATE FOUNDERS

YASMIN KOPPEN

Leipzig University, Germany

MYTHS OF UNITY, REALITIES OF DIVISION: THE POLITICAL REFRAMING
OF MENG HUO AND THE HAILONG TEMPLE IN MAHU

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break

MYTHOLOGY & POLITICS

16:30 – 17:00

[via Zoom]

HUGO GUNJI

Independent Researcher, Wallingford, Connecticut, USA

FROM MYTH TO MILITARISM: THE MODERNIZATION OF SHINTO
DEITIES IN IMPERIAL JAPAN'S IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUS

NORTHERN EUROPEAN & BALTIC MYTHOLOGY

17:00 – 17:30

LOUISE S. MILNE

*University of Edinburgh & Edinburgh Napier University,
Scotland, UK*

THE INCUBUS, THE ELVES AND THE FALLEN ANGELS: NATURE-SPIRITS
AND NIGHTMARES

17:30 – 18:00

[via Zoom]

FAÑCH BIHAN-GALLIC

Fionn Folklore Database, UK

THE ARMORICAN MERLIN AND THE PROPHECISED CHILD

18:00 – 18:30

[via Zoom]

IGNAS ŠATKAUSKAS

*Institute of the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore,
Vilnius, Lithuania*

HAGGLING WITH SNAKES: AN ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SNAKE
CHARMING IN LITHUANIA

18:30 – 18:40

CONCLUDING REMARKS

19:30 – Conference Banquet

ABSTRACTS

THE SPIRITUAL AND SUPERNATURAL: ROLE OF DOGS IN ARMENIAN TRADITION

ANNA ADAMYAN
Nanjing University, China

In this study, I analyze the figure of the dog in Armenian folk beliefs and its connection to the cult of the *Aralez*, widespread characters in ancient Armenian tradition. According to Armenian sources, the *Aralez* are believed to have originated from dogs; they were supernatural beings in canine form that, according to ancient Armenian tradition, descended from the sky to resurrect heroes who had fallen in battle. In Armenian folk beliefs, dogs are depicted as animals capable of seeing angels and thus are associated with both positive and negative superstitions. I argue that contemporary beliefs about dogs are intrinsically linked to pre-Christian perceptions of dogs as supernatural beings. Furthermore, by comparing these beliefs to canine deities in other mythologies, such as the Babylonian Marduk and the Egyptian Anubis, I demonstrate that the Armenian *Aralez* fulfill a unique role: they are endowed with the power of resurrection, a function not typically attributed to dog-like figures in other traditions. The study also examines the evolution of the dog's image over time, noting that in later centuries, dogs began to be associated with enemies of the nation, and also some Christian saints were depicted with dog heads in Armenian manuscripts and monuments.

Keywords: dog, folk belief, supernatural beings, dog-like deities, mythology.

CROSSING THE RIVER OVER TURTLES AND CROCODILES: ANALYSIS OVER A CIRCUMPACIFIC MOTIF

PAOLO BARBARO
Independent Researcher, Kyoto, Japan

The Gwanggaeto Stele (CE 414), an important document related to the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo relates, among other things, a crossing of a river by the heavenly ancestor of the founding monarch of the kingdom over turtles. This motif, which many mythologists claim originates in Austronesian cultures

of the Sunda Islands, is found also in Japan as well as in other parts of the Pacific. Its presence in the northernmost part of the Korean peninsula questions the current prevailing diffusionist model. Hence, I propose a critical analysis of the existing hypothesis of the horizontal transmission of this motif and of the related myths, to discuss whether the current reconstructions relating it to the diffusion of an Austronesian *urmyth* can be explained including Korean material or whether new hypothesis should be formulated.

THE ARMORICAN MERLIN AND THE PROPHECISED CHILD

FAÑCH BIHAN-GALLIC

Fionn Folklore Database, UK

King Judhael and Queen Pritelle of Domnonea are said to have reigned at the end of the 6th century AD. They are now mostly unknown in their native country of Brittany, though their legacy in both medieval sources and folklore is significant. The royal couple indeed appears to have begotten many children who became important saints in the Armorican peninsula, not least of all Saint Judicael, holy man and king. According to the 11-12 th century *Vita Judicaelis*, the birth of Judicael was prophesized in a dream interpreted by the bard Taliesin. Interestingly, a comparable episode appears in the life of Saint Onenn, Judicael's sister, which has come down to us through oral tradition. Here, the prophesy is spoken by an obscure hermit, Saint Elocan.

Both episodes connect the monarch with prophetic knowledge through the intermediary of a figure that appears to act in the liminal space between society and the world beyond. In this paper, I will reflect on these hagiographical sources and their relationship with each other. I will also explore the way they both appear to connect back to Armorican traditions and folklore related to the figure of Merlin as a figure that occupies the liminal space between our world and the one of magic in Breton literary and oral sources.

GODS HEAVENLY FEAST DISRUPTED BY TRICKSTERS AND MONSTERS: AN INDO-EUROPEAN MOTIF IN A ROMANIAN CHRISTMAS CAROL?

ANA R. CHELARIU

Independent Researcher, New Jersey, USA

The subject of this paper is the Indo-European mythic motif of the Gods feast, also known as the Banquet of Gods, interrupted by the Trickster's mischiefs, as found in European traditions and a Romanian Christmas carol.

In the Norse poem *Lokasenna* (Poetic Edda: 2015) is recorded the story of Gods having a feast in the Hall of Aegir, and the havoc made by Loki, the Trickster-thief who steals and helps others steal gods' treasures, then helps them to recover the goods in exchange for favors. Despite gods' restriction, he will manage to enter the hall and insult the gods and goddesses at the feast. He also orchestrates the kidnapping of Idun, the keeper of the golden apples that are often regarded as the symbol of the sun. Similarly, the Greek Eris, the goddess of discord, who was not invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, will throw a golden apple 'of discord' into the room out of revenge.

Bricriu from the early Irish literature, builds a splendid hall, preparing a feast to which he invites all gods of Ulster. When they refuse his invitation, he threatens to make them kill each other, and to turn daughter against mother. After arriving at the party, the gods try to keep him out of the hall, but he, as in the Norse story, manages to get in, and incite them against one another. In the end, the hall is damaged (Early Irish Myths and Sagas 1981: 219).

The Romanian Christmas carols were traditionally performed at the time between winter solstice and New Year's, when there was the belief that the sky opens up and people could see inside the Heaven. In one carol, God and the saints, Peter, Ilie, John, and Crăciun/Father Christmas, are eating and drinking at a table under a large apple tree; taking advantage of the open sky, the Trickster Iuda, steals from heaven the sun and the moon, the stars, the keys of heaven, the judgement wand, leaving the world in darkness and chaos. The saints have to restore the firmament and recreate the orderly universe.

ON THE CREATIVE REALIZATION OF FOLK AESTHETICS IN VIDEO GAME: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE MYTHOLOGICAL VIDEO GAME *BRIGHT BIRD*

MENG CHENG

Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China

In *Shiji Ji* (*Gleanings*, 《拾遗记》) written by Jia Wang, a Taoist mystic of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, there is a tale about the mythical creature called Chongming bird (bright bird): “During the seventy-year reign of Emperor Yao (尧), there was an ancient country named Dizhi (摠支) once presented the bright bird, also called the Twin-Pupiled, for its dual pupils within each eye. Resembling a rooster in form and singing like a phoenix, it shed its feathers seasonally, soaring on fleshy wing-stems. This divine creature subdued fierce beasts—tigers, wolves, and malevolent spirits—warding off calamities and shielding humanity from harm.”

Bright Bird, a Chinese video game released in 2020, is an adventure game centered around the quest for the legendary divine Chongming bird (bright bird) said to dispel darkness. This video game creatively adapts the imagery and lore of bright bird from the Chinese ancient tale, unfolding its story in a village shrouded by a mysterious haze, where villagers are falling ill one by one. According to the ancient tale, only the bright bird can lift this ominous mist and restore sunlight to the land. Thus, the protagonist Yao (鵲)—a young woman with a unique resistance to the haze who turns out to be the bright bird and, in the end, sacrifices herself to dispel the ominous haze and restore the sunlight—and Xuan (玄), a self-absorbed young Taoist she meets shortly after leaving the village, embark on a journey to find the mythical creature.

This paper explores the creative realization of folk aesthetics in the Chinese video game *Bright Bird* mainly based on the myth of bright bird from the perspectives of the game design of character, storytelling, and the inheritance of folk wisdom, etc. Framed within Chinese philosopher Li Zehou’s tripartite aesthetic theory—“pleasure of the senses” (悦耳悦目), “resonance of the heart and mind” (悦心悦意), and “spiritual transcendence” (悦志悦神)—the study examines how folk aesthetics is revitalized through digital interactivity. Folk aesthetics rooted in people’s life practice, characterized by spontaneity, vitality, and collective consciousness; its unique vitality and artistic value have become a key inspiration for video game design. By adding vitality, simplicity, and a shared national spirit to games, it brings poetic beauty to digital storytelling — creating worlds that feel both timeless and alive.

1. Sensory Pleasure: Audiovisual Reimagining of Folk Aesthetics

It first examines how video games materialize folk aesthetics through multisensory design: creating Chinese folk aesthetic atmosphere, IP-adapted folk aesthetic symbols, and defamiliarized aesthetic experiences. *Bright Bird* exemplifies the integration of folk aesthetic concepts into audiovisual symbols via modern technology and art direction, achieving mesmerizing sensory experience.

2. Resonance of the Heart and Mind: Embodied Expression of Folk Aesthetic Connotation

Then it explores the expression of folk aesthetics connotation through emotionally resonant experiences enabled by narrative storytelling and embodied gameplay. By adventure exploration and puzzle-solving mechanics into its game narrative storytelling, *Bright Bird* allows players to perceive the cultural significance and emotional strength inherent in folk aesthetics while solving real-world challenges in the virtual world.

3. Spiritual Transcendence: Perception of Folk Wisdom and Sense of Sublime

Finally, the study shows how video games can preserve the poetic wisdom of folk traditions by helping players grasp life's deeper truths and experience sublime. The game *Bright Bird* turns a classic Buddhist story about "letting go of attachments" into interactive quests, through which players acquire the folk wisdom that contentment brings happiness, moreover, it enables player to role-play the bright bird who sacrifices itself to save the world, which would naturally arouse a strong sense of sublime in players' heart and mind, because the protection of virtual villagers makes us feel the real power of selflessness and chasing hope, like ancient tales coming alive in your hands.

To wrap up, the creative realization of folk aesthetics in video game not only enriches players' sensory experiences but elevates their aesthetic appreciation, granting them access to sublime experiences. This process evolves from sensory pleasure to cultural engagement and ultimately spiritual fulfillment, equipping players with emotional resonance and ethical agency. By offering culturally-grounded solutions to contemporary challenges, it simultaneously pioneers innovative pathways for game design—bridging ancestral wisdom with digital interactivity while redefining entertainment as a medium of collective healing and moral awakening.

THE FLOWER THIEF OF SEOCHON FLOWER GARDEN IN JEJU ISLAND MYTHOLOGY

SOUL CHO & CHARLES LA SHURE

Seoul National University, Republic of Korea

In the otherworld of Jeju Island mythology, there is a place called Seochon (西天) Flower Garden. This garden contains many flowers, such as flowers that save people, flowers that kill people, and even flowers that make people fight each other. Seochon Flower Garden is a sacred space that determines the fate of the human world.

The god of agriculture in Jeju mythology is Jacheongbi (自請妃). Jacheongbi is the main character of the *Segyeongbonpuri* myth. When her spouse, Mundoryeong, whom she met in heaven, is killed by an enemy, she disguises herself as a man and goes on a trip to Seochon Flower Garden to resurrect him. In the process of catching an owl that causes the flowers of Seochon Flower Garden to wither, Jacheongbi deceives the caretaker of Seochon Flower Garden. Jacheongbi buys a dead owl from some children, pierces its chest with an arrow, throws it into the flower garden, and then enters the garden to claim her kill. As a reward for her achievement, she is given the caretaker's daughter's hand in marriage. She then secretly picks a reincarnation flower and revives her husband Mundoryeong. Jacheongbi, for her resurrection of Mundoryeong, obtains seeds of the five grains from heaven and descends to earth to become a god of agriculture.

Jacheongbi had already deceived Mundoryeong once when she married him. After marrying Mundoryeong, she deceived the manager of Seochon Flower Garden and his daughter in order to revive Mundoryeong. Through several rounds of deception and flower theft, Jacheongbi finally becomes a god of agriculture. Jacheongbi's deception and theft are the process of creation that realizes the potential of life in nature in the human world.

This ability is a product of a paradoxical worldview that is connected to the deception and theft of the creator god Sobyewang in the Jeju Island mythological system.

THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

SIGNE COHEN

University of Missouri, USA

Birds have long been linked to wisdom and supernatural knowledge, perhaps due to their ability to fly and access realms beyond human reach, as well as their complex songs, which often evoke human language. This paper explores the concept of "bird language" in religious and mythological texts. I examine various figures who are said to possess or acquire the ability to communicate with birds, including Jānaśruti Pautrāyana and Satyakāma Jābāla in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Solomon in the Talmud and Qur'an, Tiresias in Greek mythology, Apollonius of Tyana in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, and numerous characters in Norse myth, such as Sigurðr (in the *Fáfnismál*, *Völsunga saga*, *Skáldskaparmál*, and *Þiðreks saga*), Guðrún Gjúkadóttir (in *Guðrúnarkviða I*), Áslaug Kráka (in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*), and King Dagr (in *Ynglingasaga*), among others. The Norse god Óðinn, who receives knowledge from his two ravens, Huginn and Muninn, can also be assumed to understand the language of birds. Additionally, I trace this motif of humans communicating with birds in several folk tales, including "Trusty John" and "The Dancing Water, the Singing Apple, and the Speaking Bird."

In India, the concept of bird language takes on significant spiritual importance. Several Vedic schools of recitation are named after birds, and the relationship between bird song and wisdom is underscored in Vedic literature, where the chants of priests are compared to the songs of birds.

In conclusion, I will address Frits Staal's provocative hypothesis regarding the structural parallels between the repetition of Vedic mantras and the patterns found in bird songs, suggesting a deeper connection between avian communication and human religion.

SOME NOTES ON SPIRIT COMMUNICATION IN URBAN MANILA: FOLK CATHOLICISM AS RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

GERARD P. CONCEPCION

University of the Philippines Diliman

Despite Catholicism's supremacy in the archipelago, folk Catholicism has endured for centuries in the Philippines as a thriving fusion of Catholic doctrine and local spiritual traditions. Spirit communication, in which Catholic rituals coexist with animistic beliefs to enable Filipinos to communicate with both ancestral and divine spirits, is one of the most important facets of folk Catholicism. This essay examines the relationship between indigenous spiritual traditions and Catholicism, emphasizing the role that spirit communication plays as a link between the two. Taking inspiration from E. Arsenio Manuel's seminal work, *Philippine Folk Catholicism and Its Indigenous Roots*, and my own experiences in urban Manila, I analyze how Filipinos connect with the spiritual world through prayer, rituals, and mediums.

Through fieldwork and personal encounters with local *albularyo* (healer), *manghuhula* (fortune teller), and *espiritista* (spirit medium), I witnessed firsthand how Catholic prayers, such as invocations to the Holy Trinity and saints, merge with indigenous practices. These syncretic customs show how folk Catholicism is still strong and important in modern-day Filipino society, exhibiting a dynamic kind of religious adaptation. In addition to adding to the larger discussion on the function of religion in post-colonial cultural identity, my goal in sharing my own findings is to offer a close-up look at spiritual activities that are frequently overlooked in scholarly discourse.

This essay also considers how spirit communication vis-à-vis folk Catholicism serves as a means of cultural continuity and resistance to colonial legacies, in addition to being a religious practice. These activities' continued existence shows how tradition and modernity are constantly negotiated and contradicts popular conceptions of secularization. I intend to contribute fresh perspectives on the part that religious syncretism plays in the Filipino religiosity through my investigation, enhancing scholarly and individual comprehensions of spirit communication in the country.

Keywords: Spirit Communication, Urban Manila, Folk Catholicism, Religious Syncretism, Filipino Religiosity.

MYTHOLOGY, NEO-FASCISM, AND THE GROWING THREATS OF HUMAN EXTINCTION

STEVE FARMER

The Systems Biology Group, Palo Alto, California, USA

History makes no sense without prehistory, and prehistory makes no sense without biology.

E.O. Wilson, [The Social Conquest of Earth](#), 2012.

The urgency of 'looming extinction'... should be a constant focus of programs of education, organization, and activism, and in the background of engagement in all other struggles.

Noam Chomsky, [Internationalism or Extinction](#), 2020¹.

Since the mid 1990s, my collaborators and I have discussed at length how traditional narrative analyses of mythology, religion, and philosophy can be improved by combining those analyses with advanced research in cultural neuroscience and related fields, including detailed behavioral studies of humans and other social animals. One of the advantages of approaching the history of thought as a subfield of sorts of biology is that this approach allows us to quickly explain otherwise inexplicable parallels in the structural evolution of virtually every traditional literate religious and philosophical system known.

In part of my talk today I'll explain how key sides of that evolution can be simulated in computer models my collaborators and I began developing over two decades before Large Language Models (LLMs) became available. Our initial designs, described in a conference paper three of us wrote in 1996, involved the construction of rule-based expert systems based on our philological studies of the emergent structures of dozens of those systems worldwide. A little over a decade later, working then with a much larger group of researchers, we began building more sophisticated versions of those systems using intelligent-agent models, which allowed us to simulate key sides of modern as well as premodern cultural developments. Near the end of today's talk I'll describe rapid progress we're currently making building even more sophisticated systems using LLMs, which as I'll argue today we hope can help solve some of the political problems involving neo-fascism and related forms of autocratic rule that we view as the most dangerous of the imminent threats of human extinction mentioned in my talk's title.

My talk is the first in a specialized panel of lectures on mythology and political thought we've included for the first time this year in our annual conferences. The

¹ This 2020 book, co-edited by Paul Shannon, Charles Derber, and Suren Moodliar, is one of the last major texts attributed to Chomsky, whose abilities to communicate were severely damaged by a tragic stroke he experienced in June 2023, when he was 95.

other two panel talks will examine uses and abuses of political mythology in modern Japan, Korea, and China. In the first lecture, Robert Weiss, from Kyushu University in Japan, will explore the complex relationships between modern Japanese and Korean state mythologies, which for obvious reasons were especially problematic from Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 until the end of WW II. The third lecture, by Yasmin Koppen, of Leipzig University, will review striking examples of how Chinese Han officials over long periods manipulated local mythologies in the Mahu region of SW China in order to promote the political illusion that the impoverished Nuosu Yi clans living West of Lake Mahu are fully integrated with the politically dominant and far wealthier Han Chinese in the East. In my talk I'll provide a number of examples of how similar political strategies have been used for centuries by ruling elites to maintain their power over ethnic minorities in virtually every region of the ancient and modern worlds.

MISOTHERY AND AMBIVALENCE: THE TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND DRAGONS

TIAGO GARCIA FERRER

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In this talk, I will explore why hatred and fear are a universal part of the Dragon's essence. First, I will clarify my conception of "hatred and fear" using the term "misothery," coined by animal studies researcher Jim Mason. Then, I will explore the term's relationship with European Dragon stories using textual evidence from Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*, *The Golden Legend*, the *Martyrium of Margaret of (Psidian) Antioch*, *Beowulf*, the *Roman de Mélusine*, the *Poetic Edda* and *The faerie queene*. Throughout these examples, I will demonstrate that misothery is not only core to the idea of the Dragon as a creature, but also implicit to the modern European use of the word "Dragon." After this survey of European Dragons, I will present evidence from Eurasian traditions such as *Enuma Elish*, the *Rig Veda*, the *Śāh-nāma* and the *Book of the Dead*, but also from further afield. Legends from Africa and the Americas such as *Mwindo Epic*, *The Story of The Warrior That Ate The Horned Snake* and the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* serve to demonstrate misotheric conceptions of the Dragon that arose independently from European traditions.

However, East-Asian Dragons present a more complex picture. I will present Dragon texts with very clear misothery including *Kojiki*, the *Nihonshoki* & the *Shanhai jing*, but also the Chinese *Long*. Although sharing morphological similarities with Dragons from other traditions, the *Long* does not occupy the

same role in either folklore, literature or religion. Furthermore, it is so intertwined with daily life that it can never truly be an “other.” Therefore, the *Long* could be better understood as an Angel, separate from the fear and hatred that characterizes the Dragons.

I will end this talk with an exploration of the Dragon in a modern, interconnected world and how misothery became a universal part of the Dragon’s essence.

FROM MYTH TO MILITARISM: THE MODERNIZATION OF SHINTO DEITIES IN IMPERIAL JAPAN’S IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUS

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Shinto cosmology, centered on the divine ancestry of the imperial line and the celestial authority of the kami, underwent a profound transformation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With the consolidation of State Shinto under the Meiji regime, mythological narratives drawn from the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* were reinterpreted to reinforce the emperor’s status as a living deity and the nation’s divine destiny. Figures such as Amaterasu and Ninigi no Mikoto were elevated from mythic ancestors to ideological pillars, anchoring a new national mythology that conflated spiritual authority with military obligation.

This modernized mythos was disseminated through state education, ritual performance, and the bureaucratic restructuring of religious institutions. Heroes like Yamato Takeru, long embedded in oral and textual traditions, were reimagined as archetypes of self-sacrifice and imperial loyalty. Simultaneously, the literary influence of Lafcadio Hearn contributed to a romanticized rendering of Japan’s mythic past, shaping both domestic and foreign perceptions of its spiritual heritage.

The result was a dynamic reconfiguration of Japan’s non-human realms—where kami became agents of national identity and militarist ideology. Myth was no longer a reflection of cosmological order but a strategic instrument of statecraft, mobilizing the sacred in support of conquest, obedience, and martyrdom. This rearticulation of divine-human relations reveals the flexibility of myth in times of ideological crisis and its enduring capacity to bind the living world with the world of the gods.

DANCES IMITATING ANIMALS AND TRAINED ANIMALS I N ARMENIAN RITUAL AND FESTIVE TRADITIONS

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In various cultures of the ancient world, animal-imitating dances were a common element in rituals. For example, in ancient Egyptian culture, ritual dances imitating animals held a special place in ceremonial practices. Similar phenomena are found in ancient Greece, especially during theatricalized rituals dedicated to Dionysus, where animal masks and animal-like costumes were also important.

In ancient Indian culture, too, the imitation of various animals during sacred dances was significant, including the reproduction of animal movements, gestures, and body postures.

Such phenomena are also observed in ancient Mesopotamia and in the Hittite kingdom, and similar practices existed in Armenian rituals and celebrations as well.

This report will present examples of animal-imitating dances and the participation of trained animals in Armenian rituals and festivals, examining these performances in the broader context of similar customs from other cultures.

One of the most characteristic Armenian festivals where animals play an important role is *Barekendan*. Researchers believe that the animal dances or dances with animal masks in Barekendan reflect the archaic nature of the ritual, or at least of that specific part of the celebration. Mask-wearing during Barekendan is also associated with the cult of ancestors. The festival features roles of the goat, wolf, donkey, dog, and other animals. Young men disguised as these animals would march and dance. Animal-imitating dances also took place during the feast of *Saint Sargis*. In general, many traditional Armenian dances include animal themes.

Various animal dances and corresponding masks were also common in Armenian weddings, remnants of which have been preserved to this day. Of particular interest is the medieval Armenian tradition of trained animals and the custom of people wearing animal masks during performances.

In conclusion, such customs and traditions in Armenian culture, originating in ancient times, continued to exist until the late Middle Ages, and some of their elements have survived to the present day.

**A MULTI-SPECIES NARRATIVE:
A STUDY ON *MUD PHAF MIL PHAF* OF THE LAHU PEOPLE
IN SOUTHWESTERN CHINA**

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This study examines the creation myth of the Lahu people in Southwestern China. According to *Mud Phaf Mil Phaf*, an ‘oral-derived text’ (Mark Bender 2002), the emergence of the world and all entities is primarily attributed to the interplay of collaboration and conflict among multiple beings. These include a high god with his assistants, a giant, and various other entities such as ants, sparrows, swallows, gourds, deer, owls, reeds, pine trees, and mice. These cooperative interactions, whether affirmative or negative, are not solely dedicated to generating beings but also to establishing the relationships among them.

The multi-species narratives in *Mud Phaf Mil Phaf* are continuously reactivated within contemporary mythological frameworks. The concept of a living community is not depicted as a mere fictive narrative; rather, it is continually restructured through the dynamic interplay of individual and communal life experiences. During New Year celebrations and healing rituals, the Lahu people routinely share tales that illuminate the inventive nature of the relational existence. For instance, during the Lunar New Year, practitioners perform a ritual dedicated to venerating a specific wild banana tree. They express gratitude for the tree’s historical role in saving human lives and convey wishes for prosperity and happiness in the forthcoming year. It is particularly important to emphasize the involvement of these mythological practices in eco-conservation movements and the design of public spaces, collectively demonstrating a reflexive approach to the interspecies relationships.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEJU FOLK BELIEFS AND ONGGI

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This paper explores the dynamic relationship between Jeju’s indigenous folk beliefs and material culture—specifically focusing on *onggi* (traditional Korean earthenware)—from a religious anthropological perspective. While previous studies on *onggi* have primarily addressed its production, distribution, aesthetics, religious symbolism in Catholic contexts, and roles in

industrialization and tourism, little attention has been given to its connection with local folk religious practices.

This study examines how *onggi*, as a material object, functions within Jeju's folk belief system and how this relationship is embedded in myth, ritual, and everyday practice. In particular, it investigates the connection between Jeju mythology and the deities associated with local earthenware kilns, such as *Gulhalmang* (Kiln Grandmother) or *Bulhalmang* (Fire Grandmother). Though the original kiln sites (*doyoji*) have largely disappeared, sites from the 18th and 19th centuries in areas such as Aewol, Gwangryeong, and Daejeong provide a foundation for understanding this relationship. The study also considers contemporary efforts to revive and preserve these traditions through local organizations and institutions.

By analyzing rituals such as the *gulje* (kiln ritual) conducted during the firing process, this research seeks to illuminate the ways in which Jeju's myths and spiritual practices are transmitted and embodied through material culture. Ultimately, the paper contributes to broader discussions on the interaction between religion and materiality and offers insight into the localized expression of spiritual beliefs through objects and ritual performance.

LEGACY OF DEATH: FEMALE SACRIFICE AND POSTHUMOUS VOICE IN MYTH

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This essay explores how myths and legends from different cultures tell the stories of noble women whose deaths become turning points—not just in their own narratives but in the moral and symbolic worlds around them. From Iphigenia and Antigone in Greek tragedy to Princess Ototachibana in Japanese legend, Saint Perpetua in early Christian writing, and Sita in the Hindu Ramayana, these women are often quieted or sidelined in life, only to gain voice, influence, and meaning through sacrifice. In death—or symbolic disappearance—they become remembered as exemplars of loyalty, moral courage, or divine harmony. Their “voice” does not come from literal speech, but through ritual commemoration and canonization. Their voice creates cultural legacy and death becomes the justification of actions. They become a pivot point, restoration of peace from chaos where moral authority comes after their death, when their agency is taken away. However, this pattern is not universal. Many women in myth die without remembrance, and others (like Clytemnestra or Medea) attempt to act within

life, only to be vilified or exiled from cultural honor. Thus, while the sacrificed noblewoman becomes a celebrated archetype, her legacy is conditional—it arises only when death is useful to the society that remembers her. Sacrificial women thus become shared archetypes—mythic solutions to the cultural tension between female voice and social order, between individual virtue and collective need.

MYTHS OF UNITY, REALITIES OF DIVISION: THE POLITICAL REFRAMING OF MENG HUO AND THE HAILONG TEMPLE IN MAHU

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The commemoration of the legendary Yi leader Meng Huo at the Hailong Temple (Hailong-si) in Mahu, southern Sichuan, significantly demonstrates the modern political instrumentalization of mythology on the hands of the Chinese government. The three mythological traditions attached to the Hailong Temple, where Buddhist, Daoist, and local hydrolatric elements coexist uneasily, offer a striking example of how imperial and contemporary state actors reimagine mythological figures to legitimize political expansion and promote ideologies of ethnic unity.

Drawing on fieldwork, spatial analysis, and local oral traditions, this study traces the transformation of Meng Huo from a likely historical chieftain—whose existence remains debated—into a symbolic bridge between Han Chinese and Yi identities. While official narratives frame Meng Huo as a hero of ethnic reconciliation and emphasize his fictionalized interactions with the Han strategist Zhuge Liang, local Yi responses remain ambivalent. Despite state investment and the temple's designation as a provincial cultural heritage site, participation from Yi communities is limited, and the spatial layout reveals ongoing contestations.

The modern framing of Meng Huo lore highlights the persistence of asymmetrical power relations beneath the rhetoric of harmony. Centering on mythologized history and episodes from the novel *Sanguo Yanyi*, it serves nationalistic purposes but fails to resonate with the Yi population it purports to include. By analyzing the temple's evolving mythscape, this paper interrogates the potential and limits of myth as a unifying political tool in contexts of enduring structural inequality. Thus, this contribution speaks to broader patterns in the

modern political use of mythology, especially in the management of cultural diversity within multiethnic states.

COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY AS A METHODOLOGY: TAKING MICHAEL WITZEL AND YE SHUXIAN'S RESEARCH AS AN EXAMPLE

SUN LILI

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The theoretical exploration of comparative mythology in Chinese academia presents a dual research paradigm: on the one hand, it is devoted to the ontological construction of the discipline; on the other hand, it is expanded into a methodological paradigm for cross-cultural comparative research. However, looking back on the history of the discipline's development, the modern device of "comparative mythology" has been caught in a cognitive dilemma of paradigm choice since its inception in China rejecting Max Müller's theories of natural myths while accepting the anthropological school without reflection, and this kind of selective acceptance has led to a lack of understanding of comparative mythology.² This selective acceptance has led to a fundamental shift in the ontological cognition of comparative mythology, resulting in a blurring of its doctrinal cognition and a shift in its disciplinary orientation. Especially under the influence of the strong discourse of comparative literature and folklore, comparative mythology has been constantly disciplined as a subsidiary field of literary research, and its research paradigm has been simplified into the operation of analogy between different mythological texts, which not only dissolves the internal doctrinal logic of the principle of "comparability", but also obscures its methodological significance in exploring the sources of civilization. It is worth noting that international research on comparative mythology in recent years has been reshaping the academic character of comparative mythology through paradigm innovation, increasingly breaking through the barriers of "Indo-Europeancentrism" and "text-centrism," and reaffirming its epistemological and methodological value in the interdisciplinary dialogue between the humanities and the natural sciences.³ Michael Witzel, then president of the International Association for Comparative Mythology, advocated "historical comparative mythology," which focuses on the

² Sun Lili, "On the Reception of Max Müller in China in the Early Twentieth Century," *Folk Culture Forum*, No. 3, 2024.

³ Sun Lili, "The Development and Reflection of International Comparative Mythology in the 21st Century-Centered on the International Association for Comparative Mythology", Master's Dissertation, University of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2023.

comparability of the entire mythological system, explains the origin of myths worldwide through the tracing of common mythological narratives, and then unravels the mysteries of the origins and spread of human civilization. This research suggests the academic significance of comparative mythology as a method in the study of the origin of human civilization. At the same time, Chinese scholars such as Ye Shuxian are also carrying out the paradigm breakthrough of comparative mythology, and while systematically deconstructing the literature-based view of myth, they restore it as the common source of “literature, history, philosophy, religion, politics, and law”, and propose that myth is a kind of cultural gene with a coding function.⁴ As a result, through Ye Shuxian’s reconstruction of the concept of myth, comparative mythology became an important theoretical premise for the study of the origin of Chinese civilization. It can be seen that Witzel’s and Ye Shuxian’s research constitutes a typical case of paradigm innovation in comparative mythology in the 21st century, and together they suggest the significance of comparative mythology as a method in the study of the origin of civilization. Specifically, the two studies jointly promote the paradigm transformation of comparative mythology, which is mainly reflected in the following three dimensions:

- The paradigm shift: from one-way comparison to multidimensional mutual evidence.
- The reconfiguration of boundaries: the integration of humanities and natural sciences.
- The origin of civilization: dialectical reconstruction of the universal and the particular.

TOSHIO TAKAGI AND HIS *COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY*

KAZUO MATSUMURA

Wako University, Tokyo, Japan

I am planning to discuss in this paper the accomplishment of mythological studies in Japan of the early modern period. I will focus on Toshio Takagi (1876–1922) and his book *Comparative Mythology* (1912), arguing that his ideas of mythology was very advanced at that time and could have contributed for further advancement of mythological study in Japan, if he were not hindered by his early death at the age of forty-eight.

* In 1867, Tokugawa Shogunate of the Edo Period ended and with the rulership of the emperor, the Meiji Period begun. Instead of the policy of closing of the

⁴ Liao Mingjun, Ye Shuxian: “Mythological Research on the Exploration of the Source of Chinese Civilization -Interview with Professor Ye Shuxian”, *Ethnic Art*, No. 1, 2012.

country, the age of modernization and westernization started. This was a choice to avoid being colonized under European rulership. The new Japan tried to catch up with more advanced western countries in every field of activities. Humanities were no exception. In the field of history, linguistics, and literature, foreign professors were hired, and most university lectures were conducted in foreign languages.

* In general, under strong influence of the Darwinism, methods searching for the origin of matters were in favor in every branch of humanities, particularly so in the Indo-European comparative philology. Together with the development of the Indo-European comparative philology, interests in the contents of the texts, namely myths, also aroused. Philologists such as Adalbert Kuhn (1812-81) and Friedrich Max=Müller (1823-1900) presented their ideas how to decipher the meanings of myths. Even though not being admitted as a proper branch of the humanities, mythological study came to be known in the Meiji Japan along with the Indo-European comparative philology.

* Takagi was a professor of German philology at the Fifth National College in Kumamoto when he published *Comparative Mythology* in 1922. He took interest in mythology and introduced theories of Kuhn, Max=Müller, Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831-80), Andrew Lang (1844-1912) and others in his book. Examining the theories of these scholars, Takagi tried to analyze Japanese myths employing these new, hitherto unknown, Western theories. The results were in my judgement remarkably successful. His evaluation and criticism of the theories of aforementioned scholars were accurate, and his interpretations of the topics of Japanese mythology were still valid in many cases.

THE INCUBUS, THE ELVES AND THE FALLEN ANGELS: NATURE-SPIRITS AND NIGHTMARES

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This paper explores how nature-spirits, elves and fallen angels were represented in Northwest European medieval and folk traditions, focussing on some key aspects which recur in the evidence (hybrid-form, number, typical action), and showing how these were deployed to depict a range of altered states of mind. Taking as the starting point the ways in which the 13C *South English Legendary* links incubi, elves and fallen angels to desire-filled dreams and experiences, distinguishing also between the impact of solo versus massed spirits, the paper unpacks learned and popular views on these matters, before and after this text,

in scholarly and medical sources, charms, spells and stories. While the incubus was both a woodland creature and a demon capable of penetrating sleep, causing nightmares or lust-filled dreams, elves too were associated with altered states of mind and linked to mental disturbance of various kinds. In forest or wilderness, solo nature-spirits might mislead or seduce travellers; as multiples, they were characterised by commotion and violent action (dancing, riding, clamour). Evolving traditions concerning these spirits thus connected them to issues of desire and hallucination in various ways, continuing to shape the mythos of spirit-encounters into the early modern era.

FROM THE LANGUAGE OF GODS TO THE BARBARISM OF REFLECTION. THE RELEVANCE OF GIAMBATTISTA VICO'S MYTHOLOGY TODAY

SEBASTIANO MOSTI

San Raffaele University in Milan, Italy

This talk aims to reconstruct the theory of the social efficacy of mythical narratives elaborated by the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico in his main work: the *New Science* (1744). In fact, this text, besides being a classic in the history of mythological studies, is still able to provide some useful interpretative categories for understanding the role of mythology in contemporary technoscientific civilization. More specifically we want to reflect on the relationship between what Vico calls “language of the gods” and “barbarism of reflection,” respectively. According to the Italian philosopher, the first form of communicative experience of humans was with the gods. In this sense, early humans considered sounds or natural events as words and signs that deities sent to them. This is the “language of gods”: a sacred communicative form that conveys mythical images, which Vico called “fantastic universals.” Through this early form of language, humans gave themselves a social and political order, which lasted until the advent of new rational cognitive forms (called “rational universals” and “language of men”). In the first section of the talk, we consider the characterization Vico gives of this primordial language and its link with mythical imagination on a social level. However, according to the philosopher, when civilization begins a process of demythization, the “barbarism of reflection” takes place. This is a state of civil disorder, which seizes modern societies that are no longer able to generate collective myths and “fantastic universals”, having forgotten the “language of gods”. Therefore, in Vico’s original perspective, societies are “barbaric” not because of the presence of myth, but because of its absence. We will pay attention to the risks associated with the “barbarism of reflection” and indicate possible solutions Vico developed to fill the need for myths in modern societies.

I HAD A DREAM OF LORD JAGANNATH: THE POLITICS FOR A SUCCESSOR BY THE GAJAPATI RULERS

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The relationship between the Gajapati Kings and the Jagannath temple is intriguingly complex. The Gajapati Kings, based solely on their custodianship of the Jagannath temple, were recognised as the overlords or kings of Orissa, even though they did not possess any actual kingdom. On the other hand, while the Jagannath temple, one of the dhams of Hindus, has remained a revered place for followers of Hinduism, it has also been a source of conflict during various dynastic transitions, whether due to internal strife or external political changes. Additionally, the kings rarely adhere to the rule of primogeniture, often preferring to select the son of their favourite wife as their successor. In many instances, the eldest son, who fights for the expansion of the empire and gains popular support by proving his worthiness through valour, vigour, and the qualities necessary to become a king, is overlooked. The king uses a dream of Lord Jagannath as a means to designate his favourite wife's son as the chosen one by Jagannath to succeed him. The order of Lord Jagannath in the dream, which cannot be verified, was immediately accepted by the court, and the favoured son received popular support as the divine ordination, while the worthy son found himself dismissed from favour and popularity and was expected to accept it as fate.

This paper aims to explore the intricate relationship between the Gajapati king's dream of Lord Jagannath and the selection of successors in four stages. The first part will explain the political scenario that fostered a connection between political power and religion; the second will examine the role of the divine dream in the political context, the third will analyse the context in which the Jagannath temple inscription – Madalapanji was written, and in the last part, a critical evaluation of how the dreams of Lord Jagannath were used and abused by kings throughout different periods will be presented.

THE MOTHER TRUTH

BORIS OGUIBÉNINE

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1. Russian folk wisdom has produced the proverbial saying *Хороша правда-матка, да не перед людьми, а перед богом* ‘Mother Truth is good, but not before people—only before God.’ This proverb suggests that truth (*npavda/pravda*) has value when confronted with divine judgment, but not when subjected to human assessment. The compound *npavda-матка* raises an intriguing question: why is truth paired with *матка/matka*, a colloquial quasi-diminutive form of *мать* ‘mother’? No satisfactory explanation has been offered.

The word *matka* encompasses various meanings: ‘basis, foundation, support, cause, root, source’ as well as ‘womb, uterus.’ Since Russian colloquial usage treats *npavda/pravda* as something that establishes solid connections and foundations—ensuring perfect correspondence between word and deed⁵—the compound *pravda-matka* synchronically expresses truth as ‘foundational mother,’ making it an attributive pleonastic compound.

2. Comparing this with other traditions that associate motherhood with revealed truth may illuminate the historical background of the Russian expression beyond its synchronic meaning.

The most productive comparison appears to be with Vedic tradition as preserved in the Rigveda, particularly the usage of *ṛtá-*, a central term meaning both ‘truth’ and ‘cosmic order.’ While these meanings seem incompatible, in Vedic poets’ view, sacred speech is born as *truth* (what H. Lüders called “the *ṛtá-* as the truth of the cult song”), while *cosmic order* represented the object of sacred speech—the *truth* that transforms primordial chaos into Vedic order. This distinguishes between the speech act itself and the speech act that orders the universe.

The Rigveda contains poetic formulas focusing on the mother of *ṛtá-* ‘truth’: for example, Rigveda 10.59.8 *yahví ṛtásya mātárā* ‘two young mothers of truth’ (likely Heaven and Earth as dual subject), or Rigveda 9.33.4-5 (where sacred formulas bellowing like milk-cows are called young mothers of truth), and with characteristic Vedic stylistic modification, Rigveda 4.52.2 *mātā gávām ṛtāvārī* (‘morning dawn is the truthful mother of cows’). Most striking is the Vedic formulaic expression *ṛtásya yóni*, understood as ‘womb of truth.’

3. Truth’s essential characteristic is being spoken—serving as the object of verbs of speech. Vedic evidence abundantly supports this: *ṛtá-* ‘the cult song’ regularly functions as direct object of such verbs, as in Rigveda 1.151.4 *ṛtāvānāv ṛtām ā ghoṣatho bṛhāt* (‘the truthful gods Mitra and Varuṇa proclaim the great truth’) and

⁵ Cf. H. Lüders: “‘Wahrheit’ ist das, was mit den Tatsachen übereinstimmt.”

10.67.2 *ṛtām śamsanta* [...] *divās putrāsaḥ* ('the sons of heaven pronounce the truth').

4. The evidence from the Rigveda, one of the oldest Indo-European poetic collections, supports the conclusion that the concept of mother of truth may have provided the archaic foundation for the transformation that produced the idea of Mother Truth—that is, truth as mother, the fundamental, ultimate truth.

AMENOHIBOKO: GOD CONNECTING JAPAN AND KOREA

MIYUKI ONOE

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Amenohiboko, described as a prince of Silla in Japan's foundational texts the Nihonshoki and Kojiki, represents a fascinating chapter in early Japan-Korea cultural relations. His name translates to either 'heavenly spear' or 'sun-enshrining spear' in Japanese.

According to the Nihonshoki, Amenohiboko arrived in Japan during Emperor Suinin's reign (roughly 3rd-4th century CE, if historical) seeking to pledge allegiance. He brought eight sacred treasures including jade ornaments, bronze mirrors, a spear, a knife, and silk goods. The emperor granted him permission to settle anywhere he chose. Amenohiboko initially moved through Omi (present-day Shiga Prefecture) and Wakasa (Fukui Prefecture) before finally establishing himself in Tajima (Hyogo Prefecture).

The Kojiki offers a different account: Amenohiboko came to Japan pursuing his wife, who was the incarnation of a red jade born from sunlight. Though he traveled to Naniwa (modern Osaka) hoping to find her, the reunion never occurred. He then journeyed through Wakasa and into Tajima, ultimately settling in Izushi.

Both texts agree that Amenohiboko dedicated his eight treasures to Izushi Shrine, where he himself became deified. This is believed to be the historical arrival of a Korean group that introduced sun worship, advanced metallurgy, and silk production to Japan. Curiously, however, no Korean historical records mention Amenohiboko.

I'd like to explore what this episode reveals about early Japan-Korea cultural exchange by examining archaeological evidence from *kofun* burial mounds and their artifacts.

COMMUNICATING WITH HEROES & ANCESTORS IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN MYTHOLOGY & FOLKTALES

SUNIL PARAB

Sindhu Veda Research Foundation, India

India is country rich with mythical and folk narrations of gods, heroes and ancestors. We will use term “ancient stories”; i.e., “*purākathā*” for both myth and folk narrations in this abstract. The fascination of these stories entices common people to be part of the *purākathā* through corresponding rituals. The rituals open a portal for devotee to communicate with his deity, ancestor, or hero from the *purākathā*. This paper in particular investigates such different rituals that allow devotees to communicate with their gods. The author further focuses on Central Himalayan folk deities which are best examples to observe how multiple sociological layers assist in evolving folk narrations and rituals. Author gives textual references of D. D. Sharma, William Sax, and Lokesh Ohri along with his own audio-visual documentation in the field of central Himalaya.

Apart from folk heroes, the presentation also talks about communication with characters from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, such as Duryodhana, Karna, Lava and Kusha which are still assumed to be worshipped directly or indirectly in the region. The communication with deity thus becomes an essential part of ritual to crosscheck righteous path. As per the belief of folk people of central Himalaya, time and lifestyles may change, but Dharma should not be ignored. If Dharma is not followed, then there will be rage of deities that will cause ill effects for an individual, or a family, or a community, or an entire village, or entire humanity. Thus, time and again, communication with deities is necessary for the devotees, so the deities could mentor them. Similarly, there are instances when two different parties claim to be following Dharma which is creating conflict between the two. In such scenario, the deity must intervene as Dandanayak (The one who establishes Justice). This is an exploratory study based on literary study and field research. The presentation of this paper will thus include references along with audio video documentation associated with the topic of presentation.

FROM TRAGIC FIGURES TO REVERED DEITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DEIFICATION OF KING DANJONG AND MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE

JEONG-AE PARK

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This study comparatively analyzes the posthumous deification processes of King Danjong of Joseon and Minamoto no Yoshitsune, two political figures who met tragic ends at the hands of their uncle (Sejo) and brother (Yoritomo), respectively. Both figures underwent distinct deification processes: Yoshitsune, initially feared as a restless spirit, was later transformed into a deity and became a symbol of sympathy in the *Hōgan-biiki* discourse, while Danjong was venerated as a mountain spirit in Taebaeksan, worshiped as a local deity of Yeongwol, and revered in Korean shamanistic traditions.

This presentation explores the socio-cultural significance of their deification, drawing from historical records, folklore, and ritual practices. It examines how both figures were reinterpreted and transformed within the frameworks of *Goryō belief* (御霊信仰) and Korean folk religion, shedding light on how religious expressions have been used as a medium of popular sentiment and resistance against political authority.

The findings suggest that the deification of these figures extends beyond mere religious phenomena, representing a counter-narrative to official historical discourse. Yoshitsune contributed to shaping a cultural sympathy for the weak, while Danjong became a focal point for local identity and communal memory. Through a comparative study of Korean and Japanese *Goryō* beliefs, this research highlights both the universality and particularity of the deification of political losers in the East Asian cultural sphere, demonstrating how defeated historical figures are reborn as cultural symbols.

Keywords: Danjong, Yoshitsune, Deification, *Goryō Belief*, Comparative Mythology, Political Losers, Folk Religion.

MORAL DISCOURSE CONCERNING COMMUNICATION WITH THE REALM OF THE DEAD OR SPIRITS IN EARLY MODERN CATHOLIC MISSIONS TO EAST ASIA

ONDŘEJ PAZDÍREK

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Christianity is a religious tradition with a specific moral framework for communication (*sensu latissimo*) with the spiritual realm and the realm of the dead; while specific forms of this communication, such as prayer, are commended and deemed virtuous, others are condemned and categorised as superstition, witchcraft, or even necromancy. With the spread of Christianity to East Asia, these Western categories were applied to East Asian cultural and religious traditions.

The most contentious matter concerned communication with the dead, since it took, in both European Catholicism (intercessory prayers for the dead) and Confucianism (ancestral veneration), a very specific and tightly regulated form, and each side considered the other's practices morally unacceptable — a matter which led to the protracted and complex Chinese Rites Controversy. From the perspective of the missionaries, however, this did not constitute a separate issue: both *circa defunctos superstitio* (superstition concerning the dead) and what they deemed to be demon-worship were considered part of a single phenomenon and are discussed jointly in the missionary texts.

In my paper, I shall attempt to examine and analyse this process of the imposition of the then-contemporary Catholic moral framework on the religious traditions of Asia that involve communication with the dead or spirits. Basing my analysis on the writings of Alexandre de Rhodes, one of the most important Catholic missionaries in what is now Vietnam (active there in 1624-1630 and 1640-1644), especially Chapters XXII–XXXII of the first part of his *Relazione de' felici successi* (1650), I should like to characterise the dynamics of this process in the context of the prevailing interpretative stance of Early Modern Catholic missionaries in East Asia towards non-Christian religious traditions.

TWINS AND CITIES IN INDO-EUROPEAN PAST

ARMEN PETROSYAN

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In Indo-European past, the existence of fraternities of young warriors is reconstructed. They, under the guidance of adult mentors, hunting and plundering, especially imitating wolf behavior, spent several years in the peripheries of the tribe's territory. Only then, after undergoing an initiation ritual, the young men could become full members of the tribe, marry and have their own property. Their raids and conquests of new territories led to the establishment of settlements, and to the resettlement there of new groups of people. Distinctive feature of the young warriors of the brotherhoods were the association with the black/dark color. In some traditions the youths themselves, or their mythological incarnations, may have been called by the Indo-European root **h₂reh₁mo-* 'black, dark color.'

In the Armenian epics, some capital cities or centers of epic traditions are founded by twins or twin-like characters. Thus, in the ethnogonic tradition, the patriarch Ar(a)mayis builds the first capital of Armenia Armawir, in the 'Vipasank', King Eruand builds the second capital Eruandašat, in the 'War of Taron', Demeter and Gisanē build the city of Višap, and in the 'Daredevils of Sasun', Sanasar and Baghdasar build the city of Sasun. The names of Ar(a)mayis and Armawir are etymologized from **h₂reh₁mo-*, and Sanasar and Baghdasar build their city on a 'Black Mountain'. Those legends have parallels in Indo-European traditions: in the Mahabharata, the five Pandava brothers, two of whom are twins, build their city of Indraprastha; one of the legendary founding brothers of Prussia founds the cult center Romowe; the twin Remus and Romulus were founders of Rome. Remarkably, the names Rome (Rōma) and Romowe may be etymologized from an ablaut form of **h₂reh₁mo-*. The presence of Indian, Armenian, Baltic, and Roman parallels indicates the general Indo-European character of this mythologem (seemingly, except for the Anatolian tradition).

HAGGLING WITH SNAKES: AN ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SNAKE CHARMING IN LITHUANIA

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The phrase “ontological turn” continues to appear in various discourses, spreading far beyond its original field of cultural anthropology (Strathern, Wagner, Latour, Viveiros de Castro, Descola). From cyborg anthropology to childhood studies to research on psychedelics, the ontological turn has also recently impacted Lithuanian studies of mythology and ethnology. It has offered specific conceptual tools and approaches to discuss, in academic terms, previously marginalized and repressed topics such as the remaining heritage of pre-Christian folk-magic and spirituality. The turn’s impact is particularly notable in the research of human relationship with the (spirits of) forest (Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė, 2021) and in the fascinating studies of the ancient Lithuanian verbal charms and charmers (Vaitkevičienė, 2022). The ultimate form of the traditional charm mastery is the ability to understand, name, haggle with, and control snakes, compelling them, for example, to retract their venom. In this context of snake charming, we will reveal a glimpse of the peculiar Baltic mythological view on the perspective, agency, and even a society of snakes and offer a comparison with Viveiros de Castro’s reading of an Amazonian myth of the origin of Ayahuasca among the snake-people (2021).

LINGUO-RELIGIOUS COMPLEXES IN EASTERN EURASIA

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This paper further develops a new theoretical concept of linguo-religious complexes with explanation of related theoretical background and application on historical populations speaking with Asian languages. Languages and religions are evolving in mutual functional connections serving purposes of communication (language) and regulation (religion) in different conditions of non-/preliterate and literate societies. The paper focuses on multiethnic, multilingual and multireligious areas with non-uniform developments. It mentions specific environmental conditions of Eurasian greenbelt and long-distance contacts of cultural centers and their continuing partial diffusion to the East (wave theory in case of languages and so-called wild geese pattern in case

of economic development). Environmental influences on migrations and patterns of mobility stimulated interferences of neighboring languages and religious communities in tributary relations. Specific rules can be analyzed in interferences of religions varying between 1) coexistence with mergers, 2) syncretism and gradual shifts marking slow gradual peopling based on migration and trade, up to 3) hostility and sudden replacements as a circumstance of political expansions.

These developments are related to following influences of natural environment: A) stimulating contact conditions like migration corridors, oases and lowland population centers important for trade routes; B) inhibiting contacts in cases of dividing rivers or high mountains; C) regulating frequency of contacts and population density in connection to the factors of altitude and changing quantity of precipitation. All these circumstances will be described with suggestions for further research and delineation of historical developments along Eurasian greenbelt with distinctions between east-west vs. north-south vectors of migration and cultural diffusion. There are differences of development in the northern steppe zone or in more southern contact zones in Western, Central / Inner and Northeast Asia. Regarding results of development, cf. for example a) more dominant southward migrations/diffusion in general or b) the Altai Mountain divide between the Islam (West) and Tibetan Buddhism (East) or Baikal Lake divide for Christianity among the Buriats on the West side and Tibetan Buddhism among the Buriats on the East side of the lake.

FEVER DREAMS, ARCHETYPAL MANIFESTATIONS, AND THE MYTHIC DIALECTIC OF ORDER AND CHAOS

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This paper explores how fever dreams function as manifestations of the mythic dialectic between order, logos, and chaos, drawing parallels between dream imagery and ancient mythological representations of cosmic struggle. The theoretical foundation of this study is based on Carl Jung's claim; that myths and dreams are expressions of fundamental structures within the collective and individual unconscious. While myths externalize these structures at the societal level, dreams embody them on a personal level. The Babylonian creation myth, Enuma Elish, serves as a key comparative framework, depicting the clash between the primordial forces of Apsu (order) and Tiamat (chaos) against a new generation of gods. It culminates in Marduk's triumph and the imposition of

structure upon the cosmos. Through a close reading of the text, this Babylonian cosmogony is interpreted as mirroring a recurring fever dream experienced by multiple individuals—one that often begins with structured, smooth imagery that the dreamer strives to maintain, only for it to destabilize into overwhelming, chaotic patterns before an abrupt awakening (Schredl, 53). These are more intense, fragmented, and emotionally charged dreams which feature bizarre imagery, time distortions, and nightmarish themes. In mythology and literature, these fever dreams are visions or gateways to otherworldly realms and divine encounters. It is interpreted across cultures as messages from supernatural forces, shamanic experiences, or trials of the soul. Furthermore, these fever-induced visions encapsulate a microcosmic reenactment of the archetypal struggle between order, logos and chaos. It suggests that the same underlying psychic structures that shape mythology also manifest in individual consciousness, demonstrating how dreams and myths serve as symbolic arenas where order is momentarily established, challenged, and reconfigured.

Keywords: Archetypes, Fever Dreams, Myth, Enuma Elish, Mythology and Literature.

BEYOND THE LIVING: HUMAN COEXISTENCE WITH SPIRITS AND THE UNDEAD IN SERBIAN RURAL BELIEF

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In this presentation, I will discuss observations from my fieldwork conducted in villages across different regions of Serbia, focusing on local attitudes toward the dead. This includes not only practices surrounding dying, death, preparation, and burial, but also the ongoing relationship with the deceased after death. Through various examples, I aim to show how specific local contexts shape the way villagers perceive and respond to the presence of the dead in the world of the living. These responses range from positive and familiar to defensive or even aggressive interactions, reflecting a spectrum of attitudes toward the deceased. I explore these dynamics within the framework of the Serbian village, which—throughout history and especially according to my interlocutors—has undergone various phases of sociocultural transformation, often influenced by broader regional or even global socio-political developments. In this light, I compare the narratives of older and younger villagers, many of whom not only believe in the possibility of the deceased remaining present, or even interacting or communicating with the living, but for whom this coexistence represents a tangible aspect of reality.

Keywords: Serbia, village, undead, spirituality, rural traditions, native religiosity, ontology.

MYTHOLOGY IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: DIVERSITY OF SOURCES

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The mythology of the great epic of India is multilayered, in the same way as Indian culture is multilayered in general. The basis was formed by the Indo-European legacy: the theme of the ever-lasting battle between gods headed by a Thunder-god and the anti-gods served as a model and even as a source of the main epic conflict. But on Indian soil the epic and its mythic background, Indo-European in origin, became in time more and more ‘Indianized’. In Punjab and later in Gangetic basin Indo-Aryans came into contact with tribals speaking Dravidian, Austroasiatic, Tibeto-Burman, probably Austronesian and some unknown languages. It was the beginning of the so called “Sanskritization” process, when the Vedic Indo-Aryan culture absorbed tribal non-Aryan and non-Vedic Aryan traditions, but under their influence experienced transformation that led eventually to the birth of the caste society and the new religion – Hinduism. Mahābhārata demonstrates how widespread in the “epic period” was the cult of the Nāgas, mythic serpents able to assume a human form, and the related worship of termite mounds (“anthills”). Another religious practice, which may be traced to pre-Aryan antiquity, is the pan-Indian cult of yakṣas – the spirits dwelling in the trees. Now we may be sure that the institute of religious pilgrimage, which plays so important role in the Mahābhārata story and in the Hinduism, originally was connected with the worship of yakṣas. Images of the “Mothers” – goddesses or demonesses of epidemics and childrens’ deceases – have deep roots in non-Aryan substratum. The same may be said about such figures and Skanda, Durga and some avatars of Viṣṇu. The epic myth of the Flood was formed so long ago as 3rd or 2nd millennium BCE. Some specific motifs in the ‘biographies’ of Pāṇḍavas’ ancestors have unique parallels in the mythologies of Austroasiatic speaking peoples in South-East Asia and Oceania. The conclusion would be that the Mbh is not “one of the Indo-European epics” or even the Indo-Aryan epic. It is the pan-Indian epic, containing legacy of various ethnic groups, including those that have ceased to exist long ago, leaving no other trace in Indian culture.

A CORPUS OF FOLKLORE PROSE THROUGH THE PRISM OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

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During the publication of oral prose from the folklore archive of the NGO ‘The Propp Centre,’ a corpus of 2,450 narratives was compiled. This corpus consists of tales typically classified as belief legends—stories about interactions with spirits, as well as accounts of sorcerers, the evil eye, prophetic dreams, and fortune-telling. These folklore narratives were recorded during interviews with residents of North Russian villages over the past 50 years.

We chose not to publish the material solely based on mythological beliefs or plot-motive types, as we aimed to preserve the pragmatic effect of communication tied to the personal experiences of the storytellers. Our approach combined phenomenological and structural-typological methods. Phenomenological sociology, psychology, and philosophy provided a foundation for discussing personal experience as a subject of communication, while the structural-typological approach enabled us to identify types of narrative events.

All these narratives exhibit a cause-and-effect plot structure (Veselova, 2000⁶), often referred to as “etiological.” Etiological conclusions characterize not only personal narratives but also myths: “If in myths they concern the state of nature and culture as a whole, then in personal narratives they concern either a moral conclusion or an explanation of successes or failures that have become the narrator’s lot ‘since then’” (Novik 1986⁷: 40). We refer to such events as *life situations*. Narrative *life situations* closely align with the concept of crises in personal experience, such as illnesses, deaths, loss of property, and choices regarding marriage partners. Such situations often require an explanation, but they cannot be completely rationalized, so the concept of a “supernatural encounter” is used.

After analyzing 2,450 folklore narratives, we found that the spectrum of events encompasses nearly all aspects of human life. The identified events of personal experience were compiled into an *Index of Life Situations* and categorized into four sections:

- I. Threats to life and health
- II. Social institutions and relations
- III. Ritual conventions
- IV. Speech conventions

⁶ Veselova Inna, *Genres of Modern Urban Folklore: Narrative Traditions*, PhD Dissertation, Moscow, 2000.

⁷ Novik Elena, *Ritual and folklore in Siberian shamanism: An attempt to compare structures*. Moscow, 1984.

**STAR SONGS:
HOW HUMAN VOICE IS USED IN COMMUNICATION
WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD OF STARS, PLANTS, AND ANIMALS**

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The human need to communicate with the spiritual world is universal to all times and cultures. The human voice and sound in general have always worked as some of the most direct channels connecting these two realms. This is especially true for cultures which place more importance on the sense of hearing than on other senses (for example the native American cultures in the Amazon and Andes) - hardly surprising given the power sound has on the human body and mind.

In my presentation, I will compare the voice techniques used by New-World shamans while communicating with the Spirit realm of stars, plants, and animals (namely tribes of Shipibo-Konibo, Tukano and Yaminahua) with the techniques used by their counterparts in Asian cultures (e.g. Mongolian throat singing and Buddhist chanting). Apart from delving deeper into the process of the inner transformation the shaman undergoes in order to open the channels of communication, I will also touch upon other means used to achieve the altered state of consciousness (for example sacred plants, meditations or body cleansing). Fascinating research has also been done on the connection between the way shamans “see” and graphically record the sounds used in their spirit communication and the basic patterns and ornaments appearing in tribal art.

**LEGEND OF THE WHITE SNAKE:
TRADITION AND TRANSGRESSION IN CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE**

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Chinese collective sensibility refracts ideological tensions among three distinct yet converging currents, personified by the three male protagonists of its most popular folktale, White Snake (WS): Taoism (her husband Xu Xian), Confucianism (her son Xu Mengjiao), and Buddhism (her nemesis Fahai). Its symbolic repertoire, embedded within millennial customs, reveals the matrix of popular culture to be pervaded and structured by a dialectic of TS. All three doctrines are represented by their contrasting attitudes to its heroine Bai

Suzhen, who brings them together through a dialectical reconciliation. The classical opera begins by explicitly declaring: "They disclosed the immortal design (...) With the Three Teachings accomplished, all hatred was gone."

Necessarily reborn human, WS is relentlessly pursued by a puritanical Buddhist monk whose sole aim is to dissolve her faithful marriage to an unsuspecting Taoist healer. Vanquished, she is banished to the basement of Lei Feng pagoda, her vocation apparently unfulfilled. Though the virtuous snake is 'white' insofar as she strives for spiritual liberation, her inherently demonic essence has been split off into her 'green' (dark) alter ego (sister). The raising of the male adept's serpent-power from the base of the spine is lived through as a 'descending' regression to the maternal womb, induced by the transgression of societal norms. This is the meaning of the Broken Bridge over West Lake and of the cataclysmic deluge that engulfs the Golden Mountain. The inward Taoist practice of becoming an embryo has ancient, extensive parallels in India. Whereas the ascetic monk embodies the 'ascending' realization predicated on restraining the senses to transcend worldly attachments, the ancestral snake that confers the elixir of immortality represents our phylogenetic inheritance harnessed for bodily rejuvenation.

Having achieved canonical status during the Southern Song (1129 till 1279), the legend is localized in the capital Lin'an (Hangzhou) near the hoary (328) Lingyin temple. It epitomizes the reworking of moribund Indian Buddhism into an independent spiritual tradition that impregnated all Far Eastern culture. For its constituent elements, including the core snake motif (Nüwa), remain anchored in indigenous myth and prehistory reformulated, under the Indian impulsion, to serve a uniquely Chinese civilizational project.

THE ORACLE OF DELPHI: HER STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PAST AND PRESENT

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The Oracle of Delphi was no single person but a sisterhood of mystics that spoke on behalf of the god Apollo to answer questions, give advice, and make prophesies. Her perhaps most famous saying "know thyself" is a fixture in European consciousness and her sanctuary is still today one of the most visited and important ancient sites on the continent.

For Herodotus, the oracle site and sanctuary of Delphi constitutes a central place of communication between higher divine power and people who need guidance from the same. He paid great attention to the possibility that supernatural

powers influence human events and, in this context, not least to the question of whether these powers also communicate with humans. This is also evident in the fact that in his work people repeatedly seek to learn the will of gods with the help of oracles, which can be obtained at several sites in Herodotus' world; but among these sites, none is as prominent in his work as the oracle of the god Apollo at Delphi in Greece.

Delphi is repeatedly present in Herodotus' work, on the one hand as a central place of Greek public life where one can do something for one's own reputation, both private individuals and Greek poleis and even non-Greek rulers, and on the other hand as the oracles of Delphi, which people repeatedly find difficult to understand. Specifically, I would like to deal with Herodotus' explanations of the Oracle of Delphi and its significance in the antiquity, and on the other hand, I'd like to dive into the procedures and actual work of the Oracle, the Pythia, the female high priestess, mouthpiece of the god Apollo.

Furthermore, the significant research work and discovery of the American scientific team around Henry A. Spiller, John R. Hale and Jelle Z. De Boer by whom the Oracle had been brought back to life as a serious historical figure, will be highlighted.

CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN JAPAN AND KOREA: THE ROLE OF MYTHICAL STATE FOUNDERS

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This paper traces the role of mythical state founders in the construction of national identities in modern Japan and Korea. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japanese elites utilized the idea of an unbroken dynasty stretching back to the sun goddess Amaterasu to justify the emperor's supreme position as father of the nation. Describing Japan as a family state with the emperor at its apex allowed elites to forge a connection between the imperial institution and the populace, while at the same time maintaining Japan's distinctness from Western nation states. In this context, Jinmu, the legendary first emperor, served as a model for the modern image of the Meiji emperor as a military ruler. From the first decade of the 20th century, Tan'gun started to play a similar role in discourses on Korean national identity. Nationalist historians such as Sin Ch'aeho traced the history of the Korean nation back to Tan'gun as the founder of the first Korean state and ancestor of the Korean people. Like in Japan, the

nation state was often likened to a family. With the annexation of Korea into the Japanese empire, Japanese thinkers started to incorporate Koreans into the Japanese family state by describing Tan'gun as Amaterasu's little brother. While some Korean intellectuals resisted this so-called theory of common ancestry, others, such as Ch'oe Namsŏn, tried to modify it in order to raise Koreans' status within the Japanese empire. The paper emphasizes the significance of ancient mythical texts in the formation of modern national identities.

OVER THE SEA TO SKY

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This paper examines the widespread mythological motif of supernaturally constructed vessels capable of traversing the boundaries between the worlds. Specifically, it analyzes ships created through magical, ritual, or divine agency that transport passengers between worlds—whether to realms of the dead, divine abodes, or other domains. The motif is contextualized within related mythological narratives of water-crossing as a liminal activity, including the transportation of souls across cosmic waters or rivers on the boundary of the netherworld.

The analysis primarily focuses on Indo-European traditions, offering comparative examinations of relevant motifs in Greek, South Asian, Iranian, Scandinavian-Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic mythology and folklore. Among the supernatural ships that visit the other realms, I discuss the *Skíðblaðnir* and *Naglfar* ships attested in the Poetic and Prose Edda; the 'flying ship' of the Eastern Slavic folktales; the divinely crafted *Argo*, the ship of the Argonauts, and other significant vessels in the Homeric literature; the magical ship from the Celtic 'Voyage of Bran,' and so on.

The paper concludes with a comparative survey of analogous motifs in non-Indo-European traditions, including African, Egyptian, Siberian shamanic, Dravidian and Munda South Asian, and East Asian (Japanese and Korean) mythological systems. This cross-cultural examination raises questions about possible reconstructions of a mythological motif transcending linguistic families, contributing to broader discussions of comparative mythology.

**EMBODIED MEDIATORS OF TIME AND SPACE:
A STUDY ON SHAMANS AND RITUALS
IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE DRUNG RIVER**

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The shaman in the upper reaches of the Drung River which to be named as the Namsa in Drung language, their bodies, as mediums, hold both the dimensions of space and time in the ritual, and are bridges between man and god, life and death, past and future. The body of the Namsa's as a medium is not only symbolic, but also realized through the interaction between the Namsa and the supernatural in the specific ritual. These rituals involve two different ritual systems of the Drung people, including life-saving rituals related to the Drung's myth of human origin, rituals for protecting valley souls related to the Drung's myth of species origin, rituals for praying for a good harvest related to the narrative of hunting gods, and rituals for worshipping mountain gods related to mountain god sacred narrative. Through the review of the relevant theories of Mircea Eliade, Van Gennep, Claude Levi-Strauss and Victor Turner, we will see that in Eliade, the Namsa in the profane world can complete the return of individual and groups to the sacred time and space through specific rituals. In Van Gennep, we can see more specifically the relationship between the Namsa's own life journey and how the body holds the media function of time and space in the ritual. Levi-Strauss's structuralist view reveals how the ritual performed through the Namsa's body encodes life and death, past and future, sacred and profane into a structured system of meaning. Victor Turner's concept of liminality emphasizes how the Namsa himself/herself seeks a balance between different states of existence, and how he/she constantly negotiates and establishes the existence of the ethnic group in the contradictions and conflicts between natural and social changes. The narration and chanting carried out through the Namsa's body is not only a repetitive performance, but also an active construction of a space for communication and negotiation, so that the oppositions in different contexts can be re-mediated.

Through the analysis of specific ritual practices, this study focuses on how the Namsa's body can serve as a medium to preserve the historical memory from the sacred ancestors and ensure the existence of the Drung people in the flowing present and the future that is destined to be full of changes.

**SPIRITS OF THE MINE:
KOPALCI AND KOBOLDS – A GEOMYTHOLOGY
IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN TRADITIONS**

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This paper explores mine spirits in Central European folklore—specifically the Slavic *kopalci* and Germanic *kobolds*—as expressions of a deep-rooted geomythological worldview, where the Earth was inhabited by conscious, moral beings. In the mining regions of Slovenia, Slovakia, and Poland, *kopalci* ("diggers") were seen as invisible underground guardians, known for warning miners of danger, hiding precious ore from the greedy and punishing disrespect through cave-ins or misfortune. Similarly, *kobolds*—mining spirits of Germanic tradition—combined helpfulness with mischievousness, often personifying metals and minerals themselves. These beings served as intermediaries between humans and the mineral world, enforcing a kind of sacred etiquette in extractive spaces. This paper argues that these spirits reflect a mythic memory of resource landscapes, turning mines into spiritual thresholds. Through their presence, metal ores are reimagined not merely as commodities, but as forces embedded in rituals and ecology. Mining, in this light, becomes a spiritual negotiation with the unseen—a dialogue with the deep.

Keywords: Geomythology, Mine spirits, *Kopalci*, *Kobolds*, Central European folklore.