

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY
&
GROUPE D'ETUDES ORIENTALES, UNIVERSITY OF STRASBOURG**



**FIFTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY**

**October 10-12, 2011
University of Strasbourg, France**

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

**Conference Venue:
Collège Doctoral Européen
46, boulevard de la Victoire
67000 Strasbourg**

PROGRAM

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

9:15 – 9:30 PARTICIPANTS REGISTRATION

9:30 – 10:00 OPENING ADDRESSES

BORIS OGUIBÉNINE
University of Strasbourg

JOSEPH HARRIS
Harvard University, IACM

MONDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: BORIS OGUIBÉNINE

10:00 – 11:00 KEYNOTE LECTURE

YURI BEREZKIN
Institute of Ethnography, Saint Petersburg, Russia
MONSTER FACE IN ASIAN AND AMERICAN ART AND EARLY NON-
EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee and Tea*

11:30 – 12:00 ROBERT D. MILLER
The Catholic University of America
TRACKING THE DRAGON ACROSS THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

12:00 – 12:30 MICHAEL MEYLAC
University of Strasbourg
ET LA FEMME DE LOT REGARDA EN ARRIÈRE, ET ELLE DEVINT UNE
STATUE DE SEL

12:30 – 13:00 NAOUM ABI-RACHED
University of Strasbourg
L'ARABITÉ : MYTHES ET PERSPECTIVES

13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch Break*

MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: NICK ALLEN

14:30 – 15:00 STEVE FARMER
Palo Alto, California
TWISTED TALES: SPURIOUS CLAIMS OF POSTURAL YOGA IN ANCIENT
INDIA

15:00 – 15:30 GALINA ZUBKO
Moscow State University
THE STRUCTURING PRINCIPLE OF ANCIENT MYTH

15:30 – 16:00 *Coffee and Tea*

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: ROBERT MILLER

10:00 – 10:30 KAZUO MATSUMURA
Wako University, Tokyo
FIRE AND WATER: HEROIC INITIATIONS IN THE MYTHS OF NATURAL
CATASTROPHES

10:30 – 11:00 DAVID WEISS
University of Tübingen
SUSANOO: A CULTURE HERO FROM KOREA? THE CONNECTION OF A
SHINTŌ GOD TO KOREA IN JAPANESE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee and Tea*

11:30 – 12:00 LOUISE MILNE
Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh
METAMORPHOSIS AND SUPERNATURAL SELECTION: QUESTIONS OF
TIME AND SPACE IN VISUAL COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

12:00 – 12:30 JOSEPH HARRIS
Harvard University, IACM
MYTH AND RITUAL IN A LATE MEDIEVAL WEST SCANDINAVIAN POEM

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch Break**

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

CHAIR: KAZUO MATSUMURA

14:00 – 14:30 DEAN MILLER
University of Chicago
DUMÉZIL'S ORPHAN CHILD: MYSTERIES OF THE THIRD FUNCTION

14:30 – 15:00 ANA R. CHELARIU
Independent Researcher, New Jersey
METAMORPHOSIS IN INITIATION RITES: TRANSFORMATIONS FLIGHT
FROM MYTH TO ROMANIAN FOLKTALES

15:00 – 15:30 *Coffee and Tea*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: DEAN MILLER

10:00 – 10:30 VÁCLAV BLAŽEK
Brno University
ATALANTA AND INSTITUTION OF FOSTERAGE

10:30 – 11:00 NICK ALLEN
University of Oxford
CYAVANA HELPS ASHVINS, PROMETHEUS HELPS HUMANS: A
STORY ABOUT SACRIFICE

11:00 – 11:30 NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA
Harvard University
WOLF: A GUARDIAN OF THE NETHERWORLD IN INDIAN, SLAVIC AND
INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY

11:30 – 12:00 *Coffee and Tea*

CHAIR: STEVE FARMER

12:00 – 12:30 JOHN COLARUSSO
McMaster University
PROTO-MYTH, THE STORM GOD

12:30 – 13:00 BORIS OGUIBÉNINE
University of Strasbourg
ON THE SO-CALLED FUNDAMENTAL MYTH

13:00 – 14:00 DISCUSSION & CONCLUDING REMARKS

19:30 - Dinner
Restaurant Maison Kammerzell
16, Place de la Cathédrale
67000 Strasbourg

ABSTRACTS

L'ARABITÉ : MYTHES ET PERSPECTIVES

NAOUM ABI-RACHED
University of Strasbourg

Le terme arabité est tellement chargé de significations que l'on est en droit de se demander s'il ne renvoie pas, pour une part au moins, à une réalité mythique. S'il est vrai que l'arabité a fait déjà l'objet de plusieurs études surtout dans ses aspects idéologiques et dans ses connections avec l'arabisme ou avec le mouvement de la Nahda, la thématique mérite d'être revisitée à la lumière des événements qui secouent actuellement le monde arabe à un rythme accéléré et selon des scénarios superposables.

Comment définir l'arabité ? Quelle est sa place dans l'histoire du monde arabe ? En quoi est-elle "mythique" ? Comment le mythe s'est-il construit ? Qu'en est-il de sa survivance ? Voici les questions auxquelles nous tenterons d'apporter des éléments de réponse.

CYAVANA HELPS ASHVINS, PROMETHEUS HELPS HUMANS: A STORY ABOUT SACRIFICE

NICK ALLEN
University of Oxford

The story of Cyavana, told in various Sanskrit texts, is relatively well known to Indo-European comparativists via Dumézil: the sage uses his powers to force Indra, king of the gods, to admit the third-functional Ashvin deities to the soma sacrifice. In Hesiod's *Theogony* Prometheus tricks Zeus into allowing humans the more nourishing parts of a sacrifice. Each story involves both attractive females (Sukanyā, Pandora) and paired males who are somehow close to humanity, and in each case the innovation regarding sacrifice marks a significant transition in mythic world history. The paper compares the two stories and proposes that, although Prometheus is a complex figure, one of his components is a Cyavana-like figure derived from an ancestral Indo-European story.

MONSTER FACE IN ASIAN AND AMERICAN ART AND EARLY NON-EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

YURI BEREZKIN

Institute of Ethnography, Saint Petersburg, Russia

Representative art is a tool in struggle for social positions. Not all complex societies had developed iconography but all societies with elaborate figurative art demonstrate at least minimal social complexity. Parallels between the art styles of Ancient China, Northwest coast of North America and pre-Columbian civilizations have been discussed for decades but after about 1960 this topic was largely abandoned because both structural and migrationist (oceanic voyages) approaches to it proved to be sterile. However, just since 1960 the progress of archaeological and anthropological research supplied us with reliable reconstruction of the process of the peopling of the New World and with materials of crucial importance on early complex societies of circum-Pacific region.

The detailed analysis of Asian and American representations dated mostly since 3000 B.C. till the present time lets few doubts that their iconography developed from the same source. The traditions in question are South and Southeast Asian (Kirttimukha images), Chinese art of Zhou-Shan, pre-Shan (Liangzhu, Longshan, Erlitou, a.o.) and contemporary with Shan (Sanxingdui, Uchen) cultures, ethnographically known folk art of Amur-Sakhalin-Hokkaido region, Old Bering Sea and Okvik styles of Chukotka and St. Laurence Island, the Ipiutak mask, the Yupik art of late 19th century, the Northwest Coast art, the Olmec and later Mesoamerican art, art of Intermediate zone since late I millennium B.C. (Tolita, Yotoco and Malagana, Cocle, Tairona, a.o.) and last but not least iconography of most of Central Andian cultures since III millennium B.C., especially between 1500 B.C. and A.D. 1000. The Okunev art of Upper Yenisei (ca. 2000 B.C.) shares major features with circum-Pacific traditions that is understandable considering Far Eastern parallels for ceramics of Angara-Yenisei Neolithic. Restricted parallels exist in Maori, Adena, Hopewell and Amazonian art. Besides iconographic traits common to all traditions, the South and the East Asian, the Eskimo and the Northwest Coastal, the Mesoamerican and the Andean, and the Northwest Coastal and the Andean traditions have additional specific features in common.

The Mesoamerican data are especially important because they contain not only formal parallels for Kirttimukha and Tao-tie but also reliable keys to decipher the meaning of corresponding images. This meaning was related to the idea of cosmic principle (largely but not only chthonic) that was devouring everything and giving birth to everything. Both Mesoamerican and Andean materials demonstrate that this principle was connected with calendar. This *Weltanschauung* was largely alternative to the "cosmic marriage" mythologem, unknown (at least in antiquity) across most of the areas where the monster face was represented. South Asia is the

only exception and in this respect lies on the periphery of tradition in question. The area of distribution of the monster face in art correlates with the area of distribution of those mythological motifs that must be brought to the New World during the early migration along the Alaskan coast ca. 13,000 B.C. cal. Across the North American mainland this tradition was largely deleted by later migrants, including the bearers of the Proto-western tradition (ca. 10,000 B.C. cal.).

The suggested reconstruction (early Asian prototype for such an elaborate and complex image like monster face) means that at least some groups of people who entered the New World in the Terminal Pleistocene had a non-egalitarian social organization, i.e. their members used figurative art competing for social positions. For Mesoamerica where our sources are the most informative, the monster face in its local manifestation of cosmic reptile preserved association with the rulers' power till the Late Classic and possibly till the Spanish conquest. The Chinese, Northwest Coastal and Andean data can be interpreted in the same way.

This conclusion fits excellently the existence of parallels between South American and Melanesian secret male rituals including plots of myths and sacred paraphernalia. Survived in the areas that are most distant from the Asian mainland, such rituals certainly had wider distribution in the past. Their unique cases in the Northern hemisphere had been recorded by the Russians in Kodiak and Unalaska in the early 19th century. In situation of scarce resources, the male rituals can be organized with minimal investment of resources (the Fuegians and Chamacoco) but the Upper Xingu, Northwest Amazonian and especially Melanesian data demonstrate that complexity of the rituals increases if the resources are richer and can be mobilized to produce ever bigger and more impressive decorated objects. It is possible that from the very beginning the corresponding rituals were related to the male initiation rites and to the dual organization of society which played especially overwhelming role in Andean and Northwest Coastal societies.

Peopling of America took place several thousands of years after beginning of ceramic production in East Asia and only slightly earlier than monumental ritual center of Göbekli-tepe in Upper Euphrates region was built. It means that growth of social complexity in both core areas of human civilization began already in Upper Paleolithic time.

ATALANTA AND INSTITUTION OF FOSTERAGE

VÁCLAV BLAŽEK
Brno University

The name of the heroine Ἀταλάντη is usually interpreted as "the [woman] equal [to a man]". According to the Arcadian version of the myth she was a daughter of Minyos' daughter Klymene and Schoineos, who should come in Arcadia from Boeotia. In agreement with the local rules another man called Iasios (also Iasos or Iasion) was determined as her foster-father. But he wished a boy and that is why he left her in the Parthenion Mountains. A she-bear became her new foster-mother who also suckled her. Later Atalanta found her new home among herdsmen where she presented herself as a top-hunter and runner (Kaerst, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Halbband 4, 1896, c. 1891). In the story the motif of the fosterage occurs at least twice: in the case of the foster-father who left Atalanta in the mountains and the she-bear who found and suckled her. Both internal Greek etymology and external Indo-European cognates confirm that her name indicates her role of a fostered child.

METAMORPHOSIS IN INITIATION RITES: TRANSFORMATIONS FLIGHT FROM MYTH TO ROMANIAN FOLKTALES

ANA R. CHELARIU
Independent Researcher, New Jersey

Many stories, from myths to folktales, include the motif *the transformations flight*, a series of metamorphoses that helps the young escape the dangerous pursuer, a wizard, a monster or other perils.

The scope of my presentation is to follow this motif from Nemesis or Proteus to folk stories, with special attention given to the Romanian folktale *Oh, The Boy at the Devil's school*, in an attempt to understand the role of metamorphosis, and possibly their relations with rites of initiations. Archaic societies devoted a great deal of attention to initiating their adolescents into the complexities of the adult world. Through enacted rites of passage, they helped and educated their children on this transition. An important role in the initiatory ritual was the enactment of symbolical ingurgitation and regurgitation of the neophyte by a sacred mythical animal, a deed from which the young emerged reborn into his new social position within the group. A comparative study of the transformations flight motif in myths to folktales, could lead to interesting results, especially when observing the same pattern in the sequence of these metamorphoses. The antiquity of the motif of transformations flight and that of the father selling his child in various animal

forms, as presented in the Romanian folktale, is confirmed by the story of Erysichthon (Ovid *Metamorphoses*, Book VIII, 738-878) who sells his daughter in many animal shapes (mare, bird, cow, deer). The story of Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea and his daughter Eidothea, is another example of motif of transformations flight, along with numerous myths in which Zeus pursues and overpowers goddesses or nymphs taking various shapes. Among these, the famous myth of Zeus and Nemesis, perhaps the oldest, is the starting point in my analysis of transformations flight between gods and goddesses/nymphs tangled in rites of creation and marriage initiation. The metamorphoses in stories from antiquity to folklore follow a certain order that could not be considered arbitrary and comparing this data could bring a different perspective on a very old and extremely popular mythical motif.

PROTO-MYTH, THE STORM GOD

JOHN COLARUSSO
McMaster University

Advances in comparative mythology have been substantial over the past forty years, but yet all of these have centered upon efforts to find comparable figures or themes. When compared to efforts in conventional historical linguistic these mythic ones resemble sound correspondences with the occasional proto-phoneme (for myth read “proto-motif” or “proto-theme”) posited to explain or at least represent an array of corresponding sounds. When enough proto-themes can be aggregated through reconstruction a proto-figure may emerge, such as that of the Sky God, *Dyēws. Such mythic reconstructions are comparable to proto-words. As yet, however, no complete proto-myth has been reconstructed. Such a reconstruction would be on a par with the reconstruction of an entire linguistic paradigm, such as the Indo-European pronominal system or the thematic masculine nouns.

In the present talk I offer a full reconstruction of just such a proto-myth. Building upon the pioneering 1970 efforts of V. Vs. Ivanov and the late V. N. Toporov, who put forward a rough outline, a “reconstruction du schema,” of “le dieu de l’orage,” I survey the rich reflexes of a late and perhaps central Indo-European myth recounting the birth and early life of the Storm God. Enough material survives of this myth, albeit often in diverse and sometimes conflicting forms, to permit a detailed proto-myth to be retrieved.

This effort is interesting in its own right, but it also raises issues of how this proto-myth competed with or complemented other, often older Indo-European myths, such as that of the Sky God, *Dyēws, whose fertility and effulgent aspects have shifted onto a young warrior god. In this regard this proto-myth is indeed like a reconstructed linguistic paradigm whose fit into a broader grammar can shed light on wider aspects of a proto-language.

Twisted Tales: Spurious Claims of Postural Yoga in Ancient India

STEVE FARMER
Palo Alto, California

Claims are common in popular and even scholarly studies that postural yoga or *asana* practice can be traced back thousands of years to early Vedic or even Indus culture, the latter flourishing from roughly 2600 to 1900 BCE. Last year V.K. Gupta, head of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, an official agency of the Indian government, in fact made global headlines when he claimed that his agency had catalogued more than 900 yoga poses supposedly culled from ancient texts by experts from nine Indian yoga traditions; the aim of the catalog, Gupta is quoted as telling the Washington Post, was to deter anyone from claiming for private gain that he had invented “a yoga posture which was already created in 2500 B.C. in India.”

The widespread misconception that postural yoga arose in ancient India persists despite a large body of recent research that confirms that postural yoga was unknown in India before the middle ages — and, even more importantly, that most of what are commonly viewed as “ancient” *asanas* and all *asana* sequences are modern inventions, arising in late colonial times from fusions of Indian and Western practices, including European body building and gymnastic traditions that were wildly popular in India as well as in the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of what is known today as “traditional yoga,” ironically even those styles practiced with nationalistic fervor in Hindu yoga camps throughout India, cannot be traced back further than the 1920s and 1930s, and owe as much to Western as to Indian traditions.

The story of the emergence of modern “transnational” postural yoga has been ably described in recent studies by Sjoman, De Michelis, Alter, Singleton, and others. This paper focuses instead on how misuses of textual and iconographical data of a type common in studies of comparative mythology have enabled the backdating of *asana* practice to 3000 years or more before its first appearance in India. Special stress is placed on the misdating of a large body of early-modern yoga texts by 2000 years or more by one of the twentieth century’s best-known comparative mythologists, Mircea Eliade, whose studies from the 1930s remain influential even today in popular histories of yoga; and on gross misreadings of mythological images from the Indus Valley that have not only contributed to popular distortions of that history but have equally obscured key facets of Indus myths critical to understanding India’s earliest urban civilization. The paper argues that the twisted tale of postural yoga provides an instructive case study of methodological problems in comparative mythology, in which far-reaching conclusions are often drawn from unreliable data and grossly misdated sources, as discussed in Edinburgh in the first official conference in this series (Farmer 2007). Striking (if equally spurious)

pictorial evidence is shown from ancient Egypt, China, and Mesoamerica that ironically could be used to argue far more persuasively than any suggestions from the Indus Valley that postural “yoga” appeared elsewhere in the world thousands of years before it did in India. Recent neurobiological and physiological studies are reviewed that explain why we should expect the early and independent development of such practices in widely separated ancient civilizations even in the absence of direct or indirect cultural contact.

FIRE AND WATER: HEROIC INITIATIONS IN THE MYTHS OF NATURAL CATASTROPHES

KAZUO MATSUMURA
Wako University, Tokyo

On March 11th, 2011, Northern part of the main island of Japan, Honshu, suffered heavy damage due to the earthquake of unknown scale and subsequent tsunami attacks. This tragedy must be told many times in order not to repeat the same fate in future. In earth’s long history, however, natural catastrophes have been repeated endlessly in various forms: Earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, volcanic eruptions, meteoric bombardments, bad weathers such as ice ages, droughts and inundations (deluges). They must have given unforgettable memories to people who had to face them. Oral traditions including heroic initiation myths were surely invented in order to tell later generations how to escape from such calamities.

In 2008, at the second annual IACM conference held at Ravenstein, Netherland, I presented a paper titled “Can Japanese Mythology contribute to Comparative Eurasian Mythology?” In the second part of the paper, “Myth of the Sun and Fire”, I mainly compared the Japanese myth of the Hidden Sun and its recovery by heroic acts with myths that have similar motifs of Northeastern Asia and Northwestern America arguing that the importance of the motif of the hidden sun and its recovery and related motifs of the fire theft in the circum-Pacific region must have something to do with the existence of the volcanic belt in the same region.

This time, with additional motifs related to the natural catastrophes, I am planning to see various heroic initiation myths as expression of man’s attitude toward natural catastrophes.

**ET LA FEMME DE LOT REGARDA EN ARRIÈRE,
ET
ELLE DEVINT UNE STATUE DE SEL**

MICHAEL MEYLAC
University of Strasbourg

„Et la femme de Lot regarda en arrière [*mē'aharâw* – «derrière *lui*», masc.], et elle devint une statue de sel“ (Gen. 19,26). L'interdiction de „regarder en arrière“ (ici, sur la ville condamnée à être détruite par Dieu) s'inscrit dans un vaste contexte mythologique. Dans ce contexte, les particularités de ce passage biblique, et de ses contradictions, sont étudiées et peuvent être interprétées. Au niveau linguistique, il n'est pas clair derrière qui la femme de Loth a regardé „en arrière“; et il est encore moins clair à quel moment et où „s'est passée“ la transformation fatidique. En effet, il est généralement admis (dans des commentaires anciens et jusque dans la peinture européenne) que la transformation „s'est passée“ en route, pendant la fuite de Sodom à Tsoar (d'où les explications étiologiques), et ce, bien que l'ange, tout en interdisant aux fugitifs de regarder en arrière, les avait prévenu : „Hâte-toi de t'y réfugier, car je ne puis rien faire [i. e. détruire la ville] jusqu'à ce que tu y sois arrivé“.

DUMÉZIL'S ORPHAN CHILD: MYSTERIES OF THE THIRD FUNCTION

DEAN MILLER
University of Chicago

An examination of the French comparative mythologist's Third Function; its origins, components and constituent elements, its attachment (often tenuous) to the other Functions in the Indo-European idéologie, its important yet ambivalent place within this system – obviously a “foundational” area and yet suspect or even derogated. Bivalent operations and potencies within the function will be noted: life and love (sexuality) and death, natural versus culturally-created “wealth,” the marine dimension as threat and as opportunity, and others. Is “space” seen as a functional determinant and marker? We see variations and rivalries among the main F3 players: agriculturist as against nomadic herdsman, and the mysterious merchant makes for a further puzzle, and we see that even the canonical color assigned this function is not a settled matter. Perhaps more questions will be raised here than will be answered definitively.

TRACKING THE DRAGON ACROSS THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

ROBERT D. MILLER
The Catholic University of America

Calvert Watkins famously and definitively illustrated the connections between the Vedic slaying of the dragon Vritra by the thunder-god Indra and the storm-god dragon slaying myths of the both ancient Iran (Azi Dahaka) and Indo-European Hittites (Illuyanka). But there are actually two Hittite dragon-slaying myths – the other, Hurrian in origin, concerning the storm god Teshub – and the relationship between the two remains unclear. The Hurrian-Hittite myth clearly under lies the Canaanite storm-god dragon slaying, but the connection of the latter to an independent Semitic dragon-slaying myth is also unclear. Is there a separate Semitic myth at all, or does the dissemination of these mythological motifs all go back to Indo-European Hittites and Indo-Europeans among the Hurrians of Mitanni? And if there is a Semitic myth, did it disseminate from the Levant southeastward to Mesopotamia with the spread of the Amorites in the early 2nd millennium or was there an originally-Sumerian dragon-slaying myth already present in Southern Mesopotamia? And what are we to do when specific motifs of the earliest Mesopotamian form reappear in the late Iranian Shahname? This paper will attempt the relative chronological tracking of the dragon across the ancient Near East, as similar myths fed into each other, their elements interweaving and combining in new forms, with very old pieces “submerging” for centuries only to reappear even in stories of the Bible, of Typhon and of St. George.

METAMORPHOSIS AND SUPERNATURAL SELECTION: QUESTIONS OF TIME AND SPACE IN VISUAL COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

LOUISE MILNE
Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh

Visual traditions in comparative mythology shed light on the processes whereby mythological motifs and personae evolve and mutate over long periods. "Family trees" can be constructed to demonstrate how ancient hybrid creatures (e.g. horned men, mermaids). Such metamorphic phyla suggest rules, analogous to those which govern biological natural selection and psychoanalytic processes of dream formation. The means by which supernatural motifs evolve visually illuminate how mythological systems in general can mesh and split over time. Mechanisms for mutation in image-based "grammar" both resemble and differ from those at work in language evolution and speciation. Writing tends to act as a brake on variability, stabilising or reducing rates of change in language evolution. Radically oral

societies in fact did have an important form of proto-writing - visual image-making - working in a complex feedback with collective psychology. Since image-making is far older than writing, phenomena common in mythic representation, such as the reification of variants, or the "weathering" of composite shorthands into enigmatic condensations, date from at least the Upper Paleolithic through the transition to Neolithic. We can recognize in "trees" of visual metamorphoses the existence of a mythopoeic ur-grammar, ordering how variability may be limited and unleashed in mythic forms, and determining where and along what lines accretions and losses can occur.

**SUSANOO: A CULTURE HERO FROM KOREA?
THE CONNECTION OF A SHINTO GOD TO KOREA
IN JAPANESE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE**

DAVID WEISS
University of Tübingen

This paper elaborates on James Grayson's thesis that the god Susanoo, one of the central gods in Japanese mythology, is in fact a culture hero who brought metallurgic techniques from Korea to Japan. This theory has been discussed in Japanese scholarly literature for a long time. In this paper, I will give a rough summary of the main theories on this topic in Japanese scholarly literature and point out a strong tendency towards euhemerism. In other words, Japanese scholars (with a few exceptions) tend to interpret Susanoo as the representation of a historical person who emigrated from Korea bringing cultural techniques with him. There is a regrettable lack of analyses of mythological motifs and structures and consequently a lack of comparison of these motifs and structures with Korean ones. I will try to point out that for a deeper understanding of the myths regarding Susanoo and his connection to Korea it is important to presuppose that it was not only a *person* who travelled from Korea to Japan but a *myth*.

THE STRUCTURING PRINCIPLE OF ANCIENT MYTH

GALINA ZUBKO

Moscow State University

There are a lot of facts showing a consistent aspiration that existed in ancient times to fix and preserve very important knowledge and a strong desire to pass it on to future generations. Myth was always the main instrument used for those purposes. Ancient Myth was neither tale nor fantasy. It was considered by ancient peoples as eternal Knowledge conserved for thousands of years. Myth in this sense is not to be reduced to a text – written or oral. Its mode of existence is in sacred symbols, ornaments, patterns, ancient art, and even in signs of the earliest systems of writing

Ancient Myth is thus a kind of extra-temporal “text” with a very complicated “grammar” of symbols. The crucial point is that system is organized on the idea of Omniunity. The other principles of Myth are symbolism, syncretism, isomorphism and specific causal relations, that is, its own logic.

The knowledge that Myth has in it is structured by signs, each of them having a lot of correlating semantic elements. All of these signs and their combinations form a kind of semantic frame reproducing the great Frame of the Universe. The information within Myth is structured by signs, numbers and rhythm. Unlike science, Myth does not analyze or classify: it does structure and synthesize. Myth, being a living, self-developing system, has very intense internal relations. And there is nothing accidental in this internal dynamic of Myth. On the contrary, Myth opposes Order and Harmony to universal Chaos. Myth introduces Order and structuring principles into society and all of its spheres – language, writing systems, folklore, religion, art, and so on.

The Fifth Annual International Conference On Comparative Mythology has been sponsored by the Groupe D'études Orientales (EA 1340) of the University of Strasbourg and co-sponsored by the International Association For Comparative Mythology.

Le cinquième colloque l'Association Internationale de Mythologie Comparée est organisé avec le soutien du Groupe d'Études Orientales (EA 1340) de l'Université de Strasbourg et co-sponsorisé par l'Association Internationale de Mythologie Comparée