

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY
&
EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND, UK**

**NINETEENTH
ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY**



VISUALISING MYTHOLOGIES

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

June 1-5, 2026

**Edinburgh Napier University
Merchiston Campus
10 Colinton Road
Edinburgh EH10 5DT**

PROGRAM

MONDAY, JUNE 1

08:45 – 09:15 PARTICIPANTS WELCOMING & REGISTRATION

09:15 – 9:30 OPENING ADDRESSES

MONDAY MORNING SESSION:

CHAIR: LOUISE MILNE

GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

09:30 – 10:00 ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIĆ
Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia
ROBERT SEGAL ON MYTH

MYTHOLOGY OF AFRICA AND MESOPOTAMIA

10:00 – 10:30 JULYE BIDMEAD
Chapman University, Orange, CA, USA
DEITIES, DEMONS, AND MONSTERS IN MESOPOTAMIAN MYTHOLOGY: A
VISUAL LOOK

10:30 – 11:00 CHINENYE EGBUNA IKWUEMESI
[via Zoom] *The Afrodeities Institute, UK*
VISUALISING CIVILISATION: WEST AFRICAN MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGERY
AS STRUCTURED KNOWLEDGE ARCHITECTURE

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

SCANDINAVIAN MYTHOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

11:30 – 12:00 EMILY LYLE
[via Zoom] *University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK*
ODIN'S DRINK AND THE CREAM OF THE WELL

12:00 – 12:30

[via Zoom]

DMITRI PANCHENKO

Saint Petersburg State University, Russia

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE BRONZE AGE SCANDINAVIAN ROCK ART

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch Break

MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: MICHAL SCHWARZ

MYTHOLOGY AND MODERNITY

14:00 – 14:30

JAN KOZÁK

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

MAPPING THE FALSE COSMOS: VISUAL COSMOLOGIES OF AWAKENING
FROM THE MATRIX TO CONTEMPORARY CONSPIRITUALITY

14:30 – 15:00

[via Zoom]

APHRODITE-LIDIA NOUNANAKI

*Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens,
Greece*

SEEING ENOCH: AI-GENERATED REVELATION AND NEO-COSMOLOGY
ON SOCIAL MEDIA

15:00 – 15:30

AMINA OTTO

University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

KING OF OTHERWORLD TO GOD OF UNDERWORLD:

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ARAWN KING OF ANNWFN FROM THE FOUR
BRANCHES OF THE MABINOGI TO MODERN FANTASY MEDIA

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee Break

SLAVIC, BALKAN, AND DANUBE REGION MYTHOLOGY

16:00 – 16:30

[via Zoom]

BRANISLAV ŽIVKOVIĆ

University of Padova, Italy

BEHOLDING THE DRAGON'S HEART: DRACONITE IN MYTHIC
IMAGINATION

16:30 – 17:00 BOJANA RADOVANOVIĆ
Institute for Religious Studies, University of Graz, Austria
RUSALJE IN THE BALKANS: BETWEEN THRACIAN HERITAGE, HELLENIC,
AND ANATOLIAN INFLUXES

17:00 – 17:30 JULIE GELDERBLOM-CALVEY
Romanian-American University in Bucharest, Romania
ROMANIAN CONTEMPORARY ICONOGRAPHY:
WHERE COLLECTIVE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL
EXPRESSION INTERPLAY

17:30 – Reception
Apex Café
10 Colinton Road
Edinburgh EH10 5DT

TUESDAY, JUNE 2

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: KIKUKO HIRAFUJI

MYTHOLOGY OF EASTERN AND INNER ASIA AND THE AMERICAS

09:00 – 09:30 KAZUO MATSUMURA
[via Zoom] *Wako University, Tokyo, Japan*
TALE OF THE GENDER CHANGE

09:30 – 10:00 WENXIAN SONG
[via Zoom] *Yunnan University, Kunming, China*
MUSICAL NARRATION OF THE "OH DEDE" SUITE IN THE MYTHS OF THE
NU PEOPLE IN YUNNAN, CHINA

10:00 – 10:30 IWAO ISHIKAWA
[via Zoom] *The Nakamura Hajime Eastern Institute, Tokyo, Japan*
MYTH CONCERNING ORIGIN OF SACRIFICIAL HORSE: PRESENTATION AS
A SAMPLE OF TRIAL COMPARISON RESEARCH BETWEEN OLD TIBETAN
INDIGENOUS RITUAL NARRATIVES AND DONGBA NARRATIVES

10:30 – 11:00 MICHAL SCHWARZ
Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
DIVINE CONTEXTS OF WHITE COLOR: VISUAL SACRALIZATION IN INNER
ASIAN RELIGIOUS ART

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

11:30 – 12:00 ONDŘEJ PAZDÍREK
Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
AN ICON OR AN IDOL? BUDDHIST VENERATION OF IMAGES IN REPORTS
BY EARLY MODERN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES

12:00 – 12:30 TIAGO GARCIA FERRER
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain
DRESSING QUETZALCOATL: THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE IN
THE *CODEX BORGIA*

12:30 – 14:30 *Lunch Break*

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

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION: IN MEMORY OF BORIS OGUIBÉNINE (PANEL)

PANEL COORDINATOR & CHAIR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

14:30 – 15:00 NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA
Princeton University, USA
BORIS OGUIBÉNINE: HIS LIFE AND WORK

15:00 – 15:30 CHUJING YANG
Yunnan University, China
CATTLE'S ROAD: A COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGICAL STUDY OF CATTLE
SACRIFICE RITUALS IN THE HIMALAYAN-SOUTHEAST ASIAN HIGHLANDS

15:30 – 16:00 *Coffee Break*

16:00 – 16:30

[via Zoom]

JOHN LEAVITT

Université de Montreal, Canada

ON THE INDO-EUROPEAN AND VEDIC COW

16:30 – 17:00

[via Zoom]

DMITRII KOMISSAROV

HSE University, Moscow, Russia

BUDDHA, CYAVANA, ṚŚYAŚRŪGA, AND 'NON-FUNCTIONING FERTILITY DEITIES'

17:00 – 17:30

SUNIL PARAB

Sindhu Veda Research Foundation, India

DOCUMENTING SACRED GEOGRAPHY: NĀGA-DEVATĀ LANDSCAPES OF KUMAON, UTTARAKHAND

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION: INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY I

CHAIR: ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIĆ

GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHOLOGY

09:30 – 10:00

ABBOT HENDERSON

Arizona State University, USA

HANDS ACROSS THE COSMOS: RECONCILING THE HEKATONCHEIRES IN GREEK AND ROMAN MYTH

10:00 – 10:30

[via Zoom]

GIUSY BELFIORE

University of Pavia, Italy &

GIULIA RAIMONDI

University of Catania, Italy

SUBTERRANEAN THRESHOLDS: LIMINAL SPACE AND RITUAL PERCEPTION IN GREEK CULT

10:30 – 11:00

[via Zoom]

GIULIA RAIMONDI & SOFIA BULGARINI

University of Catania, Italy

SOURCES OF MYTH: ARCHAEOLOGY AND MYTH OF SICILIAN THERMAL WATERS

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee Break**

11:30 – 12:00 JOHN SHAW
University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
DIAN CÉCHT THE IRISH GOD OF HEALING: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

12:00 – 12:30 NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA
Princeton University, USA
THE COSMIC AXIS AND THE WORLD TREE IN VEDIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN COSMOLOGY

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch Break**

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION: INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY II

CHAIR: NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

MYTHOLOGY OF SOUTH ASIA

14:00 – 14:30 SIGNE COHEN
University of Missouri, USA
SEEING THE COSMOS: VISUALIZING MYTHIC WORLDS IN INDIAN AND NORSE COSMOLOGY

14:30 – 15:00 SAILI K. PALANDE-DATAR & NEHA RANE
[via Zoom] *University of Exeter, UK*
WONDER GODDESS AND HER SOVEREIGN VILLAGE KINGDOM: CASE OF *GRAMDEVIS* OF CENTRAL KONKAN

15:00 – 15:30 MILENA BRATOEVA
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria
SOMA AND THE *KAVI*: VISIONARY EXPERIENCE AND HARMONIC SPEECH IN VEDIC MYTHOLOGY

15:30 – 16:00 YAROSLAV VASSILKOV
[via Zoom] *Independent Researcher, Front Royal, VA, USA*
INDIAN PILGRIMAGE: ITS UNIQUENESS AND PARALLELS WITH OTHER PILGRIMAGE TRADITIONS

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee Break*

16:30 – 17:00

[via Zoom]

JULIETA ROTARU

ILARA-EPHE, Paris, France & ICCR, Pune, India

FROM GYPSY ORAL TRADITION TO CINEMATIC SACRED TIME: VISUAL TRANSMISSION OF HINDU AND BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES

17:00 – 17:30

ISABELLA GATTI

Independent researcher, Turin, Italy

RITUAL HEALING AND EMBODIED COSMOLOGY AT MEHANDIPUR BALAJI TEMPLE

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION: ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

CHAIR: LOUISE MILNE

09:30 – 10:00

REGISTRATION FOR THE AUDIENCE

10:00 – 10:30

[via Zoom]

PETRA-STEFANIE VOGLER

Ludwigsburg University of Education, Germany

VEDA-TRANSMISSION AT THE VEDAVIDYALAYA VADAKKE
BRAHMASWAM MADHAM IN THRISSUR (KERALA)

10:30 – 11:00

ANDREA GRASSELLI

Independent researcher & filmmaker, Turin, Italy

RITUAL HEALING AND EMBODIED COSMOLOGY AT MEHANDIPUR BALAJI TEMPLE. A DOCUMENTARY

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:00

SUNIL PARAB

Sindhu Veda Research Foundation, India

WHERE VASUKI DWELLS: WALKING A HIDDEN SACRED LANDSCAPE OF KUMAON. A DOCUMENTARY

12:00 – 12:30 KIKUKO HIRAFUJI
Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, Japan & SOAS University of London, UK
BUILDING ETERNITY: THE KAMI-HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF IZUMO TAISHA

12:30 – 13:00 SEÁN MARTIN
Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, UK
FOLKLAND

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch Break

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION: ETHNOGRAPHIC & EXPERIMENTAL FILM

CHAIR: SEÁN MARTIN

ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

14:30 – 15:00 ANGELOS THEOCHARIS
[via Zoom] *School of Arts and Cultures, Newcastle University, UK*
RITUALS OF PLACE: INDIGENOUS FILMMAKING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

EXPERIMENTAL FILM

15:00 – 15:30 CATRIONA GALLAGHER
[via Zoom] *British School of Athens, Greece*
DAPHNE WAS A TORSO ENDING IN LEAVES

15:30 – 16:00 RICHARD ASHROWAN
Independent Film Curator, UK
HAPPY WRAPPING FILM; EVOCATION

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break

16:30 – 17:00 LOUISE MILNE
Edinburgh Napier University & Edinburgh University, UK
PATHS OF DESIRE

17:00 – 17:30 DISCUSSION AND Q&AS

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

- 10:00 – 11:00** VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND
Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF
- 11:30 – 13:00** FILM SCREENING: TIME OF DREAMS (SAPŅU LAIKS) BY ANDRIS SLAPIŅŠ
(2005)
- 13:00 – 14:30** Lunch Break
- 14:30 – 17:00** FILM SCREENING: FIELDS OF HOPE (CERĪBU LAUKI) BY ANDRIS SLAPIŅŠ
(1988)
- 17:00 – 17:30** DISCUSSION AND Q&A

19:30 – Conference Banquet
Ecco Vino Restaurant
19 Cockburn Street,
Edinburgh EH1 1BP

ABSTRACTS

HAPPY WRAPPING FILM; EVOCATION

RICHARD ASHROWAN
Independent Film Curator, UK

Film Synopsis:

A ritual evocation set on Dartmoor, through stone and water, the senses unfolding, drawing inward, and creating. The inner life embodied and manifesting as divine play, the Lila of Hindu philosophy, the Lila who was my teacher, now reaching down through the ancestral line in father and daughter.

DEITIES, DEMONS, AND MONSTERS IN MESOPOTAMIAN MYTHOLOGY: A VISUAL LOOK

JULYE BIDMEAD
Chapman University, Orange, CA, USA

This presentation explores how ancient Mesopotamian mythology is visually portrayed and reimaged through selected archaeological remains. In the Neo-Assyrian and NeoBabylonian periods (ca. 911–539 BCE), a period of imperial expansion, wide-scale monumental architectural innovations were also ushered in as each monarch built their capital cities. Palace complexes featured bas-reliefs and walls that were intricately adorned with detailed scenes of military conquests, lion hunts, and royal ceremonies. But consistent in these decorations was the symbolic imagery of mythological figures. Though depictions of entire mythological scenes and epics are relatively rare in Mesopotamian archaeology, palace architecture, as well as cylinder seals and amulets, provide hints into the visual depiction of selected mythic characters. Focusing mainly on the iconography of mythological hybrid creatures and demons that served an apotropaic and protective function, I argue that visual representations do more than illustrate the myth, but reinterpret and, at times, bestow the creatures with more power than the textual depiction reveals. Some examples of these hybrid beings are the lamassu (human-headed winged bulls that guarded palace entrances), *apkallu* (fish-men), *girtablīlu* (scorpion-men), *mušḫuššu*, and winged *genii*. While the iconography of the demons Pazuzu, Humbaba, and the

ugallu on amulets and votive artifacts may look monstrous and terrifying, their function was meant for protection and good fortune. Many of these beings are not only attested in Mesopotamian myths but also play a significant role in ritual texts and incantations.

SUBTERRANEAN THRESHOLDS: LIMINAL SPACE AND RITUAL PERCEPTION IN GREEK CULT

GIUSY BELFIORE

University of Pavia, Italy

&

GIULIA RAIMONDI

University of Catania, Italy

This paper examines subterranean cult environments connected to the worship of nymphs and the dead in the Greek world, exploring how hypogean spaces contributed to the visualisation of the chthonic cosmos. Rather than focusing on iconography alone, the study approaches sacred topography as a visual and experiential medium through which mythological conceptions of the underworld were materially staged.

Particular attention is devoted to contexts characterised by springs, natural cavities, and built underground structures, including nymphaea and sacred caves. These spaces are interpreted as liminal environments in which water, rock, darkness, and controlled movement structured the perception of ritual participants. Their architectural configuration did not merely host cult practice, but actively shaped the sensory and spatial experience of transition between visible and invisible realms.

A key case study is the Nekromanteion of Efira, traditionally associated with the oracle of the dead near the river Acheron. A reassessment of the archaeological evidence and literary sources suggests that the complex functioned as a carefully organised setting for ritual passage. Through descent, sequential movement, and priestly mediation, participants enacted a symbolic katabasis. The subterranean environment did not present the afterlife as a visible spectacle; rather, it operated as a liminal threshold through which communication with chthonic powers became ritually conceivable.

By integrating archaeological data, philological analysis, and the study of votive and epigraphic evidence, this paper argues that Greek hypogean cult sites functioned as spatial dispositifs that materialised mythological cosmology. In doing so, they rendered the structure of the supernatural world experientially intelligible, transforming ritual movement into a form of embodied visualisation.

ROBERT SEGAL ON MYTH

ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIĆ

Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia

The main purpose of this paper is to outline the importance and impact that Robert A. Segal (1948–2024) had on the study of myth. Segal was Sixth Century Chair in Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen (from March 2019), Honorary Professor at the University of Essex, and Professorial Research Fellow at the University of Vienna. He taught at several other universities, both in US and in the UK, and was the author of *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* for the Oxford series. He was also a keen supporter of the IACM and participated at several conferences (in 2022 as a plenary speaker) as a matter of fact, I met him at our previous conference in Edinburgh. The breadth of his knowledge and his public engagement brought a whole new light to the study of myth, focusing on the comparative method. Robert Segal insisted on observing and evaluating the presence of myth in everyday lives and cultures. His insights into the work of several individuals, including Freud, Jung and Campbell, influenced scholars across several disciplines.

SOMA AND THE *KAVI*: VISIONARY EXPERIENCE AND HARMONIC SPEECH IN VEDIC MYTHOLOGY

MILENA BRATOEVA

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria

Soma is a central deity in Vedic mythology and a foundational pillar of Vedic ritual ideology. This paper examines the connection between Soma, the Vedic poet (*kavi*), and the insights encoded within the poet’s inspired speech (*vāk*). The relationship Soma ↔ Vāk ↔ Kavi forms an associative chain that serves as a core paradigm of Vedic thought, characterized by its immense creative capacity.

By analyzing specific hymns from the *Rgveda*, I will explore how this associative chain unfolds. The primary point of departure is RV 9.73, attributed to the sage Pavitra Āṅgīrasa, where the deeper meaning centers on the word *pavitra* (“filter”) and the harmony of sounds (*samasvaran*). In this enigmatic text, the invisible, inner dimension of Soma is presented as identical to a state of enlightenment. In this state, the poet integrates disparate thoughts and

perceptions into a unified vision.

In this internal aspect, Soma activates a process of visualization, allowing the poet to contemplate and realize the “thread of *ṛta*” (*ṛtāsya tāntuh*). The *Rgveda* suggests that Soma represents a mental state of spiritual delight. This state is achieved through the poets’ unique capacity to contemplate the invisible, “to see the mystical form of *vāc*” (Gonda 1963: 42), and to give voice to that vision through exalted, inspired speech.

Special attention in the paper is given to the relationship between Soma and light; Soma and *dhī* (“visionary insight”), Soma and poetic speech, as well as the symbolism of the full pot.

Keywords: Soma, Vedic mythology, Vedic poet (*kavi*), *Rgveda*, inspired speech (*vāk*), visionary insight (*dhī*), truth (*ṛta*)

SEEING THE COSMOS: VISUALIZING MYTHIC WORLDS IN INDIAN AND NORSE COSMOLOGY

SIGNE COHEN

University of Missouri, USA

This paper offers a comparative analysis of how cosmological worlds are rendered visible in Sanskrit and Old Norse textual traditions. Rather than focusing on later iconography or schematic representations, it examines how cosmological space is constructed through narrative structure, poetic diction, and patterned description in texts that were primarily transmitted orally before being fixed in manuscript form.

The paper draws on Purāṇic and epic Sanskrit materials that describe the *lokas*, *dvīpas*, and the axial structure of Mount Meru, examining recurrent lexical fields, spatial prepositions, and descriptive formulae that organize cosmic space. These sources are read alongside Old Norse mythological texts such as the *Völuspá* that articulate the structure of the cosmos through images of Yggdrasill, the nine worlds, and the primordial void of Ginnungagap.

I show that the Sanskrit and Old Norse corpora employ comparable textual strategies: vertical and axial spatial organization, concentric zones of enclosure and transgression, contrasts of light and darkness, and sudden shifts of scale that move from the minute to the cosmic. These techniques guide the audience’s imaginative perception, allowing listeners or readers to “see” the cosmos through language.

Particular attention is given to the figure of the seer, whose authoritative vision frames cosmological description. Philological analysis shows that acts of seeing are foregrounded lexically and narratively, presenting cosmological knowledge as something revealed through extraordinary perception rather than inferred

through speculation. By analyzing textual visualization in a comparative perspective, this paper contributes to broader discussions of mythic world-making and the role of language in rendering cosmology experientially real.

DAPHNE WAS A TORSO ENDING IN LEAVES

CATRIONA GALLAGHER
British School of Athens, Greece

Film Synopsis:

The mythical metamorphosis of the nymph Daphne into a bay-laurel tree is reapproached in contemporary Rome, a landscape once surrounded by native laurel forests and still home to persistent depictions of the woman-tree-symbol in laurel wreaths and festoons. From hedges in parks & gardens to laureates for graduating students, Daphne (δάφνη/alloro/bay-laurel) is both the subject of the film and the key ingredient of its making. The artist films making an infusion from a laurel wreath then hand-processes the black & white 16mm footage of its making. This is a film made about Daphne, with daphne, foregrounding her story through the plant's phytochemistry. The hand development process folds into the thematic exploration of the plant's symbolism as the camera lingers on Daphne's historic and persisting depiction in Etruscan burial grounds, the botanical code of Augustus' Ara Pacis monument and the garden frescoes of the Villa di Livia. The Baroque sculpture of Apollo attempting to rape Daphne by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, which art historian Griselda Pollock responded to with a gasp, is here answered with a sigh. This instigates an attempt to reverse-metamorphose Daphne, breaking Ovid's symbol and envisioning metamorphosis from the inside.

DRESSING QUETZALCOATL: THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE *CODEX BORGIA*

TIAGO GARCIA FERRER
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

It could truly be said that the personality of the gods is contained within their attire. While most people dress to express themselves and present a certain image, stories of the gods rely on clothing as a didactic tool and cultural

shibboleth. Within a god's dress you might find references to their given domain, the most famous myths in which the god features, their affiliations and loyalties, or even their temperament and quirks.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the painted manuscripts of pre-hispanic Mesoamerica, where a confluence of technological limitations and practical uses give center stage to the gods' attire. Taking as a case study the so-called Codex Borgia: this work is meant to be used as an instruction manual, guiding the Nahua priesthood on the performance of rituals and their relationship with the divine. Notably, the Codex is entirely devoid of writing, if we insist as Saussure and others after him like John DeFrancis that all "genuine" writing is encoded or "visible" speech. Instead, its contents are presented in the form of elaborate paintings of everything from animals to tools, to gods. As the priesthood is expected to untangle theological or ritual questions using these images, the attire the gods wear must become a carrier of knowledge.

This talk will explore the dress of Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl within the Codex Borgia, starting by introducing the attributes that the Codex deems most important. Then, the talk will analyse the ways in which these attributes are encoded into the attire of Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl, highlighting when specific attributes are given priority over others and how the dress reflects these decisions. The talk will end by mentioning attributes that were not included in the Codex's rendition and how they do, or do not, affect the book's didactic intent. Ultimately, this talk will try to show how, more than being a simple adornment, dress takes an active role within the history and mythology of the ancient Nahua.

RITUAL HEALING AND EMBODIED COSMOLOGY AT MEHANDIPUR BALAJĪ TEMPLE

ISABELLA GATTI

Independent researcher, Turin, Italy

&

ANDREA GRASSELLI

Independent researcher & filmmaker, Turin, Italy

At the Balajī temple in Rajasthan, healing rituals do not merely address affliction; they enact a cosmology through the body. This paper examines how Hindu mythological imaginaries associated with Hanuman in his healing form as Balajī are embodied, visualised, and made experientially real within the ritual practices of the Mehandipur Balajī Temple.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at the temple, including participant observation and audiovisual documentation, the study approaches ritual as a performative and visual field in which cosmological structures are materially

inscribed onto devotees' bodies. Hanuman's dual aspect as devoted servant and powerful warrior represents both moral order and the active expulsion of malevolent forces. Through prayer, trance, offerings, rhythmic movement, vocal invocation, and collective participation, myth is not transmitted solely as narrative but enacted as lived experience. Divine protection, spiritual affliction, imbalance, and restoration emerge as sensorially and socially negotiated realities. The paper pays particular attention to regular devotees who have formed a spontaneous community of mutual care. Within this relational network, healing exceeds individual cure and becomes a collective process in which mythological knowledge is actively reproduced and embodied. Ritual thus stages what may be termed a therapeutic cosmology: healing consists in re-situating the afflicted person within a broader moral and cosmic order structured by the interplay of benevolent and disruptive forces.

By analysing the visual and performative dimensions of ritual healing, this case contributes to comparative discussions on how mythological cosmologies are made visible and experientially persuasive in contemporary contexts. It demonstrates how myth persists not simply as inherited narrative but as embodied, socially enacted knowledge within plural therapeutic landscapes where ritual practice and biomedicine coexist and interact.

ROMANIAN CONTEMPORARY ICONOGRAPHY: WHERE COLLECTIVE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION INTERPLAY

JULIE GELDERBLOM-CALVEY

Romanian-American University in Bucharest, Romania

Romania is often described as “a Latin island in a Slavic sea” and its folklore is considered unique and distinct within Eastern Europe. The icons made by Romanian Christians are no exception. The word folklore is used here in reference to icons because in this research we approach Romanian icons as a genre of spiritual folk art, not just an instrument of the Church. We define an icon as depicting saints, angels, and biblical scenes created as an act of devotion. There are two types: those approved by the Orthodox Church as religious artifacts for use in prayer, and those which do not meet Orthodox conventions and are created simply as an expression of the artist's own devotion to the divine. This project examines how contemporary Romanian iconographers not only transmit religious stories but also express Romanian spiritual identity and cultural history through devotional art. The interviews were semi-structured discussions. We examined the artworks through iconographic methodology, first

identifying Byzantine elements, then identifying divergences from Orthodox Byzantine style. We took an ethnographic approach to the interviews. One theme throughout the interviews was the way in which the iconographers' memory of communist repression of religion and spirituality led them to embrace mysticism and devotion. The ability for these artists to explore and express their spiritual beliefs and identities in contexts both Orthodox and un-orthodox is felt as a privilege not to be taken for granted. This represents a shift from how Eastern cultures are historically characterized as placing collective identity and preservation over individualistic expression and ideals. The relationship between the icon artists' level of Byzantine traditionalism in their work could be tied to their generational experiences of Romania's history. This personalized approach to religious mysticism is not the influence of Western individualism, but an endemic Romanian response to socio-cultural stress.

HANDS ACROSS THE COSMOS: RECONCILING THE HEKATONCHEIRES IN GREEK AND ROMAN MYTH

ABBOT HENDERSON
Arizona State University, USA

The Hekatoncheires, a group of three hundred-handed monsters who are children of the Earth and Sky and siblings to the Titans, occupy an uncertain place within Greek mythology, appearing at times as indispensable allies of the Olympians and at others as threatening, primordial enemies. They appear across the literary record in sources such as Hesiod, Homer, and Ovid where they serve variously as combatants, jailers, and bodyguards of divine powers. Their precise role in the ordering of the cosmos remains elusive and has long been open to interpretation—an inevitability given the loss of early sources that might once have offered greater clarity. When this uncertainty is combined with their striking and difficult physical description, one which resists artistic visualization, it is hardly surprising that no secure ancient depiction of them survives in the archaeological record.

This paper examines the disparate and sometimes incompatible accounts of the Hekatoncheires in Greek and Roman myth. Where useful, it places these traditions in dialogue with cognate figures from other mythological systems, such as the Celtic Fomorians, in order to identify which elements may plausibly be harmonized and which resist reconciliation. In doing so, it asks not only how ancient authors adapted the figures to suit differing theological and narrative needs, but also why the tradition preserves such instability around beings who nonetheless stand at crucial moments in the establishment and maintenance of cosmic order.

BUILDING ETERNITY: THE KAMI-HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF IZUMO TAISHA

KIKUKO HIRAFUJI

Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, Japan & SOAS University of London, UK

Building Eternity is a documentary set at Izumo Taisha, one of the most significant Shinto shrines in Japan. The film explores how myth, ritual, and material practice intersect in the ongoing life of this sacred site.

In Japanese tradition, it is often said that there are “eight million kami,” an expression that conveys the omnipresence of divine forces in the natural world. Before the construction of shrine buildings, worship was directed toward mountains, forests, rocks, and waterfalls. Shrine architecture emerged later, influenced in part by Buddhist models, as spaces where kami could be ritually enshrined. Today, more than 80,000 shrines exist across Japan, embedded in everyday life and community practice.

Izumo Taisha occupies a distinctive place within this landscape. According to eighth-century mythic texts, it is the land where the deity Ōkuninushi ceded his realm to the heavenly gods on the condition that a magnificent shrine be built for him. The shrine thus materializes a sacred covenant between gods and humans.

Central to the film is the ritual of Sengū, the periodic rebuilding of the shrine and the transfer of the deity’s spirit to a renewed structure. At Izumo, this takes place every sixty years. Rebuilding is not preservation in a static sense, but regeneration. Constructed of wood—a living, perishable material—the shrine embodies an understanding of eternity grounded in continuity through renewal. Through rare interviews with Reverend Yoshihiko Senge and other priests involved in the renewal process, the film offers insight into how living myth is sustained in contemporary Japan. Ultimately, Building Eternity asks what it means to transmit sacred memory across generations, transforming finitude into continuity.

WHY TEA RESONATES DEEP WITHIN: THE VALIDITY AND THE LIMITATIONS OF VISUALISING TEA MYTHS

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Recent years have seen a rise in discussions focused on the emotional connection between tea and humans, with the theme of healing being prominent as a

response to the study of interspecies relations. This article will draw upon previous research to examine tea myths in Yunnan, China. It's obvious that these stories not only hold a fundamental power that underlies the practice of interspecies relationality, but also involve creating sensory paradigms or ideals, such as tea's color, taste, shape, and aroma. More importantly, in addressing the interspecies practices depicted in tea myths and their associated genres, some ethnographic films (one of which will be analyzed as an example in this article) focus on the fluidity and sharedness of sensory (or affective) experiences articulated in these myths. These films not only respond to and depict the “relational being” (Gergen) of the natural-living world but also, based on such immanence and entanglement, transform the context of tea myths into sustained effective spaces of multispecies vitality. In this sense, ethnographic film not only helps articulate the nature of these narratives as living myths but also presents all beings both on and off the screen as “the unity of the structure of Being-in-the world” (Heidegger). In addition to addressing the validity of ethnographic film, this article will also explore the limitations of visualising tea myths in ethnographic films.

VISUALISING CIVILISATION: WEST AFRICAN MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGERY AS STRUCTURED KNOWLEDGE ARCHITECTURE

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African mythological systems did not fail to produce visual knowledge traditions. They produced knowledge systems that have been systematically misclassified by a methodological hierarchy embedded in comparative mythology since its inception.

This paper argues that comparative mythology has been working with a classification system that accepts certain visual traditions as mythological evidence while recategorising African structural equivalents as craft, ritual objects, or ethnographic specimens, a classification that is incorrect.

The central comparative case is the Benin Bronzes against the Parthenon Frieze. Two collections of sacred objects acquired by force, held in the same building, encoding the same civilisational functions: divine hierarchy, cosmological authority, and the theological relationship between sacred and political power. The Benin bronze Oba head encodes divine kingship through deliberate iconographic convention, with enlarged proportion signifying *ere*, the spiritual double and seat of divine destiny, and coral regalia encoding sacred rank with the same precision that Greek iconography encodes divine attributes. One

entered the mythology textbooks, as knowledge and learning, the other the ethnographic display case. The paper examines why the field must correct it.

A secondary case examines the Dogon Cosmogram, the visual encoding of the Sirius star system within a creation mythology, in contrast to the treatment of Greek astronomical mythology. Whereas Greek stellar mythology is recognised as indigenous knowledge, the Dogon equivalent is explained away.

The empirical control for the criticality of mythology to Africa is Botswana, where mythological principles encoded in visual traditions remain embedded in governance, producing measurable civilisational outcomes, anomalous across the continent and proof of what happens when mythological knowledge systems are not erased. Its exception is the argument

The analysis draws on the Afrodeities Institute's forensic historiography, a methodology that treats mythological artefact, oral corpus, and material culture as evidentiary record rather than symbolic expressions, recovering what conventional approaches misread as belief rather than knowledge.

MYTH CONCERNING ORIGIN OF SACRIFICIAL HORSE: PRESENTATION AS A SAMPLE OF TRIAL COMPARISON RESEARCH BETWEEN OLD TIBETAN INDIGENOUS RITUAL NARRATIVES AND DONGBA NARRATIVES

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The Nakamura Hajime Eastern Institute, Tokyo, Japan

The resemblances of Bonpo ritual narratives and Dongba ritual narratives have been noticed since J. Rock's Naxi studies starting in 30s. The former has been transmitted as the holdings of the believer in Tibetan ethnic religion (Bon), in Tibetan communities. The latter has done as the tradition of priests (Dongba) of Naxi ethnic religion in Naxi communities in northwestern Yunnan. Nowadays, the latter is compared with Old Tibetan ritual narratives on Dunhuang manuscripts preceding to Bonpo literature by some researchers. However, a notable comparison research on similar ritual narratives between Old Tibetan and Naxi had already done by a Chinese anthropologist F. Yang just before the beginning of this century, though this is not well known, especially to Westerners. He compared one of Old Tibetan indigenous funeral narratives, "The tale of the separation of horse and kiang" (ITJ 731 recto) to one of Naxi Dongba funeral narratives, "Offering of netherworld horse", and found out various similarities of plot etc. between the two. I could assert that the relationship between the two is of one version to another version, because it may be closer than the relationship between Cinderella type narratives all over the world. This fact can be an important key to open the mystery of historical

relationship between ritual narratives of Old Tibetan, Bonpo and Naxi Dongba. Following his study, now I, a specialist of Old Tibetan philology and N. Kurosawa (Kokugakuin University, Tokyo), a specialist of Naxi language and literature are comparatively analyzing both narrative. This presentation is an interim report on our comparative research on the myth concerning origin of sacrificial horse. The Naxi version of the myth has not only elements from Old Tibetan narrative but also from Bonpo narrative like species birth from eggs. Probably the early Bon religion from the second half of eleventh century to twelfth century made their myth concerning origin of horse based on the Old Tibetan version. Naxi people accepted it into their tradition, and in Bon religion it was lost or forgotten. It seems that such speculation is possible. If it is right, the existence of the myth concerning origin of sacrificial horse can be an evidence of linking Old Tibetan ritual narratives to Bonpo narratives and Naxi narratives.

BUDDHA, CYAVANA, RĪYAŚRNGA, AND 'NON-FUNCTIONING FERTILITY DEITIES'

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The term 'Non-functioning fertility deity' is used by Riccardo Ginevra in his article, in which he compares the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone, the Hittite myth of Telepinu, the Norse myth of Baldr, and the Indian myth of the sage Cyavana. All the narratives he examines share a similar structure. A certain mythical character responsible for fertility becomes powerless and loses her/his functions. As a result, a disaster befalls society. Then, an embassy is dispatched to the character, often on horseback or in a chariot, and the character is returned to active life. After this, the land prospers again. Riccardo Ginevra presents evidence for the common Proto-Indo-European origin of these myths.

During the study of the Buddhist narrative about the Bodhisattva's quest for enlightenment, and particularly the episode in which villagers mock Siddhārtha Gautama sitting motionless in a meditative posture, I managed to discover remarkable similarities between the Buddhist legend and the myth of Cyavana in their various versions. Similarities exist both in the structures of these narratives and in many of their details. These similarities allow me to hypothesize the existence of a single source of origin for both narratives and, consequently, to suggest a significant influence of the common Indo-European myth of the 'Non-functioning fertility deity' on the formation of the legend about Gautama's quest for enlightenment.

In this case, the question arises about the presence of traits of a fertility deity in the image of the Bodhisattva. These traits can be found not only in the obvious connection between the character of the Bodhisattva and the ancient cult of trees

and yakṣas responsible for female fertility, but also in another important episode from the Buddha's biography – the story of Siddhārtha's first meditation. This narrative demonstrates its connection with ancient rainmaking rituals, and in this, as well as in a number of common motifs, it turns out to be suspiciously similar to another ancient Indian myth, widespread in both Buddhist literature and epic – the myth of the horned hermit Ṛśyaśṛṅga, who delivered the country from drought.

Thus, the comparative material proposed by R. Ginevra for tracing the Proto-Indo-European origins of the Greek, Norse, Hittite, and Indian myths about the 'Non-functioning fertility deity' can be significantly expanded with ancient Indian narratives. This, in turn, could lead to new intriguing discoveries.

MAPPING THE FALSE COSMOS: VISUAL COSMOLOGIES OF AWAKENING FROM THE MATRIX TO CONTEMPORARY CONSPIRITUALITY

JAN KOZÁK

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

In this paper I focus on how that layered “map of the cosmos” is built visually in gnostic-type films (from *The Matrix* to *The Truman Show* and beyond): what counts as a boundary, what counts as a passage, and what kinds of images make hidden coordination feel not only possible but likely. The appeal is not that “nothing is real,” but that some things are real in a different way: closed networks, asymmetries of information, and moments when scandals and leaks reveal elite impunity (the Epstein case is an obvious example of why “backstage” does not sound purely metaphorical). I then follow how this visual grammar travels into contemporary conspirituality: it can support democratic critique of secrecy and unaccountable power, but it can also turn into a self-sealing worldview where every counterargument becomes proof of the cover-up and conflict becomes permanent. I end with a compact typology of these images and a few practical cues for keeping suspicion precise instead of letting it burn into paranoia.

ON THE INDO-EUROPEAN AND VEDIC COW

JOHN LEAVITT

Université de Montreal, Canada

Earlier research has pursued the tracks of a magic cow, cow of abundance and in some cases of sovereignty, through traditions of Indo-European speaking societies. Drawing on the work of Boris Oguibénine, this talk will center on the Vedic cow and parallels with her cousins elsewhere in western Eurasia.

ODIN'S DRINK AND THE CREAM OF THE WELL

EMILY LYLE

University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

Comparative mythology and related folklore offer a fresh perspective on the famous episode when Odin gives one of his eyes in payment for a single drink from Mimir's well from which he obtains knowledge. In previous studies I have found that the motif of the loss of an eye belongs to an Old Norse and Celtic complex including Thor's visit to the giant Geirrod and have suggested that "Mimir's well" might be a kenning for Mimir's cranium used as a drinking vessel. Removing these elements opens the way to seeing the precious drink as being taken from the well that was associated with the Norns at the base of the world tree. The Indian parallel to this also contains extraneous material but has the same core of a precious drink. In order to produce it the gods and demons wind a snake round the world tree and spin it round and back to churn the ocean in a vortex at the base of the tree. Various objects emerge but it is the drink that is the aim and a sage eventually emerges carrying a vessel containing it. The demons seize it first but quarrel among themselves and the gods receive the first drink leaving nothing to the demons. The first taste of liquid as a source of knowledge is found in stories concerning Sigurd, Finn and Taliesin. The concept of the luck of the first drink from a well at Beltane after the beginning time of midnight or sunrise was familiar in Ireland and Scotland and the right to the "flower" or "top" of the well could be fiercely contested. It appears likely that the fundamental idea about Odin's experience was that he was the first to drink from the well.

FOLKLAND

SEÁN MARTIN

Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, UK

Langport, a village on the Somerset Levels in England, is home to two very different visions of England: that of Victorian journalist and economist, Walter Bagehot (1826-1877), whose works are consulted by British royalty, and that of folklore, land mysticism, and countercultures, as symbolised by the figure of the Girt Dog of Langport. This mysterious hound is named in the Somerset Wassail Carol (first printed by Cecil Sharp in 1905), and has also been identified in maps of the area; the Girt Dog was later co-opted into the so-called Glastonbury Zodiac (Maltwood, 1935), where it is identified as a guardian figure.

Seán Martin's film *Folkland* takes some of its inspiration from the work of filmmakers Patrick Keiller and Chris Marker, but with something of a folk horror / psychogeographic / deep topographic approach. It's difficult, if not impossible, to contemplate the English countryside without encountering what Robert Macfarlane has identified as its eeriness

(<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/10/eeriness-english-countryside-robert-macfarlane>).

For me, this eeriness is bound up with our history of invasion, brutality and radical mysticism. A potent mix, to be sure, and one that will be investigated in this film and its proposed sequels, *Bookland* and *Loanland*. The titles of all three films derive from Anglo-Saxon terms for forms of land tenure. Our tenure is, it seems to me, one of our most restless ghosts...

This related article by Paul Kingsnorth echoes some of the film's contentions about the English countryside, and some of the ideas that lie behind (or beneath)

Folkland: <http://paulkingsnorth.net/2012/11/01/the-old-yoke/>

TALE OF THE GENDER CHANGE

KAZUO MATSUMURA

Wako University, Tokyo, Japan

Torikaebaya Monogatari, literally “*If only I could exchange (them)! story*,” translated into English as *The Changelings*, is a Japanese tale from the late Heian period (probably latter half of the 12th century) by an unknown author, or possibly more than one author. It is the tale of two siblings whose mannerisms are those of the opposite sex, and their relationships in the Emperor's court. The

story is amusing but at the same time is surprising because the plot of gender exchange is unique among the stories made by the court ladies (the most famous example is Murasaki Shikibu, the author of *the Tale of Shining Prince*, alias *The Tale of Genji*) and/or court nobles. I will compare this tale with the tales of gender change of other areas. Examples are stories found in the following compilations: in China, *Soushen Ji (In Search of the Supernatural)*, compiled by Gan Bao in the 4th century); in India, *Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā (The Five-and-Twenty Tales of the Genie)* compiled by Somadeva in the 11th century; in Rome, *The Natural History* compiled by Pliny in the 1st century and *The Metamorphoses* by Ovid. The Japanese tale of gender change will be discussed together with these tales of other areas.

PATHS OF DESIRE

LOUISE MILNE

Edinburgh Napier University & Edinburgh University, UK

Paths of Desire: a town-planners' term for shortcuts made by walking over grassy areas, where no formal path was planned or constructed. This film takes as its starting point the experience of walking such paths, old and new, in every weather and season. The medium of Super8 is used to convey a sense of deep time; evoking the past – and future – of a world without cars, a world of walkers. The soundtrack features voices speaking texts about walking in countryside and wilderness, in all the main languages (Latin, Old English, Irish, Scots Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish), and some key dialects (Orkadian, Cornish...), of the British archipelago.

Central to the imagery and sound is the mythological Middle Welsh poem, *The Battle of the Trees* [Cad Goddeu, 14th-century manuscript], performed through layered voices, in the original language and in translation. Incidental music is taken from the Scots ballad, *Thomas Rhymer* (about a visit to Elfland); underlying sound throughout comes from the *World Organ* (a modern Aeolian wind organ), broadcasting from the shore on the Isle of Jura. These foci -- the texts, sounds and imagery of walking – obliquely illuminate the present obsession with borders, the societal change required by the climate crisis and the cultural roots that could address both.

SEEING ENOCH: AI-GENERATED REVELATION AND NEO-COSMOLOGY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Generative AI enables new modes of visualising mythological cosmologies on social media, transforming textual and fragmentary traditions into immersive moving-image narratives. This paper examines a growing body of short-form video content anchored in the neo-cosmological myth-making of the Book of Enoch, in which supernatural beings and cosmological events such as fallen angels, Nephilim-giants, hybrid monsters, divine realms, and the Flood, are rendered through AI-generated imagery as vivid, cinematic sequences. These videos present neo-cosmological myth not as distant scripture, but as visually accessible experience shaped through contemporary regimes of mythological visibility.

Rather than functioning as simple illustration, AI imagery operates here as a technology of mythic legitimation. By giving form, atmosphere, and apparent documentary immediacy to otherwise elusive beings, creators frame these cosmologies as coherent and visually recoverable “hidden truth.” Social media thus becomes a space where cosmology is produced through visual narrative: mythic worlds are constructed through recurring aesthetic conventions, synthetic iconographies, and spectacular depictions of the supernatural. In this context, generative AI participates in the production of new mythological imagery, establishing visual authority through stylistic coherence and iconographic repetition.

At the same time, these neo-cosmological myths assemble syncretic story-worlds that merge Enochic and biblical motifs with Mesopotamian mythologies, ancient astronaut narratives, and contemporary esoteric conspiracism. Such configurations reflect broader comparative processes through which cosmological motifs travel, converge, and are reactivated across cultural and historical contexts. Generative AI smooths diverse mythic elements into unified frameworks, offering viewers an integrated visual mythology of origins.

Approaching this material as contemporary mythological world-making in time-based media, the paper compares traditional textual transmission with emerging algorithmic forms of visual authority. Its focus is that generative AI on social media functions as a new mythic mediator, producing visual authority and cosmological coherence through synthetic iconography, documentary truth-effects, and participatory circulation.

**KING OF OTHERWORLD TO GOD OF UNDERWORLD:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF ARAWN KING OF ANNWFN FROM THE FOUR
BRANCHES OF THE MABINOGI TO MODERN FANTASY MEDIA**

AMINA OTTO

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Modern literary depictions of the medieval Welsh literary figure Arawn, King of Annwfn have become much darker and more ominous than his original representation in the twelfth-century *Y Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*. Arawn has undergone a remarkable transformation in the interluding centuries so that he is now presented as a death god, lord of the Welsh underworld, and a generally sinister entity in popular media today. His kingdom Annwfn has received similar treatment: what was once a sumptuous and richly decorated otherworld has become analogous to mythical death-realms and Christian Hell, laden with connotations of perdition and drear in its recent portrayals. Since its first appearance in the *Mabinogi*, Annwfn and its inhabitants have been fragmented and reinterpreted in such diverse sources as Arthurian legend, medieval Welsh poetry, Victorian novels, and, most recently, fantasy literature, changing with every new adaptation to reflect the contemporary culture and accumulating new layers of meaning. Descriptions of Arawn in today's literature, both fiction and nonfiction, often present him, or a character inspired by him, as an evil 'Dark Lord' as in works of fantasy authors Diana Wynne Jones, Lloyd Alexander, and Susan Cooper and in Ernest Abel's *Death Gods*. This presentation aims to trace the threads of this transformation over the last eight centuries and not only explore how these influences and perceptions have altered Arawn and his kingdom to bring us these most recent manifestations but also demonstrate how strongly past perceptions of literary figures influence its future iterations and contemporary understandings of the past.

WONDER GODDESS AND HER SOVEREIGN VILLAGE KINGDOM: CASE OF *GRAMDEVIS* OF CENTRAL KONKAN

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Konkan region of Maharashtra state (India) is distinct from other regions due to dominance of folk pantheon and associated traditions which still are living and thriving in the eco-cultural landscape. Central to this folk pantheon are the village goddesses which are identified by various local terms such as Navlai, Bharadi, Jugai, Jakhai, Pavnai, etc.

These mythical goddesses can be classified under “Little Tradition” which are folk, local, oral & informal in nature and largely undocumented. Hence, it is very pertinent to investigate the tangible & intangible aspects of these mythical goddesses within their spatio-temporal context.

The present authors adopt a landscape approach to enquire about the presence of the mythical goddesses in the context of the village. The prevalent myths and ritual practices were documented & studied to gain insight into the sociocultural profile of these goddesses.

The various procreational and protective powers of the goddess are embodied, distributed and exchanged in the landscape through grand performances (such *firtiche khele*¹ dance), exchanges, meet-ups of multiple elements. These visual manifestations serve as instruments of transmission of myths associated with the goddess across generations.

The performative and visual aspects manifested throughout the year by the local community serve a clear social function which underpins the cultural identity as a village, not just in pre-modern context but in contemporary times. Some of these visual acts are intricately tied to the annual agricultural cycle in the village. The procreational powers of these goddesses might have greater antiquity as reflected through vivid geoglyphs² recorded in the landscape. The goddess's presence as a humanised entity with supernatural powers is reiterated through her movement in the landscape on specific occasions such as *Shimga*³ festival. The study reveals the elaborate sacred geography in which a mythical village goddess emerges as a sovereign ruler of the village kingdom.

¹ Firtiche khele: Ritualistic community dance performances by kunbi maratha caste of Konkan throughout the resident and neighbouring villages.

² Geoglyph: A large design or motif created directly on the surface of the earth either by engraving, clearing soil or by arranging stones.

³ Shimga: A traditional community festival celebrated over many days with intense fervour in Konkan region, many times culminating in erecting staff and burning it

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE BRONZE AGE SCANDINAVIAN ROCK ART

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The work of enthusiasts and professional archaeologists has recovered many thousands of Scandinavian rock carvings and made them available to study. Among those thousands, there are quite a number of recurring motifs and some dozens of scenes. The meaning of most of them is elusive and even seems incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the interpretations of some of them may claim to be reliable. Mikkel Hansen has convincingly identified an image as a reference to a lunar god (2020). I was able to show that the Φ -like figures of the Scandinavian rock carvings refer to a deity that ensures the arrival of the best half of the year (2023). In my conference paper, I will offer interpretations of several motifs and scenes based on the consideration of the images themselves, as well as their comparison with the mediaeval Scandinavian texts, on the one hand, and with Greek and Indian materials close in time to the carvings, on the other hand. I will argue the existence of a rich mythology in Bronze Age Scandinavia, its initially predominant concern with celestial phenomena followed by the increasing attribution of human form to divine beings with the likely corresponding growth of mythological narratives centered, however, on supreme gods rather than heroes.

DOCUMENTING SACRED GEOGRAPHY: NĀGA-DEVATĀ LANDSCAPES OF KUMAON, UTTARAKHAND

SUNIL PARAB

Sindhu Veda Research Foundation, India

Ophiolatry, under the various complexities of the racial and cultural fusion, has been one of the most primitive belief systems of human religious imagination since antiquity. It has been appearing consistently in myths, rituals, and cosmological narratives across civilizations. This study investigates the indigenous serpent traditions of the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, India, with a particular focus on the sacred geography of *Nāga-devatā* worship that is gradually disappearing from public memory. Through an exploratory field study, the research documented key sites and traditions associated with serpent deities such as *Kālināga*, *Vāsukināga*, *Berīnāga*, *Dhaulīnāga*, *Piṅgalīnāga*, *Harīnāga*, and *Fenīnāga*. The study combined site visits, audio-visual documentation,

priestly interviews, and community interactions, supplemented by textual references and digital mapping tools.

Findings reveal that, unlike many other folk deities in Uttarakhand, the *Nāga-devatā* shrines of Kumaon are highly localized, non-processional, and visited only periodically by priests, with *Nāga Pañcamī* serving as the primary ritual occasion. Each community predominantly venerates its own *Iṣṭa-devatā*, resulting in limited shared knowledge of the wider *Nāga* network. The geographical isolation of these shrines, combined with challenging terrain and limited infrastructure, has contributed to their relative invisibility in contemporary religious discourse.

This paper argues that the *Nāga-devatā* landscape of Kumaon represents a distinct form of sacred immobility and localized religiosity, offering important insights into Himalayan folk religious systems. The study emphasizes the need for continued interdisciplinary documentation and collaboration to preserve and interpret these fragile sacred traditions.

AN ICON OR AN IDOL? BUDDHIST VENERATION OF IMAGES IN REPORTS BY EARLY MODERN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES

ONDŘEJ PAZDÍREK

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This paper examines how Catholic missionaries in East Asia — China, Japan, and Vietnam—during the sixteenth and seventeenth century described, conceptualised, and criticised Buddhist veneration of images, a practice typically denounced as ‘idolatry’ in Christian polemical discourse. It seeks to identify the conceptual foundations of such labelling in the Catholic theology of the period and to examine how the acute intra-Christian controversy over religious images in the West — the Protestant charge of idolatry levelled against Catholic visual practice and the emphatic reaffirmation of the legitimacy of *sacrae imagines* by the Council of Trent — shaped the Catholic polemical lens through which missionaries viewed the visual aspects of religious practice in the East.

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**RUSALJE IN THE BALKANS:
BETWEEN THRACIAN HERITAGE,
HELLENIC, AND ANATOLIAN INFLUXES**

BOJANA RADOVANOVIĆ

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This paper reopens the still insufficiently resolved question of the mythological and ritual substrata underlying the Balkan custom of the *Rusalje*, with particular focus on the border region between south-western Romania and eastern Serbia. Drawing on comparative mythology and ritual studies, it examines the (predominantly Indo-European) layers that have shaped this female-centered ritual complex, while also reassessing its gendered dynamics and performative structure.

Celebrated during the Pentecostal period, the *Rusalje* ritual involved groups of women gathering to dance, sing, and enact a highly visual and embodied performance, culminating in the trance-like state of one participant who was believed to mediate between the human community, the spirit world, and the ancestors. The paper explores how movement, costume, choreography, and altered states functioned as visual and sensory mechanisms for myth transmission and cosmological representation.

Previous interpretations have variously traced the origins of the *Rusalje* to the Phrygian cult of Cybele, Thracian autochthonous beliefs, or Dionysian ritual practices. By situating these hypotheses within broader geographical and cultural corridors of influence across the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Aegean, this study proposes a more integrated model of mythological continuity and transformation. Ultimately, the paper argues that the *Rusalje* tradition exemplifies how visual performance and embodied imagery have served as

crucial vehicles for centuries and how they foster the process of preserving and reconfiguring mythic worldviews in Balkan folk belief.

Where available, short ethnographic video excerpts will be used to contextualise the embodied and visual aspects of the ritual discussed.

SOURCES OF MYTH: ARCHAEOLOGY AND MYTH OF SICILIAN THERMAL WATERS

GIULIA RAIMONDI & SOFIA BULGARINI

University of Catania, Italy

The thermal waters of Sicily, documented across multiple areas of the island, represented not only resources of significant environmental and economic value but also loci of profound symbolic and cultic meaning in antiquity. This paper investigates the interplay between mythological narratives, cult practices, and sacred landscapes, with particular emphasis on the figure of Heracles (Hercules) in traditions associated with thermal springs. Drawing on a multidisciplinary analysis of Greek and Latin literary sources, archaeological data, and regional traditions, the study examines how the hero was linked to the discovery, foundation, or sacralisation of thermal waters, which were conceptualised as markers of civilisation and expressions of his liminal, semi-divine agency. Particular attention is devoted to the symbolic, ritual, and topographical significance of thermal waters within the Greek and Roman worlds, as well as to the diachronic persistence and reinterpretation of these associations in late antiquity. In a geologically active setting, natural manifestations of heat and steam were integrated into culturally mediated explanatory frameworks, generating mythopoietic narratives that articulated landscape, cult practice, and proto-scientific interpretations of natural phenomena. The Sicilian evidence thus constitutes a valuable case study for assessing how embodied and sensory engagements with the environment informed the material and narrative construction of sacred space.

FROM GYPSY ORAL TRADITION TO CINEMATIC SACRED TIME: VISUAL TRANSMISSION OF HINDU AND BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES

JULIETA ROTARU

ILARA-EPHE, Paris, France & ICCR, Pune, India

The Romanian story “Youth Without Old Age and Life Without Death,” classified as “Land-Where-No-One-Dies” (ATU-470), appears “in its complete form to be unknown in European folkloric literature” (Șăineanu 1889). This tale holds profound significance in Romanian cultural identity. Philosopher Constantin Noica (1909–1987) believed it was collected by folklorist Petre Ispirescu from Gypsy storytellers in Ispirescu’s father’s barbershop, an oral tradition that became central to Noica’s meditation on Romanian metaphysics and national spirit. Both Noica and Mircea Eliade saw this story as embodying a distinctly Romanian cosmology: the soul’s deep longing to escape historical decay and enter eternal renewal. Key themes include mythic recurrence, liberation from decay, and initiatory journeys. The closest parallel to the Romanian version is the Japanese tale of Urashima Tarō. Buddhist cosmology (especially in Abhidharmakośa) provided a conceptual model for the narrative motif: “A short stay in heaven equals centuries on earth.” Similar time dilation appears in Mucukunda’s cave-sleep (Mahābhārata) and Revatī’s celestial sojourn (Bhāgavata Purāṇa).

In Gypsy folklore, there is “The Red King and the Witch,” collected by Barbu Constantinescu in 1878 and translated into English by Francis Groome (1889) as “the very best Gypsy folk-tale that we have.” Groome was a strong advocate of folklore diffusion theory, acknowledging the Roma as disseminators of many beliefs and tales.

Although Noica did not publish his essay analyzing the story, it was nevertheless discussed in intellectual circles at Păltiniș in the 1980s, where the philosopher lived after his release from political prison. Even before, his friend Mircea Eliade wrote a novella (1976), which Francis Ford Coppola adapted as the film “Youth Without Youth” in 2007. Coppola sought maximum fidelity to the Romanian context of Eliade’s work. The film was shot in Bucharest with Romanian actors in leading roles and Romanian cultural specialists as consultants. Through his extensive research into source materials, Coppola explored how visual imagery functions in the construction, transmission, and interpretation of mythic narratives, translating Eliade’s literary meditation on sacred time into cinematic language. The story, originating in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology, was transmitted through Gypsy oral tradition, elevated by Romanian philosophical reflection, and resonates across Eurasian mythic landscapes as a universal meditation on time, mortality, and the human desire for transcendence.

Keywords: “Land-Where-No-One-Dies” (ATU-470), Gypsy folklore, Mythe de l'éternel retour, Francis Ford Coppola.

DIVINE CONTEXTS OF WHITE COLOR: VISUAL SACRALIZATION IN INNER ASIAN RELIGIOUS ART

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This paper offers a synthesis of previous work on the religious contexts of colors in Inner Asia. Especially, the color white is understood as the most important color associated with the divine world across Eurasia and beyond. After a general introduction and theoretical notes, the first part of the paper focuses on the basic social functions of colors for ethnopolitical identification, for symbolic indication of sociopolitical hierarchies, for technical use in the military, and in various religious contexts. All mentioned functions are illustrated by examples from East Asia. The second part provides comments on occurrences of sacralized white objects in East Asian nature and human society, for example, snow and ice on mountain peaks, clouds, the moon and stars, white bones, white hair, white smoke from ritual burning, and the high ritual value of white animals.

The third part presents a synthesis of cultural tendencies related to the role of white color in Inner Asia. Evolutionary aspects are evident in the spread of material culture, in the chronology of the development of cultural symbolism, and in the use of terms for "white" in the lexicon of ritual and religious life. The last section focuses on symbolic depictions of white objects and use of white color in Inner Asian art with special attention dedicated to deities and sacred objects, white color of religious buildings, cultural role of white skin in societies, and other tools like white jade, white textiles, ceramics, currencies, and general honorific contexts of white color as they can be observed in Inner Asian culture and in religious art.

DIAN CÉCHT THE IRISH GOD OF HEALING: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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In the Irish Mythological Cycle, Dian Cécht's main role is that of physician to the Tuatha Dé Danann. His most notable achievement, described in the First Battle of Moytura, was to replace the hand lost by the king Nuadu in the battle with a functioning silver arm. His cures were accomplished through magic incantations and medicinal herbs, methods with a long history in related cultures and beyond; but the meaning and origin of the name of this important god are unclear. The noun *cécht* is explained in medieval sources as 'power', or 'part of a plough'. Further references describe him as a wayfarer 'who travelled the extended ways' (presumably of healing). This last aspect, though initially curious, is well supported by parallel accounts of mythological healers in Indo-Iranian traditions, on the far extremities of the Indo-European world, and can be shown to have been inherited by Irish tradition. Such attributes as 'movement, travel, swiftness' suggest a likely explanation for *cécht* as a regular deverbative related to OIr *cingid* 'steps, paces, proceeds, goes' with its significant semantic ranges and social contexts in the early Celtic world.

MUSICAL NARRATION OF THE "OH DEDE" SUITE IN THE MYTHS OF THE NU PEOPLE IN YUNNAN, CHINA

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The Nu people in Yunnan Province, China, belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Nu Su sub-branch of the Nu people is mainly distributed in the Nujiang River Basin and has passed down the suite of songs "Oh Dede" from generation to generation. This article takes the suite "Oh Dede" in the myth of the Nu Su branch of the Nu ethnic group as an example, and based on the epistemology of "returning to myth", it focuses on analyzing the symbiosis and integration of the Nu Su creation myth and the structure of the suite "Oh Dede", revealing the intertextuality between the Nu Su myth narrative and the musical narrative of "Oh Dede". The "Oh Dede" suite music narrative in the Nusu branch creation myth and the myth narrative form an interpenetrating relationship. The content of the myth regulates the choice of the "Oh Dede" suite music form, and the multi-dimensional sound landscape of "person-sound-environment" constructed by the "Oh Dede" suite can better interpret the myth. The interactive

study of musical expression in myths and mythological narration in music can provide a new perspective for current mythological research.

Keywords: Nu Mythology; “Oh Dede”; Musical narrative; Mythological narrative

RITUALS OF PLACE: INDIGENOUS FILMMAKING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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The *Indigenous Short Film Archive* (ISFA) comprises 56 films documenting endangered community practices and urgent socioecological challenges across Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. Developed through the *Indigenous Visualities of Climate Crisis* (IVCC) project, ISFA traces the imprint of climate change and environmental dispossession on Indigenous heritage in South and Southeast Asia through a participatory smartphone filmmaking process. This screening brings together three short films from Cambodia that centre ritual practice, sacred landscapes, and Indigenous resistance. Focusing on Indigenous forests, the films show how ceremonial practices make visible relationships between land, memory, ritual knowledge, and collective continuity. In doing so, they foreground ritual not only as lived practice, but also as a visual and narrative means of rendering cosmological worlds perceptible under conditions of ecological loss. Rather than treating ritual as static tradition, these films reveal it as a living mode of world-making through which communities sustain relations with ancestors, forests, and more-than-human beings. Participatory ethnographic filmmaking here functions not simply as documentation, but as a critical practice through which Indigenous filmmakers assert epistemic authority, contest extractive narratives of modernity and development, and renew ceremonial knowledge under conditions of environmental dispossession and rapid socioecological change. The screening will be preceded by a brief three-minute presentation on the IVCC project.

The selected films are: *Tampuan Cemetery Forest* (2024) by Ki Snam (4:55); *The Bunong Spiritual Forest* (2025) by Phyan Hik (4:50); and *Tet Tawev Song for Forest Protection* (2025) by Nhone Sreun (6:14).

INDIAN PILGRIMAGE: ITS UNIQUENESS AND PARALLELS WITH OTHER PILGRIMAGE TRADITIONS

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This paper will begin with the comparison of Indian (Hindu) and Christian pilgrimage traditions on the grounds of their continuity in time. In Sanskrit literature the first descriptions of pilgrimages are contained in the great epic – the *Mahābhārata*. Particular attention will be paid to the earliest forms of Indian pilgrimage, which appear to have been connected with the worship of tree deities (*yakṣas*), and divine serpents (*nāgas*). The practice of making at the temples' workshops seal impressions as the tokens certifying a pilgrim's visit to and donations offered at a particular shrine can be traced in India since the time of the Indus civilization up to the present; this practice has close parallels in the pilgrimage traditions of Christianity and Islam. The paper will also compare the directions of circular movement in Indian pilgrimage with those observed in Christian ritual practice.

Significant similarities can be identified in the relationships between pilgrimage as an institute within post-Axial religions – and the traditions of oral epic poetry. Initially, any mature, soteriological religion is often inimical to the epic poetry, since epic traditions are typically rooted in earlier, primal forms of religion. Yet the routes of pilgrimage frequently create a meeting point for the interests of epic 'singers of tales' and those of local priests, monks, or clerics at temples, monasteries and other sacred sites.

Within this milieu, the epic tradition usually undergoes significant transformations. The exploits of epic heroes become associated with particular pilgrimage centers, while local myths and religious legends are incorporated into the repertoire of epic narrators. At the end of their careers, the epic heroes themselves undertake pilgrimages, become monks, ascetics, and are worshipped after death. Sometimes, on the pilgrimage routes, a new branch of epic creativity emerges – religious poetry, which continues to employ the language and stylistic conventions of heroic oral epic.

In conclusion, the paper will compare two narratives about pilgrims: one from the *Mahābhārata* and another from Russian oral epic. This comparison will reveal an additional shared feature of Hindu and Orthodox Christian pilgrimage traditions.

VEDA-TRANSMISSION AT THE VEDAVIDYALAYA VADAKKE BRAHMASWAM MADHAM IN THRISSUR (KERALA)

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The traditional Vedic institution Vadakke Madham Brahmaswam in Thrissur, Kerala, South India, has been teaching the Ṛgveda for centuries and is considered one of the eldest institutions of its kind in India, as well as the only traditional Veda Padhasala (higher school) in Kerala where the Ṛg Veda, Yajurveda, and Samaveda are still taught in the traditional style. Great emphasis is therefore placed on the method of transmitting the Vedas orally over long periods, a practice that has been preserved in the Vedic tradition found here (and its associated major rituals) to this day. At the traditional "start of school" at the age of seven, young Brahmins are still trained to memorize and recite the Vedic texts flawlessly, which for the Ṛgveda alone amounts to approximately 800 pages or 1.4 megabytes. In this school the traditional methodologies of oral transmission have been preserved until today.

Complex systems had been developed to convey precise pronunciation, which can be indicated by hand and head movements the tone accent to intertwined ways of reciting the text. So, the involvement of the body and its movements are considered crucial when orally transmitting the Vedas from the memory of the teachers to the memory of the students.

It is important to note the special feature that the Vedic canon is not a scripture in the literal sense: "As is well known, the Vedic canon is not scripture in the literal sense: the Vedas were composed orally and they always were and still are, to some extent, oral literature. They must be regarded as tape recordings, made during the Vedic period and transmitted orally, and usually without the change of a single word. The strictly oral transmission applies to the prose parts of the Vedas as well. These texts were taught and recited on the offering ground. Exceptions to the strictly oral tradition are rare. The earliest surviving Vedic mss., written without accent marks, come from Nepal (c. 1040 A.D.); however, they have not been studied so far (Witzel 1997: 258)."

The tradition of Vedic chants was included by UNESCO in 2003 in the collection of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity and in 2008 in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The ethnographic film was made in Kerala in 2008 by our German-Indian film team and has a duration of 57 minutes.

THE COSMIC AXIS AND THE WORLD TREE IN VEDIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN COSMOLOGY

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In loving memory of Boris Oguibénine

This paper explores the symbolic and structural role of the world tree and cosmic pillar/axis in Vedic cosmological literature, arguing that this central axis serves as a fundamental organizing principle that integrates temporal and spatial dimensions, thereby constituting a sophisticated representation of the space-time continuum.

Through systematic analysis of key passages from the Ṛgveda, Atharvaveda, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, and Upaniṣads, this study examines textual references—both explicit and implicit—to cosmic trees, pillars (*skambha*), central axes, and deities or cosmic entities that embody such axial functions, including Varuṇa, Indra, and the cosmic giant Puruṣa. The investigation demonstrates how these images encode intricate relationships between eternity and temporality, various temporal units and states, as well as the vertical stratification of cosmic realms and the horizontal organization of inhabited space.

Central to this analysis is the conceptualization of the cosmic tree as a temporal-spatial nexus where distinct chronological layers intersect with differentiated cosmic zones. The study gives particular attention to ritual practices involving the *yūpa* (sacrificial post), arguing that Vedic sacrificial performers engage in symbolic ascent of the cosmic tree, thereby navigating between different cosmic-temporal states and effecting transitions across ontological boundaries.

Methodologically, this research employs comparative analysis to establish connections between Vedic cosmic tree/axis symbolism and similar cosmological concepts in other Indo-European traditions, while maintaining focus on the distinctly Vedic features in conceptualizing temporal-spatial relationships.

CATTLE’S ROAD: A COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGICAL STUDY OF CATTLE SACRIFICE RITUALS IN THE HIMALAYAN-SOUTHEAST ASIAN HIGHLANDS

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In Boris Oguibénine’s article *Sur un Nom du Bétail en Lituanien* (Oguibénine, 1985: 1023-1029) he argued that the names of Cattle in different regions in Indo-European languages may be related to their ability to move. Furthermore, through an examination of the related rituals and texts, it is argued that: “Dans le rituel romain la circulation du bétail sous une des formes indi-quées se fait entre les hommes qui manipulent celles-ci et Tellus dont on attend qu’elle rende aux hommes son fruit souhaité.” (Oguibénine, 1985: 1027). Through field research and historical document analysis of the Drung (Dulong) people’s Cattle-stabbing rituals, this concept of movement can be examined through the rituals associated with Cattle in the traditions of Yunnan, Tibet, Myanmar, and Nepal.

1. The Drung ethnic group have a custom of sacrificing Cattle to appease spirits/heaven. There are two types of records regarding the origin of the Cattle. One type is mentioned in historical materials, stating that most Cattle were purchased from the Nujiang River area or distributed by the government for breeding and farming, and they were mostly native Cattle. The other type is obtained from field surveys of mine, which tells the story of Gaur entering the Drung River from Myanmar, as well as sacred narratives related to Cattle, including stories of Cattle being given as gifts by mountain gods and orphan purchasing native Cattle to show off his wealth.

2. The Drung ethnic group is distributed in China and Myanmar. The Drung language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family, but its sub-branch classification is unclear. The Drung River is divided into upper and lower reaches, and the languages in these two regions are in difference. However, Cattle are called “nungngua”/nuŋ³¹ŋ^wa⁵³ /, in both areas, where “nung”/nuŋ³¹/ means milk, indicating that the naming of Cattle is related to milk. Milk is not common in the daily lives of the Drung people, but it is associated with wealth. For example, young women receive a sum of money for breast milk after they become pregnant and give birth, which is called “nungkyun”/nuk⁵⁵cun⁵⁵/. The word “nungngua” is pronounced the same as the Nu language in the Nujiang River and is more closely related to the Jingpo language sub-branch.

3. Along the Drung River, both the upper and lower reaches have the custom of sacrificing Cattle for enjoyment. The upper reaches are called “Delu Wa”/də³¹ ru⁷⁵⁵ wa⁵³ /, and the lower reaches are called “Ajiu wa”/a⁵⁵ ju⁵⁵ wa⁵³ /. Both are names of dances. These rituals involve shamans, Cattle-stabbing person, and members of the group. The dance performed around the Cattle-stabbing area serves as the beginning of the ritual. After the Cattle is decorated, it is tied to a sacrificial wood. After the dance, the sacrificial ritual is performed, culminating in the sharing of the beef and singing of thanks. In the Irrawaddy River basin in Myanmar, there is a legendary boulder where the first Ajiu Wa was performed. The Mishmi people of Zayu Town in Tibet also have a similar custom, called “De”/də⁵³ /. During festivals or when people gather, wealthy people buy Cattle for sharing and hang Cattle’s head skull to symbolize wealth. Similar traditions exist in other parts of Yunnan, such as among the Wa and Jingpo ethnic groups. In Nepal, the third day of the Tihar festival is called “Gai (cow) Tihar”. People dance and decorate Cattle, offering sacrifices to Vishnu's wife, Lakshmi, in hopes of obtaining wealth. Although similar Cattle sacrifice rituals exist in various places and in different forms, their origins still require further investigation. However, the simultaneous existence of these rituals is noteworthy. 4. In the Drung ethnic group’s Delu Wa and Ajiu Wa traditions, the Cattle-stabbing person recites sacrificial incantations before killing the Cattle, appeasing its spirit and informing it of the purpose of its death (as a sacrifice to the heavenly gods or spirits), and guiding it towards the path of the mountain gods. In Tunbai Village, Milin County, Nyingchi City, Tibet, Cattle’s head skulls are also hung on trees along the pilgrimage route, near the mountain gods and bodhisattvas, to help their souls find peace and journey to the divine.

Conclusion: There are two types of Cattle in the Drung River region: the Native Cattle and the Gaur. The Native Cattle mostly come from the Nujiang River basin and Tibetan areas, while the Gaur originated from Myanmar. Cattle-related rituals and festivals are usually held during the harvest season, serving both as sacrifices to pray for a bountiful harvest and good health, and as a form of ostentatious feasting. In these rituals, the Cattle are not only a symbol of wealth, but also, through sacrificial prayers, guide the spirits to the mountain gods to ensure a good harvest in the following year. In the contemporary Drung language, the word “nungngua” (Cattle) does not have any syllables or affixes related to the meaning of the function of movement, but the concept of “movement” is manifested through related sacred narrative texts, ritual performance, and daily life practices.

BEHOLDING THE DRAGON'S HEART: DRACONITE IN MYTHIC IMAGINATION

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This paper will discuss the visualisation of the legendary gemstone draconite in detail, with special emphasis on the gemstone garnet as the most plausible locus of dragon symbolism. The link between blood-like gemstones and envisioned dragon anatomy found its most developed expression in the period of the High Middle Ages. Authors such as Albertus Magnus not only continued but also enhanced the tradition of red gemstones distinguished by inner fire and were associated with serpentine creatures and other chthonic, subterranean forces. Archaeologically, garnet's widespread deployment in the Migration Period, predominantly in cloisonné jewelry across Europe, reinforced its visual and symbolic association with warrior blood, dragon flame, and elite power. Rather than approaching such fabled imagery as purely metaphorical, the paper situates these fiery representations within geomythological experience: encounters with garnets emerging from mining landscapes, where mythic anatomy and material observation converged.

Keywords: Draconite, Gemstones, Subterranean, Medieval, Geomythology