

**Vala and Iwato  
The Myth of the Hidden Sun  
in India, Japan, and beyond**

**§1.0. Introduction: Laurasian Mythology.**

In this paper two fundamental myths and the related rituals from archaic India and old Japan are compared. Exploring their close mutual relationship offers the chance of taking another look at comparative mythology in a wholly new way. This is not done in the old Frazerian way, certainly not in the manner of the diffusionists such as Frobenius and Baumann, nor with the Indo-European-centered method of Dumézil, not to mention the various psychological approaches of Jung, Campbell, and others, or the structuralism of Lévy-Strauss and his followers. Instead, the approach proposed here reminds of the 19th century historical and comparative approach. The present proposal and methodology has recently, but unwittingly, been called "essentially romantic"<sup>1</sup> as it looks for, and points toward, a *common source*, that certainly "may no longer exist," as W. Jones put it with regard to the Indo-European parent language.

However, as I have discussed earlier<sup>2</sup>, by careful historical comparison we can isolate certain motifs, individual myths, and even whole myth complexes both in time and space, compare them, and try to trace their common origin.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, this approach is not restricted to simple, one-dimensional motifs (such as the 'messenger bird') or single myths

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<sup>1</sup> As W. Doniger chose to call it in *The New York Times Book Review* (July 14, 1991: 3, 26): "Given cultural convergences the theoretically possible explanations are: (a) diffusion, (b) derivation from a common source (c) derivation from structural characteristics of the human mind. [Ginsburg] rejects the idea of a common source because he rejects a model which is Romantic even before it is positivist: that of the genealogical tree." However it is precisely this model that has been successfully used by comparative historical linguistics, palaeontology, and -- visible in popular accounts since the Fall of 1990-- in the very influential genetic studies (cf. Witzel 2001). Incidentally, in her review, Doniger had many of the facts in hand that would have allowed her to observe the opposition between Eurasian (Laurasian) and sub-Saharan African (Gondwana) mythology detailed in this paper, but due to the engrained 'path dependencies' of the psychological interpretation, from Freud onwards, she failed to draw the obvious conclusions discussed in this and earlier papers. Recent advances in human genetics lend additional support to this scenario; such results (especially the early, Paleolithic emigration from Africa along the coasts of the Indian/W. Pacific oceans) will be dealt with separately.

<sup>2</sup> Initial talk at Kyoto University June 30, 1990; see further: *Kumano kara woruga made*, 1990; Harvard U. classes from 1990 onwards; presentations in a conference on mythology, organized by Phyllis Granoff at McMaster U. in March 1993, and at the century-old Harvard Shop Club in Feb. 1998; a summary was published in *Mother Tongue* VI, 2001, [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/%7Ewitzel/Comp\\_Myth.pdf](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/%7Ewitzel/Comp_Myth.pdf), cf. also Witzel 2004.

<sup>3</sup> I do not propose to find the origins of "all mythology", say, in Egypt or Mesopotamia. Also, I believe that it is futile, in this context, to trace singular, isolated myths or even single motifs across time and space (as Stith Thompson etc. propose), simply because such isolated motifs can always have traveled from tribe to tribe and from civilization to civilization, as is easily shown in certain cases: Kronos' emasculation in Greece, from the Mesopotamian motif of Marduk/ Kumarbi (see below, n.47) ; or the Tanabata myth from China to Korea and Japan (see below, n. 150).

(such as the Oedipus one) but its aim is the investigation of the contents, form and the very *structure* of the various mythologies compared. Therefore, *combinations* of myths, *complex groupings*, or existing traditional *collections of myths* are investigated and compared with those of other civilizations: the *Edda*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Hebrew *Bible*, Egyptian or Mesopotamian collections such as the *Enuma Elish*, the old Indian *Veda*, the early Japanese *Kiki* (*Kojiki*, *Nihon Shoki*<sup>4</sup>), the Hawai'ian *Kumulipo*, the Aztec and Inca collections, or the Mayan *Popol Vuh*. We then find that the various myths are "logically" arranged in the various collections, in quasi-historical order, following a common, continuous "*story line*". This unrecognized and neglected feature is most important for any argument about the common structure, original meaning and common origin of present and past mythologies in Eurasia and in the Americas, in short, in the Laurasian area.<sup>5</sup>

### §1.1. Indian and Japanese myth

Among the multitude of Laurasian creation myths, a crucial one is that of the emergence of light. It is not a myth of *initial* creation, rather, it belongs one of the stages after the emergence of heaven and earth, and it is an integral part of the 'quasi-historical' series of creation myths that relate the emergence of the world and of humans. More specifically, it is about the emergence of the light of the sun that makes life in this world possible.

Even a brief look into Stith Thompson's *Motif Index* (1932-36: A 710-739) brings up many forms of this topic: from the well-known Biblical version (*fiat lux*) to tribal ones which have the sun shut up in a box, or somewhere underground.<sup>6</sup> As we will see, many of them are ultimately connected. The natural background of much of this is the perception of any pre-scientific observer (and still, most of us) that the sun "sets" in the west and miraculously reappears and "rises" in the east next morning. In many mythologies it is assumed that, at night, the sun travels underground in a tunnel, or across an underground river to the east, where it reemerges from the ground or from a cave situated beyond the mythical ocean surrounding the world. By extension, the first yearly appearance of the sun and its very first one at the time of creation are assumed to have happened in a similar fashion. In many myths, the sun emerges from underground (Meso-America) or from a cave (Eurasia). Here, we will take a look at the myth of the creation of light and its circumstances, especially in their Old Japanese and Old Indian (Vedic) versions.

The ancient Japanese myth of the sun deity Amaterasu-ō-mikami hiding in and re-emerging from the Iwato cave is first recorded in the oldest Japanese texts, the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* (712/720 CE). The Indian version, the myth of Indra's opening the Vala cave and his release of the 'first dawn' is found in the oldest Indian text, the *R̥gveda* (c. 1200-1000 B.C.)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In western literature often called *Nihongi*.

<sup>5</sup> Including large parts of Eurasia and the Americas, see Witzel (2001).

<sup>6</sup> A710-739, especially: A734. Sun hides, A734.1. Sun hides in cave. A713. Sun and moon from cave, A721.0.2. Sun shut up in pit, A721. Sun kept in box, A721.0.1. Sun and moon kept in pots, A1411.1 light kept in a box; A721.1. Theft of sun, A1411. Theft of light; A260.1. Goddess of light, A270. God of dawn; A270.1. Goddess of dawn.

<sup>7</sup> For archeological reasons, it must be later than c.1900 BC, the end of the Indus civilization whose towns are not mentioned in the RV; but, it must be older than the introduction of iron in northwestern India (at c. 1000 BC.), likewise not mentioned in the text. As most historical data in the text refer to the last five generations before the end of the RV period, a date between c. 1400-1000 BCE is not unreasonable. It coincides with the archeologically

A comparison of two myths attested so widely apart from each other both in time and in space has the inherent advantage that they are *unlikely* to have influenced each other directly.<sup>8</sup> In fact, diffusion of this myth from Vedic India or from Iron Age (western) Central Asia to Yayoi time Japan is extremely unlikely. Well before the beginning of the Common Era, Central Asia was occupied by Northern Iranians (Saka). The Iranian texts, while closely related to the Vedic Indian ones, have quite a different version of the myth (see §2.1.).<sup>9</sup> Further, when Indian mythology (in Buddhist form) entered Japan via Korea around 500 CE, the Vala myth had virtually disappeared from Indian and, certainly, from Buddhist consciousness. Even the Indian Epic Mahābhārata (assembled c.100 BCE) knows only of a "demon" Vala who figures in some brief references that have little similarity with the Vedic myth.<sup>10</sup> The many congruences and similarities between the Vedic and Japanese myths, therefore, must be explained differently (see §1.2 sqq, and the summary §2.7).

### § 1.2. The Myth of the Hidden Sun

The myth relates the disappearance<sup>11</sup> of the sun (or the deity of the sun) in a cave or some other enclosure, and its re-appearance (often as Dawn) after the intervention of a group of gods (and others), creating (or restoring) light and prosperity to the world. It is found in various forms in Vedic Indian, Greek, Japanese, Ainu, Amerindian and South-East Asian sources, and in an aberrant version even with the Hawai'ians.<sup>12</sup> *A priori*, the myth of the hidden sun might be regarded as a prime candidate for the concept of a supposed general

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attested oldest Indo-Aryan names in the Mitanni records of N. Iraq of c. 1400 BC which mention the Vedic Indian gods Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra and the Nāsatyas (Aśvin).

<sup>8</sup> However, for a possible link, see A.Yoshida, below, §2.7.

<sup>9</sup> Avesta: Vidēvdād 2, see below §2.1., and there is nothing of this sort with the Scythians, and so do the equally closely related Nuristani (Kafiri) people in Afghanistan with their Imrā myth.

<sup>10</sup> In the Mahābhārata, the 'demon' Vala was killed; found only in the Aśvin hymn imitating RV poetry Mbh 1.3.60sq: *bhittvā girim aśvinau gām udācarantau tad vṛṣṭam ahnā prathitā valasya* (vs. 66); cf. also 5.149.22, 6.91.54, 8.63.10, 13.19.23?; similarly the demon (*daitya*) Vṛtra appears only in the late (learned) sections of the Mbh 12.272-3, 12.270.13 and 14.11.6-20; cf. also 9.42 (Brockington 1998: 232-3). -- A curiosity is the recent on-line paper by the Kashmir-born Louisiana scientist S. Kak. After many similar wide-ranging, polyhistor undertakings, such as finding the distance of the planets or the speed of light in Vedic texts, Kak now (<http://www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/VedicJapan.pdf>) retells the influence of *post*-Vedic Indian myth on Japan that came with the introduction of Buddhism in mid-first millennium CE, but inappropriately calls it 'Vedic,' following the current archaization frenzy. However, the well-known facts of mid-first millennium Buddhist influence, often known even by common people in Japan, are presented as another novel proof of previous Indian cultural dominance in much of Asia. Like many of his proudly nationalistic or Hindutva colleagues, Kak myopically overlooks the inconvenient evidence of millennia of mutual give and take between Eurasian cultures. This paper, instead, will indicate *which* myths were shared, *when and where*.

<sup>11</sup> There are some versions elsewhere that see the creation of light differently: there was no sun, it had to be released from the netherworld (Maya, etc.). The Indian and Japanese version presuppose the existence of light/sun. However, another old version in the Veda has eternal daylight, and the gods first had to create the night

(Yama/Yamī, MS 1.5.12). Once, I read a Czech version of the myth, written for children, that was very close to the Indian version.

<sup>12</sup> It is matched in more "southern" civilizations by a myth of a "(midday) standstill of the sun," e.g., Hebrew Bible: by Joshua at Jericho, Polynesia: bound with cords by Maui, Aztecs: the sun is generally immobile, but moved by blood offerings; Incas: the sun is tied to a sacred rock near the cave of its emergence, for example at Machu Pichu; cf. n. 216 on the Yabarana in S. America.

human facility to generate similar myths, independent of the time and place of their creation.<sup>13</sup> However, in the light of the theory of a Eurasian (Laurasian) mythology, its distribution is significant. The myth is found precisely in the areas labeled as Laurasian, irrespective of geographical distance from the pole or equator,<sup>14</sup> but not in Australia and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>15</sup> Also, the structure of this myth is very similar in all the versions mentioned above.

Its classical Indo-European form is found in the Vedic literature of oldest India, from the Ṛgvedic hymns onwards. According to these poems that are meant for praise of the gods, the early morning sun, is regarded as a beautiful young woman (*Uṣas* "Dawn")<sup>16</sup> who heralds the rising of the sun. One of the most prominent myths connected with *Uṣas* is that of a "first" *Uṣas* who - for reasons to be further detailed below - was hidden in a cave found on an island in the middle of the stream, the *Rasā*,<sup>17</sup> at the end of the world. The cave is opened<sup>18</sup> (B 1 sqq, D 1) by the strong warrior god Indra, who is accompanied by poets and singers, the *Aṅgiras*.<sup>19</sup> They recite, sing, shout, and make a lot of noise outside the cave that is blocked by a robust lock (*phaliga*). The 'strong-armed' (*tuvi-grābha*, *ugra-bāhu*) god Indra smashes the gate with his weapon (*vajra*). He is helped by the recitations and the noise made by his *Aṅgiras* friends (B 5). Helped by their various combined efforts, he opens the cave and the "first dawn" emerges, illuminating the whole world. It brings with it not only life but also riches in the form of cattle (*paśu*, Lat. *pecus*). These are the reddish cows (D 6) that are identified with the reddish dawn, but also with poetry<sup>20</sup> which, in the Indian conception, holds this world together. Hence, both cows and poetry are highly coveted by early Indian poets and priests (*brahman*).

In order to reconstruct the complete Ṛgvedic myth of winter solstice and the release of Dawn, various RV hymns have to be brought into focus.<sup>21</sup> However, using many complicated traditional Indo-Iranian poetic devices, the typical hymn RV 3.31 sums up the actions of Indra: light or the dawns (vs. 4) are imagined as cows (vs. 4), but they also appear as real cows; the repetition of Indra's primordial deed is carried out in today's ritual and poetry (vs.9, 5), described for past and present times (see vs. 9). Indra's exploit is preceded by the explorations of his bitch, *Saramā* (vs. 6), and he is helped by his friends, the *Aṅgiras* poets and priests (vs. 7). All are joyous about the winning of the cows (dawns, cows, poetry) (vs. 10).

In the light of such metaphoric usage, it is not appropriate to employ the approach of 19th century nature mythology. However, the yearly experience of the "disappearing sun" during the long temperate and subtropical zone winters must have left a deep impression. The

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Thompson, *Motif Index* 1932-6.

<sup>14</sup> Important, as one may regard it as a myth of the northern, temperate zone. Cf. Schmidt 1968 on the disappearance of the myth in post-RV India.

<sup>15</sup> A counter-argument may be represented by the possibility indicated above: that the myth is too closely linked to natural phenomena, such as Dawn. But then, we would expect similar spontaneous myths in S. America, S. Africa and Southern Australia where the dawn is as long and as pronounced as in the more northern parts of Europe, Asia, and North America. They are not found and this argument thus does not hold.

<sup>16</sup> Etymologically = Greek *Eōs*, and cf. Latin *Aurora*, Germanic *Ostera*, Engl. *Easter*; cf. Lithuanian *Sáule* and Latvian *Saule*, derived from the word for *ôsunö*.

<sup>17</sup> Which the Greeks still knew as *Rhâ* = North Iranian/Scythian *Rahâ*, the Volga.

<sup>18</sup> For the myth see H.-P. Schmidt 1968. -- The numbers A1, B1, etc., refer to the tables given below, §1.3 sqq.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Greek *angelos*, 'messenger' (and the Persian loanword *angaros* 'mail rider').

<sup>20</sup> Vedic *dhī* is connected by popular etymology with *dhenu* "milch cow", and in Old Iran. with *daenā* 'thought > religion'; cf. further Witzel 1991.

<sup>21</sup> Even if this is not (and usually has not been done so far) in the present approach of microphilology.

days get shorter and shorter while the sun's rising point moves southwards each day, until winter solstice, when it comes to a three day halt. This time of the year was regarded as crucial and dangerous by many peoples who wondered whether the sun may ever start moving again, or whether the dark and cold winter would remain forever. They must do something about it, and, with the proper rituals, such as horses races around a turning point, staged fights, and verbal competitions,<sup>22</sup> the sun indeed returned towards its northward course, late in December.<sup>23</sup>

However, this yearly event is referred to by the Ṛgveda in the context of cosmogony, as having occurred at the *beginning* of time. The initial, primordial act is repeated each year during the dangerous period around winter solstice and year's end, when nature and society dissolve.<sup>24</sup> However, the reasons for the sun's initial disappearance are not immediately clear in the Indian context, but they are so outside Indo-European myth (see below §2.5-6).<sup>25</sup>

The closest parallel to this foundational myth of the Vedic Indians unexpectedly comes from the other end of Eurasia, from early Japan. If one reads the Veda in comparison with the Kojiki<sup>26</sup> or Nihongi one will be strongly reminded of the myth of the sun goddess Amaterasu hiding in the cave of the heavenly river (B 1 sqq; Kojiki 1.15). It is mirrored here on earth at Ama.no Kaguyama in the Yamato plains south of Kyoto, and at least since mid-first millennium CE, at Amaterasu's shrine at Futami.ga Ura near Ise in Central Japan (and also elsewhere). *Amaterasu* literally means "(she who) shines from heaven."

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<sup>22</sup> Very clear in Iranian and Vedic texts, see Kuiper 1960/1983, Witzel, *Hinduism* (encyclopedia article), forthc. 2005.

<sup>23</sup> In addition, the Vala/Vara pen for cows can easily be explained as a stable which is necessary for cows to survive the cold northern winters. Indeed, similar structures have been found in Bactria, dating from the 3rd Mill. BC up to the Achaemenid period, and which are reflected in the Avesta (*Vidēvdād* 2).

<sup>24</sup> For a good account of this yearly period, see Schaerer 1963,1966 on the Dayak in Borneo; note that their carnival period at year 's end surprisingly lasts for two months; this apparently 'northern' custom is continued in the tropics.

<sup>25</sup> Note the *Aśvin*'s attack on *Uṣas*'s chariot, and *Dyaus*' pursuit of *Uṣas*. --Further Indian motifs include: Indra and the cave, the five Indras (mentioned at *Mahabhārata* 1. 2.87; cf. 5.80.22); cf. the also the somewhat parallel RV myth of the 'hiding *Agni*' who flees as he does not want to become the (sacrificial) fire.

<sup>26</sup> Apparently, not done even by Japanese Vedic scholars or, vice versa, western Indologists who can read Japanese.



Mt. Kaguyama, from the SE of the Yamato plain. In the upper center, the Unebi mountain near Kashihara, with Emperor Jimmu's grave; to the right of it, Mt. Kaguyama. (photo: Witzel 1990)

She hides in the *Iwa[ya]to* cave ("stone [house] door") as she had been insulted in many ways (see below, A 9 sqq) by her unruly younger brother Susa.no Wo, originally the god of the ocean, after he had climbed up to heaven.<sup>27</sup> Amaterasu enters the cave and slams its rock gate shut behind her. The world is thrown into darkness, and the gods assemble in the bed of the heavenly river Ama.no Yasu-Kawa to deliberate what to do (B 3). They decide to use a trick. They prepare a ritual and festival in front of the cave, complete with music and dancing. One goddess, Uzume, dances an erotic dance, lowering her garments and exposing her genitals (C 3, D 2). This makes the other gods shake with laughter.

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<sup>27</sup> Instead of his brother Tsuku-Yomi, the moon, (also *tsuku* in the 8th c. Manyōshu) who disappeared from the further Kiki accounts early on, as is the case in many Eurasian mythologies. As in Indo-European, \**mēs*, the Moon, that 'measures' the months; other etymologies are derived from from *tsuku* "to lighten a lamp", *tsuku* "to get tired"; note *tsuku* "to beat rice" in the myth of the hare in the moon (also found in N. America) that beats *o-mochi* rice paste. For details on the substitution of the Moon see a future paper.



Uzume dancing in front of the Iwato cave. From: Rotermund 1988: 203 [*Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon 5, Monbushō 1935, Kokuritsu kyōiku kenkyū-jo*]

Amaterasu is plagued by curiosity, opens the gate a crack and peers out. She is shown a mirror, Snow White-like,<sup>28</sup> and sees a "more eminent" deity than herself. This competition makes her come out of the cave (D 4). The god *Ta-jikara* ("arm-strong"), hiding next to the door, immediately seizes her and another god, *Futo-tama*, puts a string (*shimenawa*)<sup>29</sup> behind Amaterasu so that she cannot go back into the cave (D 6). The world is saved from eternal darkness.

As in Vedic India, this myth is told in the context of early cosmogony. The connection with New Year, however, is obvious in Japan as well. The *Oho-Nihe/Daijōsai*, (the first fruit offering) festival in the 11th month precedes the major New Year rituals, the *Chinkonsai* (or *Tama-shizume*, *Tama-furi*, "spirit pacifying") and the *Mitama-shizume.no ihahi* (spirit enshrining), held in the 12th month. These rituals can be linked to the Iwato myth, and indeed have often been linked by Japanese scholars. The sighting of the first sun (*hatsu-hi.no de*) on New Year's day still is celebrated today.

In order to elicit the many identities of, and similarities between the two myths, the texts from early India and Japan will be investigated in some detail (§1.3-6), before a further comparison is made with other Eurasian and Amerindian myths (§2). In doing so, myth and ritual are treated together because they frequently correspond to each other, as may appear even in the brief summaries given above. The mutual influences of myth and ritual has been

<sup>28</sup> Note the fairy tale of Snow White and the seven dwarfs: the motifs of long sleep, the mirror, etc.

<sup>29</sup> Still used in private houses and shrines at New Year. It expresses the irreversibility of the deliverance of the sun (cf. below on Amerindian myths, §2.5). For the opposite (summer solstice custom of tying the sun to a rock) see above n. 12, and below n. 216.

abundantly noticed in the Old Indian (post-Ṛgvedic) case.<sup>30</sup> However, there is no detailed record of Ṛgvedic ritual; it can only be pieced together from stray references in the text.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Ṛgvedic myth and ritual fit each other well, especially if we add the enigmatic "dialogue hymns" that, on initial impression, do not seem to have any ritual significance; the ones of interest here include such hymns as those of Indra/Varuṇa, Vṛṣākapi/Indraṇī, Agastya/Lopamudrā, Indra/Apālā, and the Ṛbhus.<sup>32</sup> As a rule, the dialogue hymns have not been studied together, as a group, and are not regarded as part of a single framework (that of New Year rituals) because, unlike Japanese myths, the Ṛgvedic ones are not narrated in proper sequence. Instead, the RV poets characteristically *merely refer* to commonly known mythemes and myths. There was no need for them to tell them as something *new*, nor did their listeners expect them to tell the human and divine audience well-known 'facts'. This obviously leaves many gaps in our understanding, which has been pieced together over the past 200 years from references in the text itself, with some help from the later, ritual-bound Brāhmaṇa texts. Initially, I will therefore rely on the well-ordered story-line of the Kojiki, and compare the Ṛgvedic materials as they happen to agree with this scheme. Further, quite similarly to the Vedic case, Japanese ritual is available, apart from brief quotes and allusions in the old myths, in some detail only several centuries after the Kiki (Engishiki, Norito hymns).<sup>33</sup> Indian ritual tradition (Śrautasūtras, Brāhmaṇas), however, is extremely rich. I will therefore follow the order of Indian ritual and will compare it with the Japanese materials; for the most pertinent points, see the following tables.

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<sup>30</sup> Jamison and Witzel 1992/2003. Note the connection of the Soma ritual with Soma myths and New Year rituals in the RV (Kuiper 1983).

<sup>31</sup> See Proferes 1999.

<sup>32</sup> On this topic see Witzel 1997, with a detailed discussion of the oldest preserved speech contests in the Ṛgveda Khilas and the Saramā myth.

<sup>33</sup> See the translation of the Norito by Philippi 1959, of the Engishiki by Bock 1970, and also some of the *Kagura uta* by Rotermund 1988.



§ 1.3. The cave of the Sun

	Indian myth	Indian ritual	Japanese myth	Japanese ritual	Other traditions
T E X T S	<i>Rgveda</i> & <i>Yajurveda Saṃhitās,</i> <i>Brahmanas</i>	<i>Gavām Ayana &amp; Mahāvratā rituals in Yajurveda &amp; in Śrautasūtras</i>	<i>Kojiki 1.--,</i> <i>Nihon Shoki (Nihongi);</i> & <i>Norito, Engishiki</i>	Daijōsai, Chinkonsai, Tamashi-shizume rituals in Kiki, Norito, Engishiki; Taikanshi	Indo-Iranian, Indo-European, Eurasian, Amerindian Myths
A	<b>MYTH: Pre-Vala episodes</b>	(Cf. some ritual items, see C 1sqg)	<b>MYTH: Pre-Iwato episodes</b>	(Cf. some ritual items)	
1	Father Heaven's (Dyaus) /Prajāpati's incest with his daughter Uṣas: as deer (Orion) pursuing her; (cf. Aśvin twins assault their sister Uṣas); cf. Vṛṣākapi, monkey comrade of Indra, approaches Indrāṇī in Indra's absence	Magadha man approaches local prostitute	Susa.no Wo (SnW.) goes to Heaven to take leave of Amaterasu (A.)  (SnW. was substituted for Moon, Tsukuyomi, K.1.11)	Amaterasu and her 'grandchild,' the new emperor, meet during the night of his installation, Taikanshiki (C 1sqg)	Cf. Greece: Persephone abducted by Hades; Lithuania: Dawn is abducted; Kekchi: daughter of 'king' attacked by him through volcanic fire; Hunter/deer = sun
2	<b>Indrāṇī is frightened</b>		<b>A. is frightened</b>		
3	<b>Dialogue of Vṛṣākapi and Indrāṇī</b>	'dialogue' of Magadha man ~ prostitute	<b>SnW. assures peaceful intentions</b>		
4	Uṣas/Suryā to be married to Soma (moon, 10.85); cf. Indra to be married to Apālā (with sun spot aspect, 8.91); Indrāṇī proposes sex to Indra (not to Vṛṣākapi, 10.86)	Magadha man and prostitute have intercourse on edge of offering ground	<b>A. proposes oath and generation of children</b>	Cf. Mikannagi and Sarume women during installation ritual	<b>Kekchi: Weaver girl (moon) meets Hunter (sun)</b> (cf. Hunter & Weavergirl in China)
5	<b>Vows, in marriage hymn (10.85)</b>	Cf. exchange between Magadha man/Veda student ~ prostitute	<b>They swear oaths</b>		
6	<b>Apālā chews Soma plant for Indra, at river side (8.91)</b>	Soma pressing	<b>A. chews sword of SnW. on side of heavenly river</b>	<b>New sake prepared; communion meal of emperor and A. at installation ritual</b>	
7	<b>Indra drinks Soma (food/sex, 8.91)</b>		<b>SnW. chews Magatama of A. on other side of heavenly river; they spit out; (food/sex/ / birth)</b>	<b>Cf. two installation huts divided by fence, used for imperial and A.'s meals</b>	
8	<b>Indrāṇī wins speech Contest</b>		<b>A. wins speech contest; Children divided between them</b>		

9	<p><b>Vṛṣākapi's misdeeds (10.86);</b> cf . Indra's misdeeds (<i>kilbiṣāni</i>);  <b>V. is rude to Indrāṇi;</b></p> <p><b>V.dirties Indrāṇi's 'dear [wood] works'</b></p> <p>(Cf. Aśvin smash Uṣas' chariot)</p>	<p>Verbal contest of: Vṛṣāka(pāyī) and Indra/Indrāṇi: rude sexual verbal abuse; <i>ditto</i>, of Brahmācārin &amp; prostitute</p> <p>Pratiprasthātr priest puts up various ornaments</p>	<p><b>SnW. claims victory, is rude;</b></p> <p><b>- he breaks down walls of rice fields;</b></p> <p><b>- lets loose colts, they lie down in fields;</b></p> <p><b>- strews feces in hall of first fruits in A.'s New (first fruits) Palace</b></p>	<p>Cf. two installation huts separated by fence, but with gate between them: new Taikanshiki 'palace'</p>	
10	<p><b>Indra astonished about Indrāṇi's anger towards Vṛṣākapi; Indra excuses misdeeds of his friend</b></p>		<p><b>A. excuses SnW.'s behavior</b></p>		

### § 1.3. 1. Hiding in the cave

Both myths and the related rituals shed considerable light on each other, a first indication that they go back to a common source. The *female* sun hides or is shut up in a cave,<sup>34</sup> either in her aspect of female dawn (Uṣas) in India or in her dominant female aspect in Japan (Amaterasu). The core of the Vala/Iwato myth begins with the retreat (Thompson 1932-6: A734) of both Amaterasu and of Uṣas into a rock cave, situated at or in the Heavenly River (Ama.no [yasu] kawa, Sarasvatī/Rasā), or sometimes situated on an island inside the river. Darkness descends and signals the time frame of the ritual: the Mahāvratā day is placed at the "night of the year", the winter solstice day.<sup>35</sup>

The reason for hiding in the Iwato cave is clearly stated in Japanese myth (A 12). Amaterasu has been annoyed, sexually offended, and wounded, perhaps even mortally, by the actions of her rash brother Susa.no Wo. In Vedic myth, however, the reason is *not directly* stated. We have to search among the 1028 hymns of the RV for myths or motifs not expressively mentioned in connection with the Vala myth, such as among the representations of the Sun deity. Indeed, Dawn (Uṣas) flees as she has been insulted and variously assaulted (A 1), just like Amaterasu:<sup>36</sup> her brothers, the twin sons of Heaven (Aśvin), who normally are her friends, attack her (RV 4.52.2; 5.75.5; 1.116.17); even her own father, Heaven (Dyaus), pursues her in form of a male gazelle and attacks her sexually so that she flees (apparently, into the Vala cave).<sup>37</sup>

The best summary of this tale is found, perhaps, in the hymn RV 10.61 (A 1). Interestingly, Uṣas' flight is referred to as one to a southern location (*dakṣiṇā*, vs. 8), where

<sup>34</sup> More on the female aspect of the sun, below §2.4.

<sup>35</sup> However, this is inserted as part of the Soma ritual that takes place in daytime, as indeed most parts of Vedic Indian rituals do.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the RV Uṣas hymns 4. 51-2 ; 7.75-81; 1.113; 1.123-124; cf.10.88, 8.58; for exposing her breasts, RV 1.123.10-11, 124.4, 124.7.

<sup>37</sup> One can and must also involve other myths, especially the Vṛṣākapi/Indrāṇī hymn, RV 10.86, see below.

indeed Orion, in India visualized as a gazelle<sup>38</sup>, is visible in the eastern sky (moving southwards) in the evening twilight of winter solstice. The poet describes the assault graphically (RV 10.61.7sq; words not found in the text have been added in parentheses).<sup>39</sup> "When the father jumped on his daughter, he poured out, having sex, (his) seed on the earth. Like a bull in a fight he (Father Heaven) spewed out foam; at the same time (he) 'went back and forth', with little thinking. She ran to the southern locations like a banished one."

While the Indian Uṣas is pursued by her brothers (and her father), the Japanese Susa.no Wo ascends to Amaterasu's heaven and actually concludes an agreement with her to produce children together (A 1). Strikingly different from the explicit Vedic descriptions, however, this is not presented in direct sexual terms. Separated by the great river of heaven, the Milky Way, the two chew on (A 6-7), and spit out, Susa.no Wo's sword and Amaterasu's *magatama* beads<sup>40</sup>, both objects with an inherent symbolism. In myth, the sword<sup>41</sup> often stands in for the penis, the *maga-tama* beads for the spirit or soul (*tama*). Amaterasu breaks Susa.no Wo's sword into three pieces, rinses the pieces in the heavenly well, *Ame.no Mana-wi*, jingles the pieces, chews them,<sup>42</sup> spits them out with a spray, turning them into female children. Susa.no Wo, on the other hand, chews Amaterasu's *magatama* ornaments, thus inherently her 'spirit', and likewise produces male children. Among them is Ame.no Oshi-ho-mimi, the ancestor of the first emperor Jimmu.<sup>43</sup> Amaterasu then claims the male children as her own.<sup>44</sup>

Freud would have enjoyed several aspects of this myth: the breaking of Susa.no Wo's sword by his sister, and vice versa, his chewing Amaterasu's 'spirit,' the avoidance of incest, the substitute birth from the mouth by both, not just the male deity.<sup>45</sup> Food and eating are frequent images for sex,<sup>46</sup> and giving birth from the mouth, by spitting or vomiting, is not an uncommon topic either. Usually, however, it is male deities who proceed in this way as they cannot bear children themselves.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Forssman 1968.

<sup>39</sup> For the incest motif, cf. RV 1.71.5,8; AB 3.33; MS 4: 35.11; ŚB 1.7.4.1; PB 8.2.10; JB 3.261-2: §207, cf. Caland 1931 : 166.

<sup>40</sup> The *magatama* are comma-formed pieces of jewelry often made of green jade. They have been said to represent the moon, but certainly go back to the claws of bears that are prominently found in prehistoric Japan; Amaterasu has a necklace of such beads of green jade. The second part of the designation, *tama* has the double meaning of 'jewel' and 'soul', (*maga* means 'bent' but also 'misfortune'); therefore chewing her beads also is incorporating her soul. See Rotermond 1988: 208, n.18.

<sup>41</sup> This sword is different from the famous *Kusanagi* sword that Susa.no Wo found hidden in the tail of the Izumo dragon, *Yamata.no Orochi* (K. 1.19). About this sword, see now Roy A. Miller in ZDMG 1995; note also the motif of killing a three-headed monster and using a sword for the division of the (illicit) conjugal bed in the fairy tale *The Two Brothers* of the Brothers Grimm.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the treatment of other ornaments of the Sun deity, e.g. in Amaterasu's heavenly abode, and Indrāṇī's *taṣṭa* ornaments, below §1.4 (A 9). In South Asia at least, objects, notably food, get 'soiled' when touched by someone's saliva. One can only eat together, or accept food, from socially higher persons or if one is related by kinship.

<sup>43</sup> On the divine ancestry of the imperial lineage, see Ueno 1985, Yamaguchi 1989; Takezawa 1992, Mizubayashi 2001.

<sup>44</sup> For an interpretation of the exchange, see Philippi 1968: 77-78. He thinks the male children originally were those of Susa.no Wo.

<sup>45</sup> Which could be expected as Amaterasu has many male traits. Cf. Sūryā/Indrāṇī's fighting qualities (in MS 2.2.5: 19.6 *senā vai Indrāṇī*), see Geldner 1951: 275, n.10b, ad RV 10.86; cf. below n.91, 184.

<sup>46</sup> For example: RV 10.85.34 where the marriage dress is *na attave* 'not to be eaten'.

<sup>47</sup> Found, e.g., in ancient Egypt with the spitting out and vomiting by the primordial Khepri ("the becoming one"): "Numerous are those who became, who came out of my mouth, before heaven existed, nor earth came into

However, the important point in Japanese myth is that the two siblings do not enter into direct sexual contact. Obviously it was not judged appropriate in the circles of 7th century imperial Yamato mythologists. In the Izumo myths, inserted as Kojiki 1.19-30, this was not an obstacle. Susa.no Wo's son Oho-Kuni-Nushi marries his half-sister Suseri-Hime, and "younger sister" is still commonly used for 'wife' in the in the Manyōshū, during the 8th century Nara period. While part of this may be due to an older designation for family members based on age, there are indications of the high status of brother-sister marriage in a wide swath, between Egypt, Iran<sup>48</sup> and Polynesia where it occurred as late as the early 1800's. King Kamehameha who unified the Hawaiian islands was born of one such carefully planned union, which made him magically strong.<sup>49</sup>

Apparently even primordial incest between siblings was not tolerated both in Yamato and in Vedic myth. Instead, the union of Susa.no Wo and Amaterasu is carefully obscured, and this is matched in the Veda where incest<sup>50</sup> between brother and sister was likewise forbidden even for the first mortals (Yama and Yamī, RV 10.14), while it was allowed in Iran. The intriguing Apālā hymn (RV 8.91, Schmidt 1987) tells, again in a rather veiled fashion, of a marriage proposal made by the young Apālā to the great demiurge god Indra. In this hymn<sup>51</sup> a young woman, Apālā, is looking for a husband. She goes down to a river, finds and chews some Soma stalks (A 6). The clanking of her teeth is enough to attract Indra, who yearns for his favorite Soma drink. The similarity with Amaterasu is clear: both women, standing at the river (of heaven) invite their partner to produce children or to marry, both chew some objects and exchange the results. Such food exchange is typical for many marriage ceremonies. Apālā is to be regarded as Indra's wife.<sup>52</sup> Usually a wife does not carry a name of her own but is called, like most other Vedic goddesses, after the husband: she is Indraṇī, 'the one belonging to Indra.'

The Apālā hymn and the Kojiki tale underline the independent actions undertaken by women; the Vṛṣākapi hymn (RV 10.86), however, reveals some the type of offense suffered by

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being... before I ejected Shu (air), before I spat out Tefnut (moisture)." (Heliopolis mythology). It is also said of Śiva in medieval Kashmir; other non-sexual methods are giving birth from the head (Athene), thigh (Indra's son Kutsa), etc. In Greece, clearly influenced by the Near Eastern myth, Kronos, the son of the primordial parents Ouranos and Gaia, cuts off the testicles of his father, while in the closely related Near Eastern versions (Hittites, Hurrites, Mesopotamians), the son (Kumarbi, Marduk) bites off and swallows the testicles of his father and thus becomes pregnant. In India, there is a hint of Indra's killing his father as well. -- Note that Amaterasu has many male features (as warrior, etc.) and therefore it is important to investigate her emergence in early Japan, see below n. 91, 184 (Matsumura 2003).

<sup>48</sup> In India, the Buddhist version of the Rāmāyaṇa, too, has the conjugal pair Rāma and Sītā as *siblings*, which fits the Iranian-like concepts of some dynasties of eastern North India (Buddha legend, see Witzel, forthc. §2, with n. 101 sqq). Note that the marriage between Adam and Eve fits the Iranian version closely: though the 'birth of Eve' from Adam's rib is an isolated feature, both are 'siblings' like Yima/\*Yamī, the later Jam/Jai in Iran; the motif is not found in the RV, though *Parśu* ('the rib/sow') is said to have had of 20 children (10.86.23 *parśur ha nāma mānavī sākam sasūva viṃśatim*).

<sup>49</sup> I will return to this topic in a future paper on Laurasian myth.

<sup>50</sup> Also, that between father and daughter, though Indo-European and Vedic myths have many examples: the Vedic 'Father Heaven' (Dyaus Pitā, = Zeus patēr, Iuppiter) pursued his daughter Dawn (Uṣas) in form of a gazelle (Orion), whereupon the gods convened, poured their terrible forms into the god Rudra (= Sirius, see Forssman 1968), who shot at Dyaus (Orion). Cf. the Indian materials in Parpola 2002: 367 with the author's customary, wide ranging free associations and speculations across time and space.

<sup>51</sup> Discussed at length by H.-P. Schmidt 1987.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Geldner 1951 on this hymn, and the story of *akūpara* PB 9.2.14, Schmidt 1987, Jamison 1991.

a female deity (A 9). Without doubt, it is the most obscene hymn in the text;<sup>53</sup> it also includes many enigmas and some tentative indications of a deeper link with the New Year festival that is to be celebrated in ritual as the yearly re-opening of the Vala cave.

It begins with the statement that at year's end, people have stopped worshipping Indra, who disappears and is (re)born suddenly. The hymns in RV (book 4.42, 4.41) dealing with Indra and Varuṇa are typical for the onset of the New Year, which signals a break down of the old order, a state of flux and the beginning of a new era. In many cultures we find year end contests, such as races and contests between various sections of the people, frequently also a carnival with sexual permissiveness. This setting may provide the clue for the difficult dialogue hymn RV 4.18 which deals with Indra's sudden birth (from a miscarried egg<sup>54</sup>) at the beginning of time, when he helped to create the present world. He is reborn at year's end, during the period of uncertainty<sup>55</sup> when the Asura, led by Varuṇa, are on the rise, and when the sun has to be released again from its underground cave, just as in the beginning of times. In 'astronomical' terms, this is the moment when it has to make it around the 'difficult turning point' of solstice.<sup>56</sup> Indra, instantly strong at birth (RV 4.18), challenges Varuṇa (4.42), the threatening lord (*rājan*) of the older generation of gods.<sup>57</sup> He finally overcomes Varuṇa and makes him join the side of (the present generation of) the gods (Kuiper 1979), whose king now is Indra. The release of the Vala cows, the dawn of New Year, follows immediately.

At this time of the breakdown of time and society at year's end, Indra's friend Vṛṣākapi, the 'bull-monkey', takes over (A 9, C 2). He molests Indra's wife, Indrāṇī, just as Susa.no Wo molests Amaterasu's companions and dirties her possessions. Vṛṣākapi, too, dirties Indrāṇī's 'dear' things.<sup>58</sup> Both women at first excuse the behavior of the miscreant. Only when both Vṛṣākapi and Susa.no Wo attack the goddess sexually, countermeasures are taken. The actual attack is not clearly stated (A 9). According to the Kojiki, Susa.no Wo throws the skin of Amaterasu's piebald horse, flayed against the grain, into the divine weaver girl's hall (A 11) and she (or Amaterasu herself), in utter surprise, wounds her vulva with the weaver's shuttle, a veiled way of speaking of intercourse. Indrāṇī, too, is frightened by Vṛṣākapi, who threatens to attack her sexually (A 9). She complains to Indra, but then takes action herself, and beats him up. In the Veda, this is the only punishment of the offender, and after this carnival-like interlude, he merely goes away into the distance ("home"<sup>59</sup>). Susa.no Wo, on the other hand, is severely punished after the Iwato episode: he is exorcised, his beard as well as his finger and toe nails are cut off, and he is thrown out of Heaven.<sup>60</sup> He goes off into the distance, to the

<sup>53</sup> For the text and context, see Witzel 1997, 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Mārtāṇḍa myth, see Hoffmann 1975-6: 422-438.

<sup>55</sup> Just as at creation time, when even Indra's very existence is occasionally doubted (RV 8.100.3), see Ruben 1961, Witzel 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Called *paritakmyā* in the Saramā hymn (10.108, cf. 5.31.11, 1.31.6, 116.15, etc.); cf. also the Ṛbhu who have slept for a year or 12 days (at year's end; RV 4.33.7, 4.33 sqq. 1.110-111; 1.161.11-13 etc.), see now Brereton, Ṛbhus, forthc.

<sup>57</sup> Note Kuiper's theory (1979, 1983) of a yearly reversal of roles at the Vedic New Year, its continuation in the medieval concept of the overlordship of Varuṇa during the rainy season (with the New Year in autumn, usually in Oct., as is still celebrated in Nepal and certain areas in India); this replaced the old New Year after winter solstice.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. above n. 40 on *magatama*, etc.

<sup>59</sup> If he is to be identified with Varuṇa (below, with n. 100sqq), this would be the ocean, which is also the home of Susa.no Wo.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. the situation of the biblical Adam after his 'incest' with Eve: like Susa.no Wo, they are thrown out of heaven, or in Adam's case, from the garden of paradise (from Iranian *pari-daeza* 'walled enclosure') by the

"backside" of Japan, the northwestern land of Izumo, where he faces new adventures, such as a crucial dragon fight.<sup>61</sup>

	Indian myth	Indian ritual	Japanese myth	Japanese ritual	Other traditions
T E X T S	<i>Rgveda</i> & <i>Yajurveda Saṃhitas,</i> <i>Brahmanas</i>	<i>Gavām Ayana &amp; Mahāvratā rituals in Yajurveda &amp; in Śrautasūtras</i>	<i>Kojiki 1.--,</i> <i>Nihon Shoki (Nihongi);</i> & <i>Norito, Engishiki</i>	<i>Daijōsai, Chinkonsai,</i> <i>Tamashi-shizume</i> <i>rituals in Kiki,</i> <i>Norito, Engishiki;</i> <i>Taikanshi</i>	Indo-Iranian, Indo-European, Eurasian, Amerindian Myths
<b>B</b>	<b>VALA episode</b>		<b>IWATO episode</b>		
1	<b>Dawn (Uṣas) is penned in a cave</b>	Gavām Ayana ritual & second (midday) Soma pressing	<b>Amaterasu conceals herself in Iwato cave</b>	Main ritual performed at night	Laurasia: Sun shut up in house/basket/ below earth
2	<b>Darkness descends, (solstice arrives)</b>	G.A. progresses towards solstice/ Mahāvratā day	<b>darkness descends; no day, no night</b>	From 10 p.m. to 4 a.m.	Laur.: Darkness reigns; Ainu: gods & humans die of excessive sleep Miao: Sun concealed for two years; Cherokee: Sun conceals herself upon death of daughter; Kekchi: Weaver girl makes love in her shut room with revived Hunter; they leave through keyhole; Xingu: Darkness, sun is with vultures & birds;
3	<b>Indra and Aṅgiras assemble &amp; deliberate</b>	Priests assemble for Mahāvratā ritual	<b>gods assemble in Milky Way (Ama.no Yasugawa) river bed &amp; deliberate</b>	Outside the main hall, Sukidō/Yukidō: assembly of priests, Mikannagi & Sarume women, and others (officials & soldiers and Kampaku)	Nur.: Gods assemble and deliberate; Greece: Zeus deliberates to send back Persephone; Cherokee: Wise men tell of solution; Aztec: gods assemble at Teotihuacán; Xingu: 2 brothers deliberate about darkness
4	Cf. name of Varuṇa: 'the Wise Lord'		<b>Omohi-kane ponders the problem</b>		

archangel Michael. Compare also the role of the biblical snake as the one who tempts Eve, with that of Vṛṣakapi tempting Indrāṇī; or cf. the role of a reptilian creature at the time of the "mistake" of the Hawai'ian 'Adam' (*Kumu-honua*, cf. Maori *Tuputupe-whenua*) He is also called "the fallen chief" or "mourner, repenter, tree-eater," who was exiled because of eating from the apple tree (*Ohia-elemele*), a misdeed that took place in mythical Sawaiki (*Hawai'i*) at the (world) tree ("the tree of life, firm rooted in heaven above, the tree producing in all the heavens the bright and sprightly sons"), that is, the tabooed breadfruit tree Ulu-kapu-a-Kane (Maori: *Uru tapu a Tane*; see Tregear 1891). The biblical motif has later been overlaid by the originally Iranian one of St. George killing the dragon, a close parallel of Indra slaying the dragon, and other widespread IE versions (see my forthcoming companion paper on this topic).

<sup>61</sup> Which confers fertility to the earth; the topic will be treated in a companion paper dealing with the Summer solstice. Note, again that the Biblical 'dragon' is slain by the archangel Michael, starting from the late book, *Revelation* (later, under further Iranian influence, by St. George).

## Vala and Iwato - The Myth of the Hidden Sun

	<b>Ritual is (mainly) performed by descendents of ancient Aṅgiras</b>	Ritual performed by descendents of the Aṅgiras and other early clans	<b>Gods decide on a great Ritual</b>	All priests descended from the gods and their 'priestly' helpers	Aztec: gods select young Nanahuatl, jumps into spirit oven, becomes sun; Maya: 2 boys enter oven, reborn after 5 days as sun and moon; Kekchi: Weaver girl killed by volcano fire, revived after 2 weeks as dwarf, then grown wife of Hunter: sun and moon
5	-  Recitations and bellowing by Aṅgiras outside the Vala cave	-  Recitation of sacred <i>Mantra</i> formulas by priests	Ama-tsu-mara is the smith; Ishi-kori-dome makes mirror; Tama.no Ya makes the <i>magatama</i> strings; Ame.no Ko-Yane Futotama as divination priests; prepare <i>Masakaki</i> tree with <i>magatama</i> strings, mirror, white/blue <i>nikite</i> cloth; Futo-tama acts in ritual; Ame.no Ko-yane recites ( <i>futo-norito goto</i> )	= later kagami-tsukuri, tama.no muraji; Imube and Nakatomi priests (see n. 88 )	Greece: Herakles hears bellowing, finds cows
6	Dogs wake up at year's end (1.161.13) (but birds in Avesta) Indra & gods send out spies (dog Saramā, bird) RV 10.108		'long singing birds' of Eternal Land cry  (Cf. crow as Jimmu's messenger)	Cf. : dogs' bark, imitated by courtiers	Nur.: messenger/spy sent out; Miao: various animals sent out; rooster cries, sun becomes curious Inuit: Raven flies south to find the sun; Maya: parrot greets sun; Xingu: flies as messengers
7	Saramā finds the cave with the cows = dawns, in the Milky Way or beyond	Sun = fire in Vedic ritual (and myth); fire is rekindled each morning 'in front' = east (Agnihotra)	<b>Rock &amp; iron for mirror casting are brought: fire used in divine ritual in front of Iwato cave</b>	Fire in front of ritual enclosure	Nur.: hero finds the house by track of light; Greece: Herakles sails to 'Redland' Inuit: Raven finds fire/sun on hill in the South; Cherokee: 7 men travel to Darkening Land, bring back daughter of sun in basket; Aztec: falcon sent to inquire about sun's unsteady rise; Xingu: flies as messengers

8	<b>Aṅgiras hold offering session in front of Vala cave;</b>  <b>Aṅgiras recite, imitate lowing of cows</b>	(most priests = Aṅgiras' descendents)  ritual recitations music & general din	<b>Divination by deer bone; tree/yorishiro true Sasaki tree of 500 branches with yasoka jewels, mirror, blue &amp; white strings, Futo-dama holds yorishiro tree; Ame.no Kuyane recites</b>	Cf. <i>gagaku</i> music played during imperial installation	Aztec: blood offerings of gods / Aztec men for young sun; Maya: blood offerings with human sacrifice, dawning, sun rises, parrot cries
9	<b>Exchange of words between Saramā &amp; Paṇi; Saramā reports back</b>	Exchange of words between Veda student / Magadha man & prostitute	<b>Uzume's erotic dance in front of cave</b>	Cf. Sarume 'monkey woman' outside the Yukidō enclosure; cf. Uzume at heaven's rim (K. 1.38)	Nur.: Reporting back by Munjem Maya: Contest between two brothers/lords of nether-world; Cherokee: Discussion between 7 men and sun's daughter

### §1.3.2. Finding the cave of the sun

Afraid of the ever-lasting night after the concealment of Amaterasu, the gods assemble and discuss what action to take (B 3). This is described at great length in the Kiki; there even is a special god, Omohi-Kane whose very name indicates that he ponders and deliberates.<sup>62</sup> This deity may be compared to the companions of Indra, the Aṅgiras poets and their leader Bṛhaspati "the lord of (poetic) formulation" who likewise have to sit, ponder, and concentrate (*dhī*), before they compose their magically effective poems. They are the semi-divine ancestors of RV poets, but they are not gods themselves. The Indian assembly of the gods and poet-priests is not described at length in the oldest text, RV, but the livelier, younger version of the JB (2.440-2) presents several aspects of this.<sup>63</sup> The main figure is Indra, who sends out spies to find the location of the cave.

First, according to the JB version, he sends out a vulture (B 6) to look for the cows (dawns); he finds the cave, but is accosted by the owners of the cows, the Paṇi, who guard them in their cave. They try to bribe the vulture by feeding him milk products such as curds. On his return, Indra notices the betrayal, squeezes the vulture's long neck, and the curds emerge as proof. Birds are prominent in Indian myth and Japanese ritual, though, in another context: the Japanese gods make the "long-singing birds", the roosters, cry, -- obviously to wake up the Sun, as the roosters still do every day, and also in the Daijōsai ritual. In the archaic Indian myths of the RV, birds are usually not mentioned in this context);<sup>64</sup> instead, the RV has a dog bark at year end (RV 1.161.13, a feature also prominently found in the Daijōsai).

The dog also plays a major role in the ensuing Indian myth (JB 2.440-2; RV 10.108): Indra's bitch Saramā, "the jumper, " is sent out next to find the cave on her own (B 6). She

<sup>62</sup> He does so at various stages in the Kiki, and later on, whenever there was a difficult situation.

<sup>63</sup> Especially in the version that has Brahmins in front of the cave, JB 2.440-2.

<sup>64</sup> This is due to the comparatively late arrival of the domesticated chicken in the Indo-European area (attested by Socrates' time in Greece) and in Indo-European myth; this holds even for areas close to the homeland of the chicken, Eastern India/S.E. Asia: roosters are missing RV myth but the closely related Iranian text, Avesta, already has them as crying birds (arrived there by which route?).



runs to the end of the world, to the great River *Rasā*, "the liquid, juicy one", obviously the name for the Ocean surrounding the world and its heavenly counterpart.<sup>65</sup> *Rasā* is a synonym for the River of the Sky, the Milky Way.<sup>66</sup> The river and the bitch engage in a lively dialogue.<sup>67</sup> In the end, the river allows the bitch to jump over; she then continues her search, in the sky.<sup>68</sup> In the JB version, the cave is found on an island in the middle of the *Rasā*,<sup>69</sup> which can refer to one of the "islands" in the Milky Way, that is some areas which do not have a great density of stars but appear, to our eye, as islands in the Heavenly River. The place of jumping over is called "the place of return" (*paritakmyā*) which closely follows the Iranian usage (*urvaēsa*) for the sun's return at solstice time.

In Japan, the gods clearly assemble (B 3) on the rocks<sup>70</sup> of the heavenly river, Ama.no (Yasu-)Kawa and deliberate. The cave, Iwato (*iwa[ya]do*), must be close by. However, the episode of the bitch as scout and messenger is missing in Japan; we will, nevertheless discover it in another, more hidden form, in ritual. The gods proceed, on their own towards the cave.

After *Saramā* has found the way to the cave, she engages in a lively dialogue with the keepers of the cows/dawns, the *Paṇi*, who are cast by the early Vedic texts as quasi-demonic, but in reality were the true owners of the cows that Indra wants to take from them. This dialogue is full of hidden references and innuendos which, again, are in need of a special investigation (see Witzel 1997). The *Paṇis* try to bribe *Saramā*, too, and they also offer her to "become their sister", a wording that suggests a sexual relationship, if not family bonds.<sup>71</sup> Certain groups of semi-deities, just like the Gandharvas and Apsaras, do not know of strictly regulated, human-style marriage but engage in free sexual relationships. In fact, the dialogue, just like the one between *Saramā* and the River *Rasā*, contains many sexual terms and references. These findings are important as *Saramā*, jumping up to the front of the cave, seems to reflect the Japanese female deity *Uzume*. Both are cast in sexual terms: while *Saramā* clearly is a bitch, *Uzume* behaves like one, and is linked with monkeys who are sometimes interchangeable with dogs (see below<sup>72</sup>). The topic of sexually colored verbal exchanges is taken up again in ritual. In the Indian *Mahāvratā* ritual, there is a lively exchange of insults between the prostitute and the Veda student (C 4, later completed by the real thing, sexual intercourse between the prostitute and a foreigner from Magadha, C 5).

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<sup>65</sup> Witzel 1984.

<sup>66</sup> The Northern Iranians call their main river, the Volga, by this name (*\*Rahā*, Greek transcription *Rhā*); however, in the oldest Iranian text, the Avesta (*Vīdēvdād* 2), the country *Upa Aodaēšu Raṇhaiiā* "at the sources of the Raṇhā" (= *Rahā*, *Rasā*), is an area high up in the Hindukush/Pamir region, see Witzel 2000.

<sup>67</sup> See Witzel 1984, 1997.

<sup>68</sup> At the end of the world, heaven/sky and earth/ocean are separated only by a very thin border, as thin as the wing of an insect, see BĀU 3. Cf. now the shamanistic interpretation of RV 10.108 by Meising 1995.

<sup>69</sup> *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.440-2; note the Avest. *us.həndaūua* mountain 'emerging from the ocean' that also carries the world tree; for details see Witzel 1984.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. the Vedic island in the midst of the *Rasā* (JB 2.440-2).

<sup>71</sup> Note also the 8th c. Japanese usage of 'sister'~ 'wife', see Rotermond 1988.

<sup>72</sup> On her exchange with the deity *Saruta-Biko* 'monkey man' and the later continuation of *Sarume* dances in ritual as well as in popular amusement, throughout the middle ages and until today, see Ohnuki-Tierney 1987; for example, George Bush I was depicted as a red-faced Japanese rhesus monkey (*Macaca fuscata*), after his less than chivalrous exploits during his Japanese trip. Note Ježić' (2002) on the *Rāmāyaṇa* story (*Hanumant* ~ *Saramā*). The motif of *Hanumant* grabbing the sun may also be explained in this context: he is a later 'incarnation' of *Saramā* who finds the sun/cows. Incidentally the near-identity in sound of Ved. *Saramā* and Jpn. *Sarume* is deceiving. *Saramā* clearly belongs to the root *sar/sr* 'to jump' (Latin *salire*), while *Saru-me* is composed of the two words *saru* 'monkey' and *me* 'woman'. Only if the latter is due to a popular etymology could the two words be linked in prehistory (see below §2.7 for such a possibility in time and space).

The Paṇi certainly cannot be compared or identified with the sexually abstinent Veda students, but the Magadha man can. Magadhas have been habitual outsiders, on the rim of the Vedic world, since the early texts (Atharvaveda 5.22). The Paṇi, the cowherds of the previous generation of gods, likewise are "outsiders": they do not belong to the party of the insiders, the new generation of the gods, and they have all the features of the other outsiders, such as the Vrātya, Gandharva, Apsaras. However, there is a hidden tension in the dialogue between the prostitute and the Veda student as well: a student must be sexually abstinent during the half year period of study (in order to collect "heat", *tapas*) but during the other half of the year, students band together and roam the countryside as *vrātyas*, in a *Jungmännerbund*, and put pressure on established families to give them cows that they need as start capital when they will settle down eventually. During this part of the year, they behave exactly as the other outsiders: they live in a young men's group, with common women, and they search for cattle (Falk 1986). The Veda student thus is tempted by the prostitute (representing the common women of the Vrātyas) to lapse into that state -- all while standing on the rim of the offering ground: taking just one step outside the sacred space, he would turn into a *vrātya* again... Apart from the important role that verbal contests play in the old Indo-Iranian society, especially at New Year, this exchange also marks an important liminal point: the Veda student is on the verge of turning into an outsider, just as the sun is about to make its turn, and just as the cows (dawns) and Amaterasu are hesitating to get out of the cave. As will appear below, they all have to be *moved on*... In the Japanese version, it is not a human prostitute but another deity, Uzume,<sup>73</sup> who nevertheless prostitutes herself by dancing (B 9, C 5), more or less naked, in front of all the gods. This sexual spectacle makes the gods laugh,<sup>74</sup> and we can assume the same for the Vedic audience when they heard the exchanges between the student and the prostitute. In sum, Veda student : prostitute = gods : Uzume.

It should be noted that the Japanese imperial installation (Daijōsai/Taikanshiki), in which many features of the primordial Iwato myth are copied,<sup>75</sup> two women are stationed outside the ritual enclosure: the Sarume woman and a priestess, Mikannagi. As indicated above, the Sarume woman stands in for Uzume, and the Mikannagi must represent either the weaver girl of Amaterasu or even Amaterasu herself, as the two are once said to be identical in the Kiki.

In both mythologies, there is a combination, on the one hand, of the myths of the daily return of the sun in the east, of its annual "return," at its rising point in the southeast at winter solstice, from a dangerous course into the darkness of winter, and on the other hand, of the primordial release of the sun from a cave,<sup>76</sup> who is then set in motion by the gods in heaven, and again annually by humans on earth. Vedic India, with its stress on pastoralism and cattle subsistence, underlines the role of dawn(s) as cows, because 'cow' evokes many related

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<sup>73</sup> Uzume is represented not only as a sexually rather 'expressive' woman but also, in K. 1.38 as 'overpowering' in her talk with Saruta-Biko.

<sup>74</sup> Repeated by ritual laughter in the Japanese Daijōsai/imperial installation ritual.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Rotermund 1988.

<sup>76</sup> For the reason why the sun (cows) have been locked up, see §1.3. This reflects the primordial state (Kuiper 1983), when they are in the cave with their rightful owners, the Paṇis. In this earlier world, people are below the ground but apparently with sunlight (subterranean light in the Brother Grimm's realm of *Frau Holle* (= hell), the light seen in the well (Kojiki 2.53), etc. Note the role of the cave in Meso-American myths (§2.5), especially in Aztec and, further, in Afro-Australian mythology: from it emerge men, all goods, etc.; but, in Afro-Australian myth, the sun is never thought as being imprisoned/hidden there.

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images,<sup>77</sup> while in Japan's proto-historical rice agriculture bovines did not play that great a role.<sup>78</sup> The focus therefore is on the release from the Iwato cave of the Sun deity herself.

In sum, the two myths, so distant in time and location, closely resemble each other, which points, at minimum, to very early diffusion from an unknown location or to common origin. This question will be further pursued in the remaining sections of this part of the paper (§1.4-6) and brought to a solution at the end (§2.6.).

	Indian myth	Indian ritual	Japanese myth	Japanese ritual	Other traditions
T E X T S	<i>Rgveda</i> & <i>Yajurveda Samhitās,</i> <i>Brahmaṇas</i>	<i>Gavām Ayana &amp; Mahāvratā rituals in Yajurveda &amp; in Śrautasātras</i>	<i>Kojiki 1.--, Nihon Shoki (Nihongi); &amp; Norito, Engishiki</i>	<i>Daijōsai, Chinkonsai, Tamashi-shizume rituals in Kiki, Norito, Engishiki; Taikanshi</i>	Indo-Iranian, Indo-European, Eurasian, Amerindian Myths
C		RITUAL INTERLUDE: BEGIN OF MAHĀVRATA			Kal.: Caumos: Balumain/Indra as visitor god
1	Indra & Aṅgiras approach the cave	Priest & sponsor approach the ritual ground	Gods approach the cave	Priests & participants (Sarume/Mikannagi) assemble outside the ritual Yukidō/Sukidō halls; emperor arrives, enters hall	Aztec: gods and humans approach cave/ netherworld Kal.: Balumain approaches the village
2	“ornaments” of Indrāṇī dirtied, RV 10.86	Pratiprasthāṭṛ priest puts up various ornaments;  brings other implements; swing, throne; various musical instruments;  two wooden sound boards	Susa.no Wo dirties Amaterasuōs hall with feces;  divine priests bring mirror, <i>yorishiro</i> tree with cloth ornaments, etc.;  upturned bucket of Uzume	(various ornaments in front of the Yukidō/Sukidō halls)  mirror, tree are used; various musical instruments used;	

<sup>77</sup> Cows = dawn, real cows, riches, poetry, fee for poets, but also = givers of milk, and a major source of meat, etc. ; see Witzel 1991, cf. D. Srinivasan 1979, D. N. Jha 2002.

<sup>78</sup> Except, in the use of buffalos for ploughing; (there also is bull fighting).

3	<p>Aṅgiras poet-priests outside the cave; make a lot of noise &amp; imitate lowing of cows</p> <hr/> <p>(cf. Uṣas, girl friend of poets, exposes her breasts)</p> <p>(cf. donkey sacrificed, Vṛṣākapi episode)</p>	<p><b>Priests recite various texts; 'all voices sound': recitation and Sāman melodies sung by priests; offerers raise a loud shouting din; wives sing Sāman &amp; and make music; others play lutes, conches; bamboo flutes, drum behind the Āgnīdhra hut, half in/outside the Vedi: skin &amp; tail used for drumming; drums in four directions</b></p>	<p>Ame.no ko-yane recites ritual texts; gods make merry outside the cave;</p> <hr/> <p>Uzume stamps on upturned bucket; Exposes her genitals; Gods laugh all together at Uzume's antics</p> <p>(cf. horse skin, skinned backwards by SnW.)</p>	<p><b>Ritual recitations of Norito, with inserted myths</b></p> <p>Cf. <i>gagaku</i> music played during Installation</p> <p>ritual laughing</p>	<p>Kal.: sexual allusions in songs at solstice</p> <p>Greece: Baubo, servant of Persophone, exposes herself; P. laughs, begins to eat again</p>
4	<p>Cf. Vṛṣākapi &amp; Indrāṇī argue, with mutual sexual abuse (10.86)</p>	<p><b>Veda student &amp; prostitute argue, at doorpost of Sadas hut</b></p>	<p>(cf. Uzume arguing with Saruta-Biko, K. 1.38)</p>		
5	<p>Vṛṣākapi approaches Indrāṇī (cf. exposure of breasts of Uṣas)</p> <p>(cf. incest of Uṣas with brothers, her Father, Heaven; also proposed incest of Yama/Yamī, 10.10)</p>	<p><b>Magadha man &amp; prostitute copulate in room at northern corner of Mahavedi offering ground</b></p>	<p>Uzume's erotic dance, exposing her genitals; (cf. exchanges of Uzume and Saruta-biko at the edge of heaven, K. 1. 38)</p> <p>(cf. S.n.Wo and Amaterasu chewing on sword/ <i>magatama</i> , on both sides of Milky Way, thus producing children)</p>	<p><b>role of Sarume woman/Mikannagi during nightly meals, in secluded halls, 10 pm-2 a.m.?</b></p> <p><b>Communal meal of A. and emperor</b> (substituting for sex)</p>	<p>Cf. Greece: Baubo, servant of Persophone, exposes herself; P. laughs, begins to eat again</p>
6		<p><b>Beating of large drums and earth drum;</b></p>		<p><b>Various music (<i>gagaku</i>)</b></p>	
7	<p>(chariot race: frequent in images, in RV)</p>	<p><b>Chariot race</b></p>		<p><b>cf. New Year/Spring <i>Yabusame</i> horse races with bow shooting at three fixed targets)</b></p>	
8		<p><b>Ārya (Brahmin) and Śudra pull at a round, wet, white piece of leather, standing inside and outside the Vedi, in front of Āgnīdhra hut:</b></p>		<p>Cf. Sun (and Moon) images outside the Sukidō/Yukidō halls</p>	<p><b>Maya: cf. competition in netherworld of 2 brothers (and their death, rebirth)</b></p>
9	<p>cf. Vṛṣākapi / Indrāṇī dialogue; also that of Paṇi &amp; Saramā; Indrāṇī wins</p>	<p><b>Śudra denigrates, Brahmin praises and wins the exchange;</b></p>	<p>Verbal exchange of Amaterasu / Susa.no Wo; A. wins exchange</p>	<p><b>cf. sun image carried &amp; destroyed in rural festival</b></p>	

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10	(cf. Indra throws horse head at backside of Kurukṣetra)  (cf. shutting up of Uṣas in cave)	<b>he <u>throws leather piece</u> into <u>Ā. hut</u> at Northern end of Vedic offering ground</b>	<b>S.n.Wo <u>throws horse skin</u> into A.'s <u>weavers'</u> <u>hall</u></b>  (Sun wounds herself and retreats )		Cf. sun hurt in various ways (Veda: Svarbhānu; Cherokee, Kekchi, Maya)  (cf. Nur. & Kal.: Sun shut up in house)
11		<b>Wet skin, hung north of Ā. hut; armored warriors drive horse chariots around it</b>  <b>and shoot at it: arrows must stick;</b>  <b>drive northwards a distance, then unharness the horses</b>		<b>no actual horse race, but presence of Kampaku &amp; soldiers, sacred weapons south of Yukido / Sukido halls;</b>  (cf. <i>Yabusame</i> bow shooting from horseback)	Cf. Iran: shooting from Airiio.xšuða 'Aryan origin' mtn. to Xvanuuant 'sunshine' mountain;  Cf. Veda: glowing Parvargya vessel as Rudra's head = sun; Shooting at (ten) Suns (Chinese, Miao, Maya etc.)  <i>Roman etc.: Circus races</i>
12	Sound 'mirror image' of Uṣas created by imitation of cows' lowing	<b>Sun '<u>mirrored</u>' by white skin on scaffold</b>	Uzume, showing mirror image to A.	<b>Actual mirror (as used in all Shinto shrines) represents Amaterasu</b>	Cf. Miao/SE Asian versions: Sun incited /curious to look outside, taken out; Cherokee: Redbird flies out of box; night descends Maya: sun rises, parrot cries out first; Yabarana: sun escapes from basket as sun bird: night descends
13	Sun is shot at	<b>white leather skin shot at</b>		<b>Medieval <i>yabusame</i> bow shooting contests, from racing horses, at 3 fixed targets, in Spring at Kamakura, etc.</b>	Sun is shot at (China, Miao, Maya)

14	Indra's /Uṣas' dance, RV 1.92.4, 1.130.7, 6.29.3, 5.33.6, etc.	<b>Servant women, with water vessels on their heads, circumambulate the <i>mārjalya</i> hut (southern = right part of Vedi) thrice, turning their right side towards it, stamping right feet, slapping thighs, shouting : <i>madhu</i> "the sweet (thing)!" They sing four songs : Hillukā, Himbini, Hastāvārā, Year song (mentioning cows, Soma, water); pour out the water and go away</b>	Uzume's dance and upturned water bucket	<b>Various dances</b>	Kal.: Yearly change of music from sacred to mundane/ vulgar: yearly <i>han sarias</i> song ('flow together')  Cf. creation myth in Indian theater
15	Recitation and imitation of cows stop as soon as	<b>Musical <i>din</i> stops</b>	'festival' and merrymaking of the gods stop		Nur.: special songs cease: return to normal music
16	Indra smashes the gate of the Vala cave	<b>Adhvaryu sits on two sound boards</b>	Uzume's upturned bucket		

#### § 1.4. The ritual and festival in front of the Sun's cave

The hiding and release of the Sun deity marks the point in time when the Indian winter solstice ritual, the Mahāvratā, and the Japanese Chinkonsai/Tama-shizume ritual take place.<sup>79</sup> By a comparison of the Japanese and Old Indian forms of rituals a result can be reached quite similar to that of a comparison of both mythologies. We therefore leave aside the mythical accounts, for the moment, and concentrate on the rituals closely connected with them.

In India, the myth of the hidden sun appears (a) in many aspects of the Soma ritual that is supposed by some to have been the typical New Year ritual,<sup>80</sup> (b) in the 12 day or year-long Sattrā rituals,<sup>81</sup> many aspects of which have been incorporated into "classical Vedic ritual" such as the Soma ritual, etc.; the most typical Sattrā in this context is the Gavām Ayana "the march of the cows."

Its description, below, follows the Āpastamba Śrautasūtra, a Late Vedic ritual handbook that is most "catholic" in its approach and mentions many other, sometimes lost sources.<sup>82</sup> The (pseudo-)mythological background for the ritual, however, is supplied by a schematic, ritual-

<sup>79</sup> The very name *mahāvratā* 'great observance' indicates its importance. The question remains: whose observance? The sun's? As to undertake a two-three day ritual observance, and then to be 'reborn' from her obscurity/cave, after that liminal period, like the participants in ancient Indian rituals?

<sup>80</sup> The RV is regarded by some as a sort of text "handbook" for the New Year Soma ritual, see F. B.J. Kuiper 1983.

<sup>81</sup> For the characterization of Sattras, see Falk 1985.

<sup>82</sup> ĀpŚS 21.7 (cf. ĀŚS 17.18) and PB 4.1 sqq. (cf. JB 2.372-442).

minded myth told in the Middle Vedic Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa (PB 4 sqq.),<sup>83</sup> where the year long Gavām Ayana is discussed. This is a Soma ritual in the form of a 360 day 'sitting' (*Sattra*, i.e. 365 1/4 days, minus the actual solstice days.) The 'march of the cows' is that of the 360 dawns along the eastern horizon, where they appear each day at a different location, as the sun rises somewhat more to the north (in spring) or south (in autumn) than on each of the previous days.<sup>84</sup> This movement is symbolized by the Gavām Ayana *Sattra* ritual, with the two solstices as the focal points: the *viṣūvat* at summer solstice and the *mahāvratā*, held during the 'Twelve nights' or the 'thirteenth month' of the winter solstice and New Year period. About this, PB 25.1.1 says: "As for the Udbhid ["splitting up/open"] and Valabhid ["splitting the Vala" days of the ritual], by means of these [God] Bṛhaspati let loose the cattle for the gods," a clear reference to the Vala myth: Indra opens the cows' cave with his "thunderbolt" (*vajra*), accompanied by the Aṅgiras poets/priests, led by Bṛhaspati.<sup>85</sup> Even more important is the Mahāvratā day, about which PB 4.10.3 says, after some discussion: "At the end of the year even it is to be undertaken." The splitting of the Vala cave is thus clearly linked, even in Middle Vedic times, with year's end.<sup>86</sup>

The Mahāvratā day represents, in the form of ritual, a rather limited episode of the Vala myth, in which the gods assemble in front of the cave and perform rituals and magic (C 1, B 3). It is one of the few instances where the authors of the rather artificial and hieratic Indian ritual (Witzel 1997) felt it necessary to incorporate popular customs and festivals, some of which can be observed and recovered even today.<sup>87</sup>

However, in the Japanese Daijōsai ritual, the Iwato myth is represented with many more layers (B 3 sqq). This and related rituals take place at the end of the year (C 1 sqq) and involve both thanksgiving for the recent harvest as well as a meal for the deities, which is prominently incorporated into the ritual of installation of a new emperor (Daijōsai ritual). At year's end, the Chinkonsai (or Tama-shizume, Tama-furi) ritual deals with the 'pacification' of the soul (of deities, the emperor, etc.), which can be related to the retreat (even death) of Amaterasu in her cave at year end (A 12, B 1; Rotermond 1988: 204).

### Participants and location

The starting point is the same in myth and ritual: all participants approach the ritual ground (C 1), in front of the cave, or the actual local place of ritual. In myth, Indra's birth and his first great deeds take place at New Year, the time of the Mahāvratā, but in ritual this is not expressed, as the background is taken for granted; just as in myth, the Saramā or Vala hymns start in mid-story (A B 3, B 6), without giving the reasons for Uṣas' disappearance: they are presupposed.

Similarly, imitations of the Vala/Iwato cave are limited to using traditional, simple huts on the offering ground (C 1). In Vedic ritual they are made of bamboo and straw mats, and in Japanese ritual, simple traditional houses are used, as seen in Shinto shrines. Both are of temporary nature: while the Indian ritual buildings are usually torn down at the end of the

<sup>83</sup> See above, §1.2, n. 30 on ritual myths, either a recapturing of older RV myths, casting them in a ritual context or expanding on them for ritual use. Some are altogether newly invented (cf. Witzel 2004, introduction).

<sup>84</sup> Note also that cows have 12 months of pregnancy, just like the year before it is 'reborn.'

<sup>85</sup> For details of the RV evidence, see H.-P. Schmidt 1968.

<sup>86</sup> Note also the explicit connection in PB 4.1 sqq with food, as in Greek mysteries, in the Japanese the First Fruit banquet (Oho-nihe), and the Daijōsai. (This is to be treated in detail in a companion article).

<sup>87</sup> Kalasha and Newar New Year, see Witzel 1998.

rite, Japanese shrines, too, are torn down and reconstructed every twenty years according to the same old specifications.

The participants (C 1), whether Indra and his Aṅgiras companions, the gods of the Kiki myths, the various Indian priests including the sponsor of the ritual, or the Japanese priests including the Sarume woman and Mikannagi priestess, warriors and their *Kampaku* leader, etc., assemble in front of the cave *viz.* hut.

### Implements

The various preparations for the ritual (C 2) include those of a number of objects, such as in Japan, the famous mirror among the "three imperial treasures," which represents the mirror image of the Sun. In myth (B 5), the gods actually collect metal and go about fashioning the mirror, and they also prepare other ritual items (see below, given by Amaterasu before the descent to earth of Ninigi, the ancestor of the first emperor, K.1.39-41). These divine ritualists are replaced in the traditional (imperial) ritual by priests who claim to be their descendants.<sup>88</sup> In Vedic ritual, the carefully selected priests also claim to be the descendants of the primordial poets (*ṛṣi*), the ancient authors of the Ṛgvedic hymns. Clearly the texts (RV, Kiki) provide the charter myths for both traditions.

Among the other ritual implements, we turn first to the Vedic 'ornaments' (*śilpa*, C 2). They reflect those of Indra's wife, fashioned (*taṣṭa*)<sup>89</sup> by a carpenter, that were dirtied by the monkey companion of Indra, Vṛṣākapi (A 9). This leads to the interesting aspect of mirror image-like opponents in the two myths. Vṛṣākapi behaves in many respects in the same naughty, even obnoxious way as Indra at other times of the year: the positive heros' (Indra's) occasional evil deeds (*kilbiṣa*) are well known in the Vedic texts and resemble those of his Greek counterpart, Zeus. Likewise, the good side of the habitually obnoxious Susa.no Wo may be reflected by the god Tajikara who opens the cave like Indra. Amaterasu is negatively mirrored by the lascivious Uzume, while Amaterasu's mirror image shown to her reflects nobody but herself. Uṣas, too, has a negative ritual counterpart in the village prostitute that interacts with the Brahmācārin and the Magadha man, but she also behaves lasciviously towards her 'friends,' the poets.

However, in spite of these mirror images, the Vṛṣākapi hymn (RV 10.86) clearly speaks of Indra and Vṛṣākapi as separate persons (A 1 sqq). Indra calls Vṛṣākapi his 'comrade' (*sakhi*), yet, Vṛṣākapi carries out all his evil actions while Indra is away (apparently looking for Soma at year's end<sup>90</sup>, A 6). Vṛṣākapi seems to be his counterpart and opponent at the same time, who takes over at winter solstice. This is exactly the position that Varuṇa holds in the yearly competition of the Deva and Asura (see below, §1.4., on theater).

As mentioned, one striking feature of the year end 'carnival' (A 9) is the dirtying by Susa.no Wo of the items belonging to the Sun deity, including defecation in her heavenly hall,

<sup>88</sup> Ishi-kori-Dome makes the mirror --> kagami-tsukuri; Tama.no Ya makes *magatama* strings --> tama.no ya-muraji; Futo-tama acts in ritual --> Imube priests (see: Kogoshui);

Ame.no Ko-yane recites (*futo-norito-goto*) --> Nakatomi priests (see: Kojiki/Nihon Shoki);

Uzume dances on upturned tubb --> Sarume (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987). Cf. also the following types of priests: *kamu-zukasa*, *kamu-nushi kannushi*, *kamu-nushi-be*, *hafuri*, *mono-imi*, *negi*, *uti-bito* and priestesses: *oho-mi-kamunagi*, *hime-miko*, etc. See Norito, Philippi: 1959: 91-92; for the Mononobe clan: see the Sendai *Kujihongi*; for these books see Matsumura Kazuo 2003: 11). -- We cannot enter here in to the discussion of the role of female reciters that were later changed to male ones, see *Norito*, transl. by Philippi 1959, introduction.

<sup>89</sup> RV 10.86.5 "The monkey has soiled my painted (carpenter-)fashioned (things); *priyā taṣṭāni me kapir vyaktā*". Is this sexual slang? Note similar expressions, Witzel 1997, Ivo Fišer 1966.

<sup>90</sup> When nobody would offer to him, at the end of the year; the text says: 'One has stopped to press Soma, they did not regard Indra as god anymore', that is, until he is reborn at New Year.



which corresponds to the actions of Vṛṣākapi towards Indrāṇī (as a victorious [sun?] deity<sup>91</sup>). These are the ultimate challenges to the forces of order represented by Indra/Amaterasu.<sup>92</sup>

Other implements, the sounds of the various sorts of musical instruments, also dances, shouting and animal noise (C 3), reflect those in myth that are used at the opening of the cave (RV, Kiki, B 8). Importantly, the upturned bucket on which Uzume dances (B 9) is mirrored by the two soundboards on which the Vedic priest has to sit (C 16, see below).

In Indian ritual, the (yearly) preparation and consummation of the sacred drink, Soma, is perhaps the most important feature (C 2). In myth, Indra has to acquire Soma (brought by an eagle from the mountain, like Ambrosia in Greek myth) before he can kill the dragon, just as Susa.no Wo can only kill the Izumo dragon (Yamata.no Orochi) after he has made him drunk with *sake*. However, both dragon slaying myths are not part of the Vala/Iwato cycle; they belong to another myth and ritual cycle, that of summer solstice and have to be treated separately.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, just in the majority of the standardized post-RV rituals, Soma is also at the center of the Mahāvratā ritual.<sup>94</sup> In Japanese (Daijōsai) ritual, too, there is sacred drink of two sorts, prepared with special care for New Year when vessels of new *sake* still are opened ritually (C 2). But, just as Soma is altogether missing in the Indian Vala myth, so is *sake* in the Iwato myth: they belong to the dragon-slaying myth and the Summer solstice rites.

The preparation and drinking of Soma is accompanied by a general cacophony of sound and speech --'all voices sound'-- (C 3) which repeats the noise made by the Aṅgiras and Indra in front of the Vala cave, where they recite and imitate the lowing of cows (B 5).<sup>95</sup> In Japanese myth, too, there is recitation of sacred speech by Ame.no Ko-yane, while the gods make merry and laugh loudly when Uzume dances (B 5 sqq). While in Indian myth, the 'noise' is one of priestly speech and sympathetic magic, Japanese myth describes a 'popular' festival, with merry-making, general noise and dance. This 'popular' aspect, missing in the Vala myth, is however supplied by Indian ritual with its noisy, comical verbal exchanges (C 4, cf. B 9) and noise ('all voices sound'), as well as with 'border line' sex between the Magadha man and the prostitute (C 5, cf. A 1).

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<sup>91</sup> She is fighting together with Indra (cf. n. 184), and in fact is called a *Marut-sakhi*, a [male] 'comrade' of the storm gods, the Marut, at RV 10.86.9; cf. 7.96.2, 8.76.2,3,9, 8.103.14. In Vedic times, the term *sakhi* (cf. Latin *socius*) was reserved for males. -- On dirtying Indrāṇī's 'dear things', see above, and cf. the 'soiling' of Amaterasu's *magatama* beads by Susa.no Wo. For the sexual relation of Indrāṇī with Indra's companions, cf. the Kutsa legend: Kutsa, Indra's son, was so similar to him that Indrāṇī (pretended to) confuse(s) him with her husband (see n. 110, 112).

<sup>92</sup> For details, see above, cf. Witzel 1997, 1998, and Kuiper (1979), dealing with Indian drama and the Veda (see below n.105); me makes such identifications as Varuṇa/Indra : Vidūṣaka/Hero, etc.

<sup>93</sup> In another, companion paper. The summer solstice was related in (pre-)R̥gvedic times with late spring snow melt and flooding of lowland rivers, see Falk 1997. The preparation of Soma by chewing stalks, as done by Apālā, is part of the myth about divine marriage proposals, preceding but not being an actual part of the Vala myth. Note that this sequence in Indian myth can only be established on the basis of the corresponding Japanese mythology, a fact that is important for methodology.

<sup>94</sup> In a way, it serves as the mythical preparation for the drink that will be used at Summer Solstice, preceding the killing of the dragon by Indra.

<sup>95</sup> The same cacophony is still heard during the Hindu coronation ritual (Rājyābhiṣeka) in Nepal (Witzel 1987).

## Competitions and verbal exchanges

Many of the year end competitions, that do not occur outside these rituals and festivals, are indicative of solstice symbolism (chariot race, bow shooting, the swing,<sup>96</sup> etc., see below). However, the Vala and the Iwato myths are foundational. The Vedic one has become part of the all-important Soma ritual that held sway for most of the first millennium BCE, and that still is celebrated in some enclaves in India today. It also has set the frame for other Hindu rituals, notably the relationship of action and sacred speech, such as for the common modern *pūjā*.

The Iwato myth is very similar in structure to the one of the descent of Ninigi, the ancestor of the first 'emperor,' Jimmu (K.1.39-41, N. II:159), and of the Daijōsai ritual, and the actions of the gods *in illo tempore* are the blueprint for those of the humans in their rituals. Thus, the *yorishiro* tree and the cloth/paper strands (*gohei*) used in front of the Iwato cave (B 5, 8) are prominent in all Shinto rituals. Most importantly, the mirror representing the sun deity and the *magatama* beads of the Iwato myth (B 5) have remained part of the 'three treasures' (*kokuhō*) of the imperial family and the country ever since.<sup>97</sup> These three items are not found in Indian ritual: they are typical for Japan.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, the actions of Indra and the Aṅgiras in front of the Vala cave (B 8 sqq), likewise, have provided the blueprint for the Mahāvratā and the Soma ritual.<sup>99</sup>

A prominent item in Year end competitions are the verbal exchanges (Kuiper 1960),<sup>100</sup> in the present case, between the sexually abstinent Veda student and the prostitute, taking place at the entrance to the Sadas hall (C 4). It is reflected by the argument between Indrāṇī and Vṛṣākapi (RV 10.86) at year end (A 9), as well as by the confrontation between Uzume and mundane deity Saruta-Biko (K. 1.38) taking place at the gate of heaven, when the ancestor of the first emperor, Jimmu, is about to descend to earth. Here, Uzume is described as someone who can overpower others such as Saruta-Biko, whose name is closely linked to the word for 'monkey' (*saru*). The monkey is a typical liminal figure, between humans and other animals; his role was transformed into the medieval *kamukura/kagura* dances and the *sarugaku* shows, still loved in mocking performances in Japan<sup>101</sup> (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987, Rotermund 1988: 210), for that very reason. These speech contests are set in liminal situations: at the end of the year, at edge of the offering ground or of the Sadas hall, at the edge of heaven.

The mythological background for the Indian speech contests is provided by the sexually explicit hymn RV 10.86. (A 4 sqq). It is set at year's end and consists of rather heated verbal exchanges, that are quite different from those of the priests but are set in a more 'popular' sphere, frequently one of sexual competition and real sex. In this hymn, the exchange is between four persons: the 'bull-monkey' Vṛṣākapi, his wife Vṛṣākapyāī, the heroic

<sup>96</sup> Another item pointing to solar symbolism. The sun is moved between its southwestern and northeastern rising points, just like a swing moves. There still is a giant swing, used at New Year, in front of the royal Palace in Bangkok, next to the temple of the Rājaguru.

<sup>97</sup> The third 'treasure', the imperial sword, occurs the tale of Susa.no Wo slaying the Dragon, which is connected with Summer solstice (n. 12), and therefore is not treated here.

<sup>98</sup> However, the golden arrow, whip and trumpet (see Lawergren 2001) of Yima, the first mortal in Iranian myth, may be compared; perhaps, also the three implements of the Royal Scythians in Herodotus (see Yoshida 1974).

<sup>99</sup> To be more precise, for the morning pressing of Soma; the midday pressing is focusing on the slaying of the dragon.

<sup>100</sup> Details in Kuiper 1960/1983.

<sup>101</sup> Such as the imitation of George Bush I, see above, n. 72.

demiurge god Indra and his wife (warrior-like) Indrāṇī. Vṛṣākapyī is the opposite of the proper wife of Indra, Indrāṇī, and her exchanges with Indrāṇī are anything but proper. The same situation obtains in Japan: Amaterasu is the opposite of Uzume; yet, when challenged, Amaterasu merely sees herself in an actual mirror: its silvery shining surface is a mirror image of the sun.<sup>102</sup> The other sides of their characters are visible in the form of animals: the Vṛṣākapi monkey in India, Saruta-Biko ('monkey man') in Japan, the 'bitchy' Uzume of the medieval *Sarugaku* plays in Japan, or the dogs in Indian myth: as Indra's bitch Saramā, and in RV 1.161.13 as awakers of the year-end gods, the Ṛbhu, acting just like the dogs in the Daijōsai ritual.<sup>103</sup>

An echo of the old myths and rituals is found in the Indian theater myth (Kuiper 1979), found in the early theoretical work on theater, the Nāṭyaśāstra (c. 1st cent. CE). The helpers of the theater director (*sūtradhāra*) represent Indra and Varuṇa: one helper carries Indra's pole (representing the world tree), the other one the golden pitcher of Varuṇa, which is broken so that sweet water flows out, just as in the Mahāvratā (C 14);<sup>104</sup> a lamp is put down with a crash. Both repeat the release of water and of light in the creation myths; this is accompanied by music (C3), again as in the Vala/Iwato myths, to appease the deities. Thus, Sūtradhāra = the post-Vedic god Brahma, the helpers = Indra and Varuṇa = the *nayaka* 'hero' and the *vidūṣaka* of the drama. In the *trigata* conversation between the three, the hero is constantly echoed by the *vidūṣaka* with incomprehensible, foolish, and indecent talk, a reflection of the Vedic *vivāc* speech contest (Kuiper 1960) and the exchange between the Ārya and the Śūdra, or the Brahmācārin and the prostitute in the Mahāvratā, where the Śūdra is habitually beaten up.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, the *vidūṣaka* "corrupter" is always defeated, takes on the blame, and becomes a scapegoat (like Vṛṣākapi in RV 10.86, D 7). The *vidūṣaka* is described, similar to Vṛṣākapi, as a bald, hunchbacked, lame dwarf, with yellow eyes and protruding teeth and distorted features, a funny gait, and uttering incoherent talk; this also agrees with the description of the *Jumbaka* in the Aśvamedha ritual, where he represents Varuṇa. Thus: Vidūṣaka = Brahman priest = Vṛṣākapi = Jumbaka = Varuṇa. Ritual, mythology and drama are again congruent; the Nāṭyaśāstra tale is just another, if late, version of the basic Vedic myth.<sup>106</sup>

Some of its aspects are also repeated in the installation ritual of Indian kings (Witzel 1987): there is the Mahāvratā musical dīn (C 3) accompanying the central part of the ritual, the unction (*abhiṣeka*), just as the noise made by the Kuzu men in the Japanese installation (Daijōsai, cf. Rotermond 1988: 199); we also find the king's white horse (see above on Amaterasu's piebald sun horse: A 9, C 10); the identification of the king with the god Viṣṇu (like that of the Japanese emperor and Amaterasu); his obscurity in a special hut (*snānamaṇḍapa*) during the latter ritual, like the hiding of Amaterasu and that of the new emperor in the central *sukidō/yukidō* huts, during the main night of the ritual (C 5); making use of the earth from the doorstep of a prostitute in the *snāna* rite (cf. the role of the prostitute in Vedic ritual, C 4-5); inclusion of all classes in the ritual (like that of the Vedic

<sup>102</sup> At the time of descent of the ancestor of Jimmu, ordered to become a symbol of the Sun that is to be used on earth, see Kojiki 1.39-42.

<sup>103</sup> Reflected as a monkey in the Rāmāyaṇa, see Ježic' 2002.

<sup>104</sup> In the image of the "Heavenly Bucket", the Great Bear/Wain, *ursa maior* (Kuiper 1972, Witzel, 1995/7).

<sup>105</sup> Originally the friendship between the Sūtradhāra and the Vidūṣaka was a contest, like that of Indra and Varuṇa, and the hero of the drama must thus be understood in his correlation with the Vidūṣaka.

<sup>106</sup> Note also the parallel shift from Vedic to post-Vedic myth seen in the transformation of Indra to Rāma and Saramā to Hanuman, see Ježic' 2002. Against the common background, the Classical and Medieval Japanese *sarugaku* plays should be re-investigated (see Ohnuki-Tierney 1987).

*śūdra* in the Mahāvratā, C 8); procession by the king on elephant (cf. that of warriors on chariots in the Mahāvratā, C 11). However, it must be underlined that the Japanese imperial ritual focuses on a meal, a 'communion,' if not identification, of the new emperor with his divine ancestress, while the Indian one is centered on the identification of the new king with Indra, the king of the gods (later, with Viṣṇu) and the conferral of divine powers by an unction. The latter ritual is found in similar form, from England to Fiji (Hocart 1927). One may observe the following relationships, in tabular form.

Deities involved: India	Deities involved: Japan	Relation / image used
Indra : Indrāṇī	Ta-Jikara : Amaterasu	in generic terms
Indra : Apālā	Susa.no Wo : Amaterasu	at marriage
Indra : Uṣas	Susa.no Wo : Amaterasu	in the cave
Vṛṣākapi : Vṛṣākapāyī	Saruta-Biko : Uzume	monkey image
Indra : Saramā	Ta-Jikara : Uzume	dog/monkey image
Indrāṇī as warrior, with Indra, (RV 10.86.10) before New Year (reminiscence of female warriors/Amazones in JB 2. 297-299)	Amaterasu as sole warrior, on arrival of Susa.no Wo, before year's end disappearance	Goddess as warrior

In ritual, the mythical discussions of the deities (A 1 sqq) take a more mundane form. The sexually abstinent Veda student and the prostitute argue (C 9), while he clings to the right doorpost<sup>107</sup> of the Sadas hut located at the entrance to the Mahāvedi, the most sacred part of the offering ground. It is notable that this location has correspondences in myth. In Nuristani myth,<sup>108</sup> the hero has to enter a house (not a cave, see below §2.1sqq), and in one version, he does so very violently, excited by a goddess exposing her thighs.<sup>109</sup>

The evocative speech contest of the Brahmācārin with the prostitute is a test of his strict abstinent way of life that requires an expiation even if he ejects semen in sleep. The compromising situation is hinted at in the Vṛṣākapi hymn, RV 10.86.18, where a donkey, the traditional symbol of oversexed beings, is ritually offered as an expiation (A 11). The *alter ego* of the 'Veda student' in this hymn can only be the equally oversexed monkey Vṛṣākapi, whose expiation with a donkey was an atonement for his transgression with Indrāṇī.<sup>110</sup>

The ambiguous relationship between Indrāṇī and Vṛṣākapi is explicitly expressed in ritual by actual sex of the off-limits Magadha man (from the Vedic 'Far East') and the prostitute (C 5), thus clearly two 'outcastes.' It takes place in a liminal hut, specially

<sup>107</sup> This is the southern doorpost; tearing at it will give the sun a nudge to move northwards again, see below, on bow shooting, n. 124, 151, 189.

<sup>108</sup> Belonging to the third part of the Indo-Iranian language family; such myths were prominent in northeastern Afghanistan until Islamization in 1895; however, parts of Nuristani myth survive with their Indo-Aryan neighbors, the Kalasha.

<sup>109</sup> Note the similarity with Uzume's exposure, and with the women slapping their thighs in Indian ritual, see below §1.5.

<sup>110</sup> Note the alter ego's of Indras's son/friend/enemy Kutsa; similarity lets Indrāṇī not decide who is who, so that she sleeps with Kutsa repeatedly (JB 3.199), see above n. 91, below n. 112.

constructed 'at the northern<sup>111</sup> hip of the Mahāvedi,' that is the actual border of the sacred enclosure and the real world outside. In Vedic myth, this is echoed by the many stories of Indra and his look-alike son Kutsa, generated from his thigh, whom he caught several times with his wife Śacī (Indrañī, JB 3.199).<sup>112</sup>

In Japanese myth, one does not quite go that far, certainly not when involving the supreme deity of the imperial court, Amaterasu.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, Uzume exposes herself and carries out a lascivious dance in front of the Iwato cave (B 9, C 5). This cannot, of course, be repeated in the stately Daijōsai ritual at the imperial court.

Instead, we find a more refined version, the common substitution of food for sex. In the central part of the imperial installation rituals, two major meals are given during the night of the Daijōsai (C 5): first one (at 10 p.m.) by the new emperor (alone?),<sup>114</sup> and the second one together with his visiting ancestress, the Sun Deity. Both 'communions' are celebrated sequentially, each in one of the two parallel houses (*yukidō*, *sukidō*), separated by a fence.

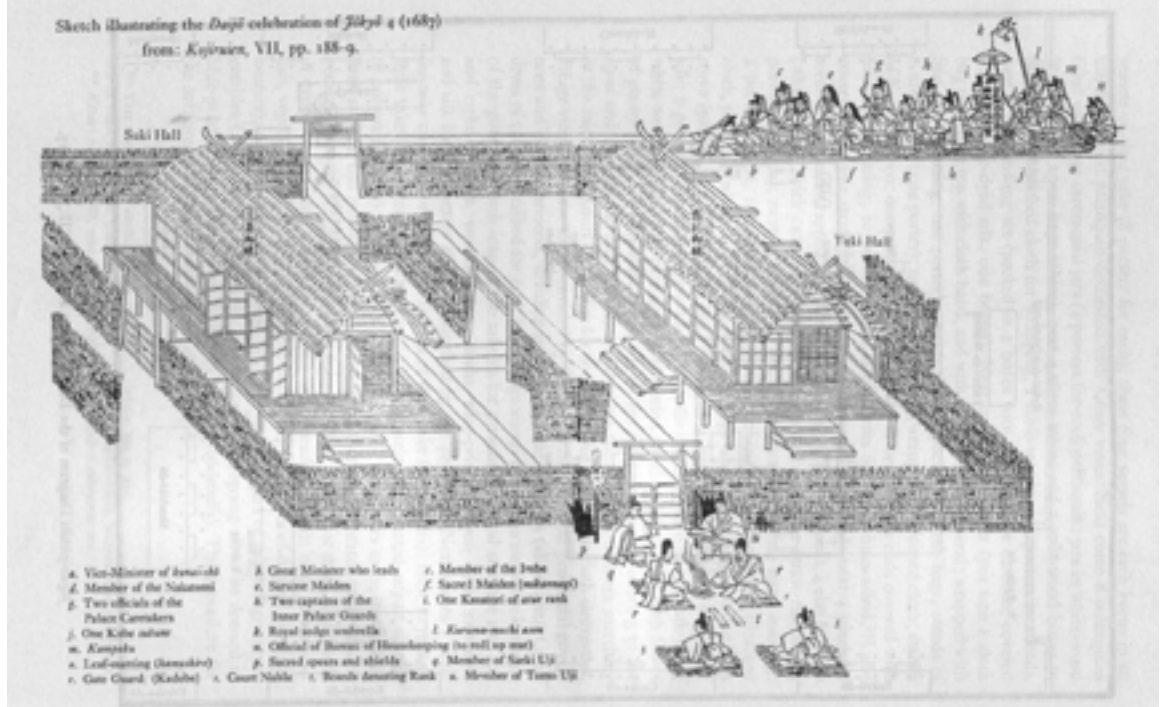
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111 Is it intended to symbolize the outcome of this ritual, production, by the time the summer solstice comes around at the northeastern edge of heaven?

112 For the ambiguous nature of Kutsa, see RV 1.174.5, 4.16.12; negative statements in RV 2.14.7 ~ 6.18.134; 10.38.5, etc. , but in a positive way, 1.51.6, sqq, 10.49.3, and frequently.

113 Note the theory of a relatively late elevation of Amaterasu to supreme deity, see Matsumura 2003.

114 Since this is an imperial ritual, descriptions and inside reports of the central part of the ritual do not exist, but must be extrapolated from Japanese myth and the comparisons with other rituals, such as the Vedic one. Is the Mikannagi= Amaterasu and Sarume = Uzume? However, there also is the identification of the emperor with his divine ancestor, Amaterasu. It is evident in the Norito prayers, for example clearly stated in Norito 38 (Philippi 1959), that was only transmitted by Fujiwara.no Yorinaga (1120-1156) in his diary, and was read out by the Nakatomi priest in 1142 CE, at the installation of emperor Konoe, but is considered to be of equal age as those transmitted in the Engi-shiki. Here, the frame for the Norito are the words of the priest recited before the deities, relating the myth of the descent from Heaven of the 'grandchild' of Amaterasu. The inserted myth speaks of Ame.no Ko-yane.no Mikoto, the distant ancestor of the Nakatomi priests, who sent his son to heaven, telling the deities: "we wish to present to the emperor at his meal water of the visible lands to which heavenly water has been added." The deities told him: "from the time that the waning sun goes down until the morning sun shines, recite the heavenly ritual, the solemn ritual words. If you thus recite, as a sign, sacred manifold bamboo shoots will spout forth like young water plants, and from underneath many heavenly springs will gush forth. Take this water and have him partake of it as heavenly water." The main ritual then continues with the mentioning of the fresh ears of grain, produced from the Yuki area of Yasu in the land of Afumi, and the Suki area of Higami in the land of Taniha, and the great wine, the black wine of the Yuki and the white wine of the Suki, brought before the emperor. The deities are asked to concur in this ritual and bless the emperor. In a final address, he speaks to all princes, courtiers, and common people. However, the older(?) Norito 1 of the Engi-shiki is spoken by the Nakatomi to the assembled Kamu-nushi and Hafuri priests, before the deities. It mentions the emperor who is about to partake of the 'heavenly, eternal, everlasting food', that is cleansed by the Imube, offered to the Kamu-nushi and Hafuri priests, who present it, furnished with various types of cloth. Even then, both Norito do not refer to the secret rituals that take place in the Suki and Yuki compounds. Just like the long lists of the ritual implements and the function of the various officials in the Engi-shiki, they only provide the outward frame.



Layout of the Suki-dō and Yuki-dō halls during the Taikanshiki in 1687. Note the Mikannagi and Sarume women in the row of priests and officials in the upper right (northeastern) corner. From Bock 1970: 48

Amaterasu appears in the dark of the middle of night, just as if she still was shut up in the Iwato cave, producing universal darkness.<sup>115</sup> At the end of the joint meal, at 4 a.m., Amaterasu leaves -- as to rise for the first day of the new emperor.<sup>116</sup> At another level, the meal clearly reflects the mythical encounter between Amaterasu and Susa.no Wo standing on opposite sides of the Heavenly River, chewing on *magatama* beads and the sword, and by spitting them out<sup>117</sup> and thus creating their children (A 4-8). Here, too, sex is expressed through the image of eating and sharing food.

We can assume that this was the official interpretation given at the time of the collection of the Kojiki myths in the late 7th century, under emperor Temmu. However, ritual always is always conservative, so that even in the 9th c. Englishiki ritual handbook, and even today, among all the male priests, warriors and officials, two women still have to attend the Daijōsai ritual: a priestess (*mikannagi*) and the *Sarume* woman wait outside (cf. §1.4) of the Sukidō/Yukidō houses; they reflect the pure Amaterasu and the lascivious Uzume.

### Races, archery

Another topic linked to the solstice rituals are the ubiquitous horse or chariot races (C 7).<sup>118</sup> The chariot races are meant to move the sun around its solstice turning point, represented by the pole at the end of the race course, a point where chariots often crash. In the same way, the sun is in danger of getting stuck at its winter solstice point of 'turning'<sup>119</sup> at its southernmost rising late in December. The course of the sun is imitated in the horse races

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<sup>115</sup> In the ritual calendar, the Oho-Nihe ritual precedes the spirit pacifying and enshrining ceremony of the soul of the emperor at year's end (*Daijōsai*, *Chinkonsai*, *Tamashi-shizume*). There is a clear parallelism with the Kiki myth of a temporary retreat of the sun deity into the Iwato cave and her subsequent release. Much of this is repeated during the Daijōsai/Taikanshiki ritual of imperial installation.

<sup>116</sup> Note that the food for the deity (*kami*) is offered only at 4 a.m. in the Sukidō hut. The two huts are separated by a fence (though with a gate in between them). The movement of the emperor from one to the other is a movement from east to west during the night, just as the night time sky moves forward (northward, then westwards, southwards, when looking north) so that the sun can emerge next morning in the east.

<sup>117</sup> Note the substitution of vomiting for giving birth by male deities: in Egypt, medieval Kashmir, etc., see above n. 47. For further occurrences of the contest between the two deities (Jpn. *ukei*) in Iran, Central and S.E. Asia, see Obayashi 1991.

<sup>118</sup> However, in the Mudgala/Mudgalānī hymn (RV 10.102), a rather strange race takes place, not with a horse-drawn chariot (symbolizing the sun's horses and the sun's turning around the solstice point), but one with a chariot drawn by a bull, with a wooden block (*drughana*) as the other draft animal, and steered by a woman, Mudgalānī (called Indrasenā, similarly to Indrāṇī, cf. RV 10.86.10, see n. 45, 81, 118) though driving together with her husband, (vs. 8); for a recent interpretation, see Brereton 1997). There are strong hints of sexual banter in the hymn, especially in the verses 10 qq. (Witzel 1997), and the mentioning of the *parivrktā* wife is a topic prominently found in the sexually explicit horse sacrifice. Note the inherent oppositions between a normal horse race at New Year and Mudgalānī's race: thus, the winter solstice race with 2/3 horses :: Mudg.'s race with bull + *drughana* wood; male driver :: woman driver. Is this a case of a mid-summer race (perhaps related to the Dravidian new year custom of bullock cart races? The bronze image of such a bullock chariot, probably from the early 2nd mill. BCE, has been found at Daimabad in W. India.) However, nothing is known about such races in the Vedic texts. Yet, the hymn may correspond to an astronomical myth: the bull/Taurus and the chariot driver/Auriga of Greek/Babylonian astronomy are indeed visible, in Summer, in the northeast at morning twilight, and then moving, until winter solstice, to the southwest. Note that the two asterisms straddle the Milky Way (as the RV has it: the bull drinks a whole lake, vs.4, his prominent forefeet, vs. 4; the chariot is only half visible, vs. 7). In that case we have a summer/fall bull race, while at winter solstice the New Year horse races take place.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Iranian *urvaēsa*, RV *paritakmyā* in the Saramā hymn RV 10.108.

of the Roman circus, developed from the early, Indo-European horse races.<sup>120</sup> While this wide-spread West Eurasian ritual<sup>121</sup> is missing in Japan, one may nevertheless compare some other typical Japanese New Year festivals. One of them is the *yabusame*, a festival of bow shooting from a horse racing at high speed, successively at three fixed aims. It has been performed in medieval Kamakura (and elsewhere) and still is so today.<sup>122</sup> Taken by itself, it might just look like any other occasion where one can show one's skill. However, the horse race of the Indian ritual is followed by bow shooting as well (C 11): a round wet skin, hung on a scaffold north of the *āgnīdhra* hut (again, at the *northern* rim of the offering ground<sup>123</sup>) is shot at by warriors -- note the continuing presence of soldiers and their *Kampaku* leader as well as of sacred weapons outside the actual ritual grounds (*sukidō/yukidō*) of the Daijōsai. The arrows must stick in the skin, and may not penetrate completely through it. In this fashion, the sun is just 'nudged on' to move around the turning point, but it is not really 'wounded'.<sup>124</sup>

This ritual feature, however, is preceded by another competition: two parties pull at the round, wet white skin (C 8), accompanied by a verbal exchange between a Brahmin, as the representative of the three higher Ārya classes of Vedic society, and a Śūdra, as the representative of the lower, artisan classes who are excluded from ritual. It has often been argued that the Śūdras consisted, to a very large extent, of the aboriginal populations of India. Thus, the competition between the two represents the fight between the immigrating Ārya and the local population, and it justifies and cements the exploitation of the Śūdras by the higher classes. In the extra-ordinary 'carnival' setting<sup>125</sup> at year's end, when things can be said and done that are unimaginable at other times, this opposition is expressed quite openly and clearly: the Śūdra actually complains that he is exploited, and the Brahmin answers, to put things 'right' again, that his goods have been 'won'.<sup>126</sup>

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120 The Greek horse race at the burial of Patroklos takes place at an inauspicious time, and thus has a left, not the auspicious right, sunwise, clockwise turn. However, even today's sport races still follow this custom. For the Indian peculiarities, with a strange twisting motion before turning see Sparreboom 1985.

121 Besides the old Greek and the Roman circus races, horse races are also found at the Tibetan New Year (Kuiiper 1979), etc.

122 The current festival, held at the (war god) Hachiman shrine in Kamakura on Sept. 16, goes back to the early Kamakura period (1100s CE). However, the festival is held also elsewhere in Japan in Spring and Fall; note the closeness to the equinox period. A film is visible at: <http://www.shonan134.com/kamakura/yabusame/Fast.html>.

123 Done to make the sun move northwards.

124 However, note the wounding of the Sun goddess Amaterasu by the weaver's shuttle. (Note the close connection between Dawn and Night in the Veda: both weave the cloth of day/night by their movements across the sky, the sun returning underground eastwards while night progresses westwards). -- The myth of the great Aryan archer Kṛṣṇānu (RV 4.27.3) has another background (it is connected with the winning of Soma). However, Old Iranian myth has someone shoot from *Airiīō.xšuda* ('origin of Arya!') to *Xvanuuant* ('having sun light'), which might reflect myths of an underground origin of people, as in Meso-America, see below §2.5). One may also compare the Chinese, Miao and Amerindian myths about an archer (or blow pipe shooter) shooting at the three or ten suns, at the beginning of times.

125 A direct challenge like this, in a highly ritual context, must surprise. However, just as many other actions in this ritual, this is part of a carnival-like celebration, when the normal order has broken down and things can be said and done that are completely impossible at other times of the year. In Roman carnival, even the slaves took over the town for a few days. --- Note also the inclusion of various 'outsiders' in the imperial installation ritual (such as the Kuzu of southern Yamato, cf. Rotermund 1988: 199).

126 The situation is still played out in modern North Indian villages during the Holi carnival in spring: the rich landlords (Thakur) are mocked, see Wiser 2000.



Pulling at a white leather piece representing the sun is, however, not found in Japanese myth or ritual; one may, instead, compare the several banners of the sun (and the moon) hung up on poles in the Daijōsai grounds. However, the verbal exchange between the Brahmin and the Śūdra may find faint echoes in the recitations (and the mythical verbal exchange between Uzume and Saruta-Biko, K. 1.39).

More importantly, after pulling at the leather piece, the victorious Brahmin throws it into the Āgnīdhra hut (C 10), situated at the *northern* rim of the offering ground. This action, just like the arrows shot at it, may make the sun move northwards again. Surprisingly, this small ritual feature is closely matched in Japan by Susa.no Wo throwing the skin of the piebald<sup>127</sup> sun horse, just flayed against the grain,<sup>128</sup> into the weaver's hall. While it is not clearly said which kind of skin is used in the Indian ritual, the Japanese myth is clear about the horse skin.

Looking a little further around in Indian myth and ritual, it becomes clear that this action is part and parcel of the ancient Indo-European horse sacrifice, where the head and the tail<sup>129</sup> are severed. In the Indian Dadhyañc myth the severed horse head is thrown away by Indra to the "backside", the western part of the sacred land of Kurukṣetra. This is situated at the western rim of Vedic territory and thus clearly a liminal place, like the Āgnīdhra hut, into which the horse skin is thrown.<sup>130</sup> Then the drum, made of the wet skin fastened by pegs over a hole in the ground, is beaten with a tail piece.<sup>131</sup> In Japan, too, actual horse sacrifice once took place, according to the ritual Norito hymns,<sup>132</sup> however, there are now represented by mere pictures of horses (*ema*) that are habitually inscribed by people with their wishes and offered at Shinto shrines.

Methodologically speaking, is very important that a rather isolated small action, the throwing of an animal skin into a hut, is repeated in *both* traditions. Such *isolated* actions, *prima facie unexplainable*, are typical relicts; they cannot be assumed to have been invented

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<sup>127</sup> For blemishes of the sun, see the materials collected by Jamison (1991); and note H.-P. Schmidt (1987) on the Ahalyā myth of Indra's marriage, at New Year, with the cleansing of Ahalyā by pulling her through the axle hole of a wheel, for which cf. the Meso-American (Kekchi) myth, below §2.5, where sun-like beings move through a key hole as well. (Passing through such narrow passages often is a symbol of (re) birth, found in Japan, Cambodia, etc.)

<sup>128</sup> This may also represent the backwards (northern) movement of the sun, as the piebald horse is a symbol of the sun (see above §1.3-4). The motif of the weaver girl is very close to the myth of the Chinese Weaver/Cowherd lovers, standing on both sides of the Milky Way, see n. 150.

<sup>129</sup> As is done in the Roman October horse (*October equus*) sacrifice, where the horse was killed with a spear and both the severed head and tail were raced to the 'town hall' (*Regia*), thus from west to east, just as the cows are moved by Hercules (Cacus myth, §2.2) who, thus, moves the dawns/sun back eastwards (Witzel 2004). -- Note that the ancient custom of severing head and tail are still followed in the Tantric and archaic tribal animal sacrifices of the Himalayas.

<sup>130</sup> The Ṛgvedic Dadhyañc myth is of interest here: Indra cuts off the head of Dadhyañc ('whitish') as a punishment for his divulging the secret of the 'lost head of the sacrifice' to the Aśvins, the physicians of the gods. However, they had substituted Dadhyañc's head by that of a horse and quickly restored his real head. This RV myth can be linked with the ancient horse sacrifices, excavated near the Urals (c. 1700 B.C.), in which the head and tail was severed, too; in one local grave, a human head was found substituted by that of a horse, just as in the myth, see Witzel 1997.

<sup>131</sup> It also is of importance in the horse sacrifice of India, Rome, see n. 129-131.

<sup>132</sup> Even today, besides sea creatures, some other animals such as hares, are occasionally offered.

independently. Instead, only against the Eurasian/Laurasian background this small detail (and similarly, others<sup>133</sup>) become significant and explainable.

As pointed out above, the obnoxious act of throwing the horse skin into the weavers' hall by Susa.no Wo finally annoys Amaterasu so much that she takes action (A 12). Actually, in one version of the myth it is not her weaver girls but Amaterasu herself that gets hurt by the weaver's shuttle and she even 'dies' of the wound inflicted. She flees and shuts herself up in the Iwato cave, just as Uṣas is shut up in the Vala cave.

#### Pouring out of water

Finally, in the Indian ritual, eight servant women, with water pitchers on their heads (C 14), circumambulate the *mārjalīya* hut (on the southern rim of the main offering ground, the *Mahāvedi*) three times, stomping their feet, slapping their thighs, and shouting "it is sweet". They sing several songs, among which is --not surprisingly-- the 'year song',<sup>134</sup> then pour the water on the ground<sup>135</sup> and leave. This action is not exactly represented in the Japanese myth or ritual. Nevertheless, there is a connection between the upturned water pitchers and the upturned bucket of Uzume<sup>136</sup> and her erotic dance (B 9) that is echoed by the sexually evocative dance of the servant girls,<sup>137</sup> slapping their thighs. (Note that in Nuristani myth, the hero can only bring down the gate of the house of the sun after he had become sexually excited, having seen a goddess exposing her thighs.)

At this moment of the ritual, all noise and din stop, and the Adhvaryu priest sits on two sound boards (C 16). This reminds of Uzume on the upturned bucket, just before the Iwato cave is opened (B 9). The occurrence of her dance at this point in time would explain why the priest sits on the sound boards only now, when the main Mahāvratā ritual has already been completed with the overturning of the water pitchers. Even this item finds its correspondence in myth, though in a post-Vedic one. As Kuiper (1979) has shown, the myth played out in the opening scenes of Indian theater is a later version of the Vedic creation myth. It ends with putting down a lamp with a bang (symbolizing the violent opening of the cave that contains the sun) and with pouring out water.<sup>138</sup> In Vedic myth, too, the final deliverance of the Sun deity from the Vala/Iwato cave follows immediately.

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. above, on other isolated and superficially insignificant cases, such as the exposure of her breasts by Uṣas and the same customs with the Amur people; the epithets of Indra and Tajikara; the throwing of the skin of a horse into a ritual hall; the weeping of Heaven in Polynesian and Vedic myth (Rodasi) when Heaven and Earth are separated, etc.

<sup>134</sup> Note the New Year festival of the Kalasha, Indo-Aryan speakers, living just east of the Nuristani, who still preserve much of their old religion. It includes the dichotomies between male/female in dance and song, resolved in the song *han sarias* 'it flows together,' see Witzel 2004, pictures at <http://www.site-shara.net/photoalbum/chawmos/html/sarazari.html>.

<sup>135</sup> Note again the fact of water being poured out at the end of the prologue scene of the Indian drama (Kuiper 1979), corresponding to the release of water after the killing of the dragon by Indra; this happens after a lamp has been put down with a loud bang, corresponding to the opening of the Vala and the release of the Dawn; see further, immediately below, and cf. H. Falk (1997) on the release of Spring waters.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Witzel 1995/7, on the Heavenly Vessel, and on the deity in Kojiki 1.5, which Chamberlain 1882 translates: 'the deity Heavenly-Water-Drawing-Gourd-Possessor; next, the deity Earthly-Water-Drawing-Gourd-Possessor', but Kinoshita 1976:13 'Ame-no-kuizamochi-no-kami (Gott der himmlischen Brunnen), Kuni.no-kuizamochi-no-kami (Gott der irdischen Brunnen).

<sup>137</sup> Importantly, not Uṣas but just servant girls, just as real sex is carried out not by members of the family of the sponsor or the ritual or its priests but by the village prostitute.

<sup>138</sup> This feature is normally connected with the killing of the dragon (Avesta, RV), or giant snake (RV, Nuristan) that encompasses the waters (for details, see Witzel 2004). The release of the waters happens at snow melt late in

## Vala and Iwato - The Myth of the Hidden Sun

In evaluating this large scale comparison of early Indian and Japanese rituals (and their corresponding myths), it must be underlined, again, that both share a large number of congruencies that cannot be just accidental. Given the inherent preservation of archaic traits due to the well-observed traditionalism of ritual, such data cannot be underestimated. We must assume an early, common solstice ritual and festival from which both, the East and South Asian version have been derived. Methodologically speaking it is especially the 'unexpected' identity of some preserved minute details (such as throwing a skin into a sacred hut) that may initially astonish but then leads to the path of systematic reconstruction.

After the long ritual interlude (§1.4), enacting the moment of the assembly of the gods and priests in front of the cave of the Sun, we now come to the final act of the myth, the actual opening of the cave and the release of the sun.

	Indian myth	Indian ritual	Japanese myth	Japanese ritual	Other traditions
	RV, etc.	Śrautasūtras, etc.	Kiki	<i>Daijōsai</i> , etc.	Laurasia
<b>D</b>					
<b>1</b>	<b>Indra smashes the Vala gate with his <i>vajra</i> weapon</b>	Udbhid & Valabhid ('smashing') rites; (end of morning pressing of Soma)	<b>Ta-jikara stands next to the cave's gate, opens it</b>	Amaterasu is in installation hall for communion meal with emperor	Nur.: gate is broken/house is shot at, it crashes down; Armen.: Mher finds cave and fire-born woman; Greece/Rome: Herakles kills Geryoneus/Cacus, drives back cows; Russia/Dalmatia: Perún strikes at Velesu; Khasi: sun maiden drawn out of cave by young man; Inuit: Raven brings back ball of fire; Cherokee: 7 men bring back box with sun's daughter (cf. soul box, basket); Redbird flies out of box; night descends Mexican versions: sun is reborn from oven, moves up; Yabarana: conoto bird finds ball of light; : sun escapes from basket as sun bird: night descends Xingu: vulture king caught, delivers sun;
<b>2</b>	(Cf. Saramā's jump towards the cave; Indra's/ Uṣas' dance)		<b>Uzume dances on sound board/vessel</b>		Nur.: sexually excited hero jumps at cave door ; Cherokee: human dances appease sun, smiles again

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spring. However, later on, in (post-)RV India, the myth has been used for the *midday* 'pressing' of the Soma ritual which corresponds to Summer (while the morning pressing corresponds to New Year, see Schmidt 1968); cf. Falk 1997.

3	<b>Uṣas looks over the horizon; exposes herself to Aṅgiras/poets</b>	Sonar 'mirror image' created by priests' lowing like cows /Uṣas results in Uṣas/cows coming out of Vala cave	<b>A., curious and looks out of the cave; looks into mirror: sees mirror image</b>	Actual mirror in use; communion meals end at 4 a.m./ dawn	Miao/ S.E.Asia: curious sun looks /goes outside; Khasi: sun shown flowers, comes out of cave; Cher.: Redbird flies out of box Aztec/Maya: sun is strengthened by her mirror image: human fire and human blood; Yabarana: Redbird flies out of box; night descends Xingu: bird with red macaw head dress brings sun
4	<b>Uṣas comes out of the cave</b>		<b>A. comes out of cave</b>	Sun rises after night of installation meals	Mithras born from cave; Armen.: Mher releases sun, water, etc. Lith.: Dawn and cows, released
5	(Cf. priests bring out cows, Apsaras women, JB)		<b>Tajikara takes A.'s hand and pulls her out ; Futotama puts <i>shimenawa</i> rope behind her</b>	<b>Use of <i>shimenawa</i> cord in rituals</b>	S.E.Asian versions (Hmong, Naga, Khasi, etc.): sun becomes curious, comes out / is drawn out by young man
6	<b>Dawn/Sun appears outside and brings riches and flourishing of nature</b>  Cf. JB: Vala cave with cows <i>and</i> Apsaras coming out	Offerers reach the desires of their sacrificial session ( <i>sattra</i> ) and disband	<b>Land becomes bright</b>	Land becomes bright	Iran: 'winter' ends, all beings emerge; Nur: Sun, water etc. released Greece: Persephone comes back periodically; Meso-Am.: Sun rises for first time and stays up, strengthened by blood offerings and human sacrifice
7	<b>Vṛṣākapi is punished by banishment: he is 'going home' into the distance; <i>Asuras</i> defeated for a year : order returns, agreement with Varuṇa reached</b>	(Śūdra, etc. put in their low social place) Magadha man sent off (to his far-off southeastern home-Land)	<b>S.noW. is fined, punished severely; and expelled; he goes off towards the distant northwestern land of Izumo</b>	Oho-harahe, general purification ritual at year's end  (Cf. role of Kuzu outsiders from southern Yamato in Daijōsai ritual)	Kal.: certain village punished by Balumain for not cooperating in Chaumos festival of winter solstice  Kal.: Indra/Balumain disappears for another year

### § 1.5. The opening of the cave

The deity opening the gate of the Iwato cave is called *Ta-jikara* "arm-strong," that is "someone who has a strong hand or arm".<sup>139</sup> The obvious epithet hides, as so often in Japan,<sup>140</sup>

<sup>139</sup> As in many languages, arm and hand are expressed by the same term, Japanese *te/ta-*, cf. Skt. *hasta*.

<sup>140</sup> Such as *Amaterasu* "shining from heaven", *Omohi-Kane* (*omohu* 'to think, ponder'), Tsuku-yomi 'moon'; Izana-gi/Izana-mi (primordial ancestors of the gods, creators, from *izana* 'to tempt'? Like Yamī, she invited he brother to procreate), etc. The etymology of *Susa.no Wo* has been given as *susa* 'terrible, impetuous, frightening' and *wo* 'male' (see Mauclair 1992: 387); he is identified with the medieval *kōjin* in the rituals of the Nakatomi priests.

the original, now lost name of the deity. However, Indra, the Vedic gate smasher, has the same epithet: *tuvi-grābha* "someone with a strong grip" (or *ugra-bāhu* "one with a terrible arm").<sup>141</sup> The matching epithets found in both unrelated languages underlines, again, the similarity of both traditions, and indicates old, Eurasian concepts<sup>142</sup> shared by the Vedic and Japanese mythologies.

Indra, in front of the Vala cave, is accompanied by a number of "shamans", the Aṅgiras poet/priests who recite poems, sing, and imitate the lowing of the cows hidden in the cave (B 5), to bring them out by "sympathetic magic". In the Kojiki, some gods behave just like the Aṅgiras: they shout and make merry. They include, likewise, some divine priests, again, like the Aṅgiras, the ancestors of today's priests.

However, the provocatively dancing goddess Uzume (B 9) does not have a correspondent in the assembly of Vedic gods and sages (though Uṣas and Indra are sometimes compared to dancers<sup>143</sup>). However, something like the erotic dance of Uzume may be recovered in the conduct of the bitch of Indra, Saramā, "the jumper." The promiscuous behavior of bitches may have inspired the substitution. The way she is treated by the owners of the cows/dawns, the Paṇi,<sup>144</sup> (B 6-7) sufficiently indicates her character. However, she refuses several bribes and also does not agree to become the 'sister' of the Paṇis.<sup>145</sup>

In a post-Ṛgvedic version of the Vala myth (JB 2.23sq) not only dawns and real cows but also seductive heavenly maidens (Apsaras) hide inside the cave.<sup>146</sup> In short, the goddess Dawn (Uṣas) appears for the gods at the beginning of time, while for men, beautiful women emerge from the cave. However, the Vedic poets have reserved the Apsaras (JB), and especially Uṣas, for themselves. When she appears each morning from her eastern underground cave, looking over the eastern horizon, she bares her breasts as a sign of friendship<sup>147</sup> for them, just as Uzume lowers her garments, exposing her breasts and genitals.

In ritual, an Indian counterpart of Uzume appears during the Mahāvratā ritual. She does not materialize as an erotic goddess or a promiscuous bitch but as a low status woman, and sexual intercourse takes place (C 5). Conveniently for 'proper' Vedic society,<sup>148</sup> it is carried out by the local prostitute and a 'foreigner' from the easternmost, off limits country of

141 On the other hand, the etymology of Indra "the swelling one?" or rather "the strong one?" remains elusive. He "rose up (= swelled) according to his breath (*prāṇa*)" after having been aborted by his brothers, only to live on, and eventually killing his father; see now Witzel 2003.

142 There are more of such ideas in Laurasian myth, see Witzel 2001.

143 RV 1.92.4 'Uṣas colors herself like a danceress, she unveils her breast like a cow the udder'; Indra dances: 1.130.7 'You broke the fortresses for Pūru Divodāsa, you dancer', 6.29.3 '(Indra) clothing himself in a scented dress, looking like the sun, you have quickly become a dancer', 5.33.6 'dancing his manliness' (*ṇṛmna*); also RV 10.29.2; -- cf. further the Eōs /Austrō / Ostera / Eostre, the Germanic Easter day, the Slavic *Kolenda* and the Latvian *Līgo* festival and the refrains of Latvian songs of summer solstice (see Schroeder 1908: 115sq.).

144 Note also the rather obscene tale of the bitch Dīrghajihvī 'long-tongue' who was at the northern ocean and licked up the Soma prepared at the southern, eastern and western one (JB 1.16); cf. the Avestan bitch Nasu, licking Haoma, likewise, from the far north where she was with the Daēuvas (Vidēvdad).

145 Which indicates a close sexual relationship, see Witzel 1997, as well as in Old Japan of the 8th century, see Rotermund 1988.

146 The Medhatighrhapati Vibhindukīya and other famous priests (JB 2.23sq), with various wishes in mind, outside a cave (*bila*), performed a Sattra; they opened the cave by their ritual; various beings came out, among which also the divine nymphs (Apsaras), clad in golden miniskirts (*hiranyacaṇḍātaka*); some of the priests touched them whereupon they shied and fled.

147 A custom also found with native people on the Amur River in E. Siberia, see n. 133.

148 According to the early Vedic text, Paippalāda Saṃhitā (9.4.6, cf. ŚB 14.9.4.18) "[married] women sit, [sexually provocative, teenage] women (*prapharvī*) dance," see Narten 1995.

Magadha, two marginal figures thus. The priests and the sponsor of the ritual represent the deities while acting on the offering ground that symbolizes the universe;<sup>149</sup> however, the prostitute carries on in the liminal Āgnīdhra shed that is situated exactly on the borderline of the well-defined sacred offering ground and the non-sacred outside world. In short, she behaves just like Saramā who straddles and transgresses the boundary of heaven and earth: the Ocean at the end of the world or the Milky Way in heaven, beyond which the gods reside. (The same motif is repeated when Uzume meets Saruta-biko at the edge of heaven, when she accompanies Ninigi, the grandchild of Amaterasu on his descent from heaven; he becomes the ancestor of the first emperor, Jimmu, K. 1.39).

The human prostitute actually carries out what the divine Amaterasu and Uṣas do not. Amaterasu's relationship with her brother Susa.no Wo is that of a well-disguised primordial incest (A 4-8): they stand on both sides of the Milky Way, and still are able to create children.<sup>150</sup> In India, too, the goddess Dawn does not enter into relationships with another god(s), at least not in the context of the Vala myth<sup>151</sup> (A1, B 1). Yet, there is more to her, as can be seen in her shameless exposure to her friends, the poets, reminding of Uzume's dance before the other gods.<sup>152</sup> However, in Ṛgvedic times, Uṣas' behavior is remarkable only<sup>153</sup> because of the "social position" of the divine Uṣas opposite to her human poets. However, people neighboring Japan, on the Amur River, provide an explanation: exposing one's breasts is a sign of friendship and not 'shocking' as (traditional) Japanese and western commentators have often interpreted the Vedic or the Kojiki myths.

We can therefore begin to disentangle the intricate texture of both Indian and Japanese myth and ritual centered around the midwinter solstice.<sup>154</sup> They contain many similarities, as shown selectively in the table below.

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<sup>149</sup> Cf. Falk 1986 and Minkowski 1991.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Obayashi 1991. The situation is replicated in the relationship between the Cowherd and the Weaver woman (= the stars Vega and Altair) in Chinese myth: they live on both sides of the Milky Way and can meet each other only once per year, on the 7th day of the 7th month, when a magpie (our Eagle asterism) spreads its wings to make a bridge for them. The myth has been imported into Korea (c. 400 CE, depicted in a grave) and into Japan (around 700 CE), where it still is celebrated as the Tanabata festival on July 7. The similarity of the Chin. and Jpn. concepts will have made its adoption in Nara period Japan easy. I will deal with its various forms in a companion piece to this paper, discussing the dragon slaying and Summer solstice myths. The myth is also enacted by the Miao/Hmong, as seen in this description: "during their New Year festival, when boys and girls are dressed up in bright ("wedding ready") clothes, lined up on two sides [of a river if that is available], teasing one another" (B. Brooks, written comm., Jan. 2005).

<sup>151</sup> However, there is the well known myth of an incestuous relationship with her Father Dyaus Pitā, or the later god Prajāpati. Rudra (Sirius) shoots at Dyaus (Orion), see Forssman 1968.

<sup>152</sup> See Ohnuki-Tierney 1997 on Japanese macaque monkeys.

<sup>153</sup> When compared to *pumścalī* 'groupies', *dāsī* servant/slave girls, *veśyā* 'prostitutes,' etc.

<sup>154</sup> What is missing is the midsummer solstice, a feature that will be of interest in treating the myth of the 'Slaying of the Dragon'. It represents, in many of its aspects, the exact opposite of the Vala/Iwato myth; for example, Susa.no Wo is the hero, not the villain.

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Amaterasu and Susa.no Wo produce children, standing on two sides of the Milky Way	Uṣas, assaulted by brothers and father (as deer), produces 'progeny' from the cave <sup>155</sup>	(Nuristani myths, see §2.1)
Sun goddess, Amaterasu, in the cave (Iwato)	Dawn goddess, Uṣas, in the cave (Vala)	Sun, Moon etc. in a house 'between heaven and earth'
Uzume dances an erotic dance in front of the cave	Saramā jumps towards the cave, is not corrupted by Paṇis	Mande, sexually excited, jumps at the gate of the Sun's house
Uzume exposes herself to the gods	Uṣas shows herself in erotic way to poets across the horizon, at sunrise	goddess Dis(a)ni shows her thighs to the hero Mande
Uzume challenges Saruta-Biko at the edge of heaven	Prostitute and student challenge each other; she copulates with a foreigner at the edge of offering ground	mixing of male/female, sacred/profane at winter solstice festival of Kalasha (Chaumos)
Amaterasu is curious and peers out, is drawn out	Uṣas is liberated by force	Sun, moon, etc., are liberated by force or trickery

### § 1.6. Summary of the Indian and Japanese sun myths and rituals

Both in the Japanese and the Indian versions, the cave myth is a feature of the primordial state of things. The cows (Dawn) belong to the Paṇis who represent the earlier generation of gods. Indra and his poet-priest companions, the Aṅgiras, release the cows/Dawns from their cave by a combination of poetry/magic (reciting poems and lowing like cows) and of force (smashing the gate). As the reddish cows emerge, so does light of Uṣas, and life is made possible. The Paṇis and other evil forces are driven away (until 'next time', that is the next year's end).

In Japanese myth, the hiding and the re-emergence of the Sun deity is effected by the same means, that is force and ritual/sorcery. The gods and their divine priests assemble in front of the cave, offer, recite and make merry. The gate is opened by a combination of curiosity on part of the Sun and of force. The re-emergence of the Sun ushers in the continuous presence of life-giving forces. The threatening force of Susa.no Wo is banished into the horizontally arranged 'other world,' to the off-limits land of Izumo, 'beyond the mountains' north of Yamato, the imperial heartland.

Reviewing the Old Indian and Japanese myths of the Cave of the Sun and their reflections in contemporary rituals, the preceding detailed discussion (§1.2-6), even a glance at the tables given above, establishes without doubt the common origin of both versions. It remains to be explained how this could have happened as both are so distant in time and space. The usual two possibilities of diffusion and common origin present themselves. However, the matter is more complex. It must be underlined that the intervening East and

<sup>155</sup> Note the Uṣas/Dyaus/Prajāpati incest myth, and the Yama/Yamī dialogue (RV 10.10); further the emergence of cattle, women etc., in JB 2.23sq, see above n. 146.

Southeast Asian areas, and especially those of western and eastern Central Asia from the southern Urals to the borders of Korea, that were to a large degree occupied by Iranians (Scythians, Sarmatians, Saka), do *not* have the Indo-Japanese form of the cave myth.

Before coming to the proposed solution (§2.7), a closer look at other versions of this foundational myth must be undertaken. It will take us in ever widening circles, from the closely related Indo-Iranian and Indo-European mythologies to those of the rest of Eurasia and, finally, to the extension of Northern Asia, the Americas.

The Indian and Japanese myths deal with the (re-)emergence of the sun at the time of creation, repeated at each New Year, and at each daybreak. However, from the point of view of Meso-American mythology (to be investigated below, see §2.5), the Vala/Iwato myth can also represent one of the several *early* stages (ages, 'Suns') in the development of the world, before the emergence of the *present* Sun. The present fifth phase of the Universe began, after the *four ages* that have gone by before our own, when the dawn of the fifth sun appeared. It had to be won for us, by its death in fire or in the netherworld, both followed by rebirth, and by a constant series of (red) blood offerings to the weak, wobbly (red) sun that needs them to be strong enough to move across the sky.

In both the Eurasian and the Meso-American myths the dawn/sun deity emerges from a place below the surface of the earth, a cave or the netherworld, to bring light and prosperity into the world.<sup>156</sup> It would lead to far here to enter into a detailed discussion of all Eurasian and Amerindian version of this myth and their various features. However, a few important points will be presented below from the related Indo-Iranian and Indo-European traditions and selectively, from beyond, while keeping the identities and close similarities in Vedic and Japanese myth in mind.

## §2. Other Laurasian myths of the hidden sun

### §2.1. Indo-Iranians

We turn now to mythologies that are closely connected with the old Indian one in language, ritual and myth. The oldest sources for Iranian religion are found in the Zoroastrian texts in the East Iranian Avestan language (c. 1000-500 BCE). In *Vīdēvdād* 2, the first mortal, Yima (the Indian Yama, the god of the netherworld) builds an underground cave. It functions as an "Arc of Noah" or Manu's ship, helping humans and animals to survive the long cold winter of Iran --there is no Iranian flood myth-- which is seen as the mythic winter at the beginning of times. After creation of the world and its expansion three times by Ahura Mazda (cf. RV 4.42.4: Varuṇa), the first three prosperous periods are followed by a fierce winter, that resembles the Germanic Fimbul winter of the Edda and the Meso-American myths, where the four ages preceding our present one are marked by successive destructions.

Yima's fortress, that resembles the actual forts of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (2400-1600 BCE, see n. 23), has interior light,<sup>157</sup> for example a door which shines by itself. Other lights inside the fortress are both eternal and non-eternal: stars, moon, and sun descend and rise only once per year. Clearly, this is divine, not human time. In short, we have an (underground?) fortress with sun, moon, stars, light, and the best of humans, cattle, and

<sup>156</sup> Return of sun, rejoicing, at *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.19.3; ~RV 5.45.10; 6.7.4; 10.88.10.

<sup>157</sup> See above n. 76 on *Frau Holle*, the self-illuminated underground realms of the dwarfs or the Indian *Nāgas*.



plants. At a certain point in mythical time, living beings re-emerge from the fortress, and human history begins with Yima's descendants.

Another version of this Indo-Iranian myth is found with the third IIR branch, the fierce Nuristani (formerly called Kafiri) in the mountains northeastern Afghanistan. Imrā (Ved. Yama Rājā) was one of their major gods until 1895, when they were converted to Islam by force. In their myths, we find, similar to the East Iranian ones, a fortress or a house that contains light, the sun and moon, water, fields, etc. There are several variants of the myth of the liberation of the sun which closely resemble the old Indian and some Iranian tales.

One version says that the gods engage in various preparations to release the sun that had been captured by a demon; useful information is received from an old woman, a relative of the demon. A track of light leads to the house. It can be entered through a crack in the door or by direct attack from outside: the door is broken and the gods regain the sun. (Robertson 1896: 385, 28; further Prasun and Urtsun versions, following Jettmar 1975/1986, Buddruss 2002). The tale, in an abbreviated version, runs like this.

There was no sun, no moon. It was very dark. Espereg-era, a demon, brought sun and moon into his house, right and left of a waterfall.<sup>158</sup> The god Mandi changes into a boy, and goes to the mother of Espereg-era. Mandi is not allowed to open a certain door. He tries to do so, pushes in his finger, this turns golden; finally, he breaks the door and sees the waterfall, the sun, the moon and a horse. He puts the Sun on his right shoulder, the Moon on his left, and rides out of the house. The dark world becomes bright. Espereg-era follows them, Mandi cuts off all his seven heads, drags him to the right side of the valley and covers him up.

The God Mara tells him to share sun and moon with the rest of the world; he carries them up to heaven, where they are ordered to go about in circles. Mara then creates humans, gives them cattle, teaches them, ascends to heaven and disappears.

The other version is more concerned with the actual conquest of the 'house' of the sun (versions of the Kati tribe in Bumboret, Urtsun and Lutdeh; the Prasun version follows Buddruss, as reported by Jettmar 1975). Here, the gods try in vain to destroy house. Imrā finally shoots at the ropes that hold the house in the air. It crashes down but rises again; finally the sun, moon, sun, and the horse are released. The assembly of the gods decides to kill the demon(s) and their bodies are buried.

The gods assemble. In the upper part of the Valley there is a house, near heaven, where a demon lives. He has much wealth. If he is killed the world will become well. The gods decide to fight him. They call God Mandi who gathers other gods as he marches up the valley, finally including also the female deity Disni. Halfway up, they sit and deliberate. They discover the house. Mandi goes there, sees an old woman and asks her about the house. "It is a house, between up and down; inside there are seven brothers (*Dizano*) who have many things: the sun and moon, gold, silver, water, fields where they sow". The Old woman explains how to make the rope visible by which the house hangs between heaven and earth.

Man(d)i goes back to the gods but forgets, three times, what he had been told; finally, another god follows him [cf. the vulture and Saramā, JB 2.240-2] and reports back to the gods, who tease Mandi. The gods shoot arrows at the house, but as it is of iron, the arrows are repelled [cf. the metal (*ayas*) forts in the Veda]. They ask Disni to sow seeds, which ripen quickly, and are threshed. The chaff attaches itself to the thread and it is

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158 Cf. Mithraic and Iranian-related Armenian myths about David of Sassoun; further Buddruss 2002; ultimately, the descent of waters as Sarasvatī/Gaṅgā may be intended (Witzel 1984: 217 sq., Buddruss 2002: 128, 130); see next note.

visible in white. Mara makes two-pointed arrows which cut through the copper, silver, gold and iron thread. The 'flour castle' crashes down to earth. The gods jump against its door, but it does not open. Dis(a)ni tells Mandi to look at her thighs<sup>159</sup> which are white and full. Mandi gets excited, jumps against the door and breaks it. He enters with a dagger and kills all seven demons. The gods draw them outside and bury them. Some echoes are also seen in the originally Iranian legend of Mithras, who became a favorite god of Roman legions as *Sol invictus*, the invincible sun, and to whose festival day, near winter solstice, the birth of Christ was shifted in the fourth century CE.<sup>160</sup> The Armenians, too, who were often dominated by Iran, have retained much of otherwise lost old Iranian mythology. One story tells of Mher (Miθra) who combines the old deities of Indra (Vedic *Indra Vṛtrahan*, Avestan *Vərəθrağna*), and Mitra/Miθra, as well as Mithras' connection with a cave.<sup>161</sup>

In sum, whether we look at the Ṛgveda (c. 1200/1000 BCE, the Avestan texts (c. 1000 BCE), the Mithraic myths or their Armenian, Ossetic and Caucasian<sup>162</sup> versions, or at modern Nuristani myths, the basic outline of the myth is retained, even after some 3000 years that have passed since our oldest sources: the sun is shut up in a cave (or underground fortress, or a house). A young hero finds its location, smashes the gate or enters the place of the Sun's confinement by trickery, and releases it, along with some women, animals and plants which make human life sustainable. The Indo-Iranian cave myth thus provides a classical case, albeit one little used in comparative mythology. The related western Indo-European myths from Greece and Rome echo the tale of Indra's freeing the cows/dawns from the Vala cave. However, they seem to deal with the exact opposite of the morning/winter solstice release of the sun, that is its release from the evening/summer solstice; they are therefore treated here only in summary form.<sup>163</sup>

## §2.2. Greece, Rome and Lithuania

According to Greek myth, Geryoneus owned a great herd of cows on the island of Erytheia "redland", situated in the ocean at the western end of the world. In one of his twelve great 'works', the great hero Herakles crosses the *Okeanos* in the golden beaker of the sun god Apollo, kills Geryoneus, and drives the cows back eastwards towards Greece. Obviously, the cows of the west, of sunset, are the exact opposite of the cows in the Vala cave of the east, of sunrise. The island of the cows, Erytheia, has long been understood as the horizontal "other

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159 Cf. the Jpn. Iwato myth, with Uzume dancing, exposed, and stamping loudly on an upturned bucket (cf. Witzel 1995b); cf. in the Mahāvratā: young women carrying water vessels go around three times, stomping their right feet, slapping their thighs, shouting '*madhu*', then pour out the water.

160 Mithras, by and large, has Iranian roots (Avestan *Miθra*, Vedic *Mitra*). He is born from a rock, achieves a settlement of his relationship with the sun god; fights with a bull that flees into a cave but is killed there by Mithras; finally, there is a sacrificial communion, a meal with the sun god (cf. the communion of the Jpn. emperor with Amaterasu), and Mithras ascends to the sun god's chariot.

161 Mher finds a spring guarded by demons (*dev*), whom he beats severely. The trail of their drops of blood leads him to a cave with flames shooting out. Outside the cave, he finds a "fire-born" (solar) woman. She tells him about the great demon in the cave who has captured the water and the sun; if a certain great black bull could be captured and killed, the demon also could be killed. Mher proceeds and kills the bull and the demon; see the exploits of David of Sassoun (*Sasowntsi Davit*) Shalian 1964: 127-129.

162 See Charachidzé 1987, with many references to the pertinent work of his teacher, G. Dumézil.

163 Details in a further paper and in my book (in preparation) on Laurasian mythology, *Origins*.

world" in or beyond the world ocean.<sup>164</sup> Herakles, who often looks like a Greek Indra, is a son of Zeus Pater, "Father Heaven," and therefore has the same genealogical position as Indra in India and Susa.no Wo in Japan.

In the Roman version of the Herakles myth, the hero, on his way back to Greece, approaches the cave of Cacus near Rome, along with his herd of cows that he had taken away from Geryoneus. Cacus, a son of Volcanus, pulls in a number of the cows by their tails.<sup>165</sup> Herakles hears their bellowing, enters the cave, and kills Cacus.

However, another myth missing in many IE tales,<sup>166</sup> the abduction of Persephone, provides the background for the disappearance of light and its restoration. Persephone is the daughter of Demeter 'Mother Earth'.<sup>167</sup> She is abducted by Hades and becomes his wife. Her angry mother gives up her role as earth goddess and no longer produces any food. Everyone starves and Zeus tells Hades to send back Persephone. But, she had already eaten from Hades' granite apple, which ties her to the Netherworld forever.<sup>168</sup> Therefore she spends 1/3 of the year in the netherworld as wife of Hades and 2/3 of the year with the gods on Mt. Olympus. Demeter and Persephone correspond to Izanami and her daughter Amaterasu, while Persephone's netherworld suitor Hades corresponds to Susa.no Wo, originally the god of the ocean. The thunderbolt-wielding Zeus releases Persephone, just as his Indian counterpart, the *vajra*-wielding Indra releases Uṣas, the Dawn. The *structure* of these myths shows a large degree of agreement.

Just as in the case of Amaterasu, Persephone's eventual re-appearance renews sunlight and food production. (This is effected, indirectly, by son of the King of Eleusis, Triptolemos, "plowing thrice," who was reared as Demeter's own child and was given the *dawn chariot* and seeds of wheat). The re-appearance of light and of agriculture are closely connected with the abduction/sexual aggression towards a young woman, just as in the Indian and in other Greek cases.

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<sup>164</sup> A concept prominent in Japanese myth as *tokoyo*; also found in Polynesian and other mythologies; cf. BĀU 3.4.2, Matsumura 2003. It is echoed by the eastern (morning, New Year) location of the Paṇi's cave, situated in the world ocean beyond the rim of the horizon that Saramā runs to, eventually jumping over the Rasā (Ocean, Milky Way).

<sup>165</sup> Note the backward skinning of the piebald horse of the sun in the Kiki: the cows = sun at dawn/dusk, the piebald horse is that of the sun.

<sup>166</sup> A. Yoshida (1962, 1974, 1976sq) has often compared Indo-European mythology with Japanese mythology, and has discovered many, apparently not accidental, similarities between Japanese and Indo-European (Scythian, Ossete, Greek) mythology. For example, Izanami's stay in the netherworld which is similar to the Orpheus myth; however, cf. also the Indian myth of Naciketas in the Kāṭha Upaniṣad 1.5 sqq, the Sāvitrī/Satyavant story of the Mahābhārata (3.277-283), the Polynesian story of Hinuitepo, and the Cherokee myth quoted below (§2.5). The reason for Persephone's fetter to Hades is that she had eaten from his food (as in Kāṭha Up. and with Izanami). Note that the Greek story has the same motif of curiosity as the Japanese one: looking (back) curiously results in being bound to the netherworld forever; similarly in the Cherokee tale, it is human curiosity that killed the daughter of the Sun; cf. also in the Hebrew Bible, the curiosity of Lot's wife and her looking back, which kills her.

<sup>167</sup> See Dunkel 1988/90.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Kāṭha Upaniṣad. Note opposite concept in the connection of eating the Biblical apple in paradise with mortality: just as one belongs to Hades after eating its fruit, so one is thrown out of heaven after eating its fruit; heavenly fruit are only for 'heavenly' beings, not for humans; cf. also the same motif in Polynesia (above, n.60).

The Greek and the Japanese tales<sup>169</sup> also share the motif of eating in the netherworld; this motif appears also in the Izanami/Orpheus story.<sup>170</sup> According to another variant, Demeter did not want to eat in Hades' realm, and therefore the servant Baubo exposed her vulva. This made Persephone laugh and she started to eat.<sup>171</sup> The use of sexual exposure and laughter is similar to that in the Japanese Iwato myth where Uzume dances in front of the cave to the amusement of the gods.<sup>172</sup>

In sum, the Indian winter solstice myth (dawn, eastern position) has been moved in Greece and in Rome, along with the reddish cows, to an evening (dusk/western) setting, while the effect of the disappearing winter sun on the earth, i.e. the lack of agriculture produce, is met with in the various Persephone myths.

In a Lithuanian tale,<sup>173</sup> the hero of the story seeks Aušrine 'Dawn':<sup>174</sup> one of three brothers went to search for the second *Sáule* ("suns"), i.e. Dawn (*Aušrine*), who presides at dawn and dusk. The ensuing abduction of Dawn reminds of the shutting up of the dawns (= Vedic cows) in the Vala. Further, Aušrine, just like Ušas, has a mortal lover. The dawn/sun goddess emerges from the cave and brings light and posterity, and --as in India-- also cows, into the world. The pre-occupation with cows (Skt. *paśu*, Latin *pecus/pecunia*, German *Vieh*/Engl. *fee*, etc.) seems to be a major Indo-European characteristic; it is not echoed elsewhere in Eurasia.

The folk songs of the Latvians, the *daina*, deal at length with the (female) sun deity (*Saūle*). Her journey takes place in a ship,<sup>175</sup> on the sea (just like the Japanese gods move about in their stone ships<sup>176</sup> or like Herakles in Apollo's cauldron).<sup>177</sup> At night, the Sun moves back by boat, not unlike the Egyptian sun, *under* the earth, towards its rising point in the east. She dances at night on a rock<sup>178</sup> in the middle of the sea, which agrees both with the mytheme of the Sun's island in the *Rasā* in Indian myth as well as with that of the meeting place of Japanese gods in the river *Ame.no Yasu-Kawa*, where the Sun's opposite and *alter ego*, Uzume, dances her erotic dance.

Saule disappeared to sleep  
behind nine lakes... (Daina 209)  
Who has said that Saule has lied,

<sup>169</sup> Also the Indian one in *KaṭhaUpaniṣad*, though in a different context (see preceding note).

<sup>170</sup> In the Savitri/Satyavant story it is the husband who must die and is successfully brought back from Yama's netherworld by his faithful wife.

<sup>171</sup> Note, again, the widespread identification of sex and food.

<sup>172</sup> See Yoshida 1974, K. Matsumura 2003; this laughter is replicated in the Japanese ritual of imperial installation.

<sup>173</sup> Greimas, *Des dieux et des hommes*, transl. Paris 1985, of his book *Apie dievus ir žmones*.

<sup>174</sup> Etymologically connected with *Ušas*, Lat. *Aurora*, Germanic *Ostera*; cf. Greimas 1985.

<sup>175</sup> Haudry 1986: 263; cf. Egypt, where the sun moves in a boat, on a river below the earth back to its rising point in the east.

<sup>176</sup> Archaeologists have recently dug up replicas of these mythological boats in Japan (reported 4/11/2000). Note also the new Xinjiang mummies, buried in boat-like tree stems, see NHK, in new Silk Road series, Jan. 2005, available at <http://www.nhk.or.jp/silkroad/digital/index.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Otherwise, the Indo-European sun god moves about during daytime in a wagon (note the paleolithic concept of Ursa Maior > Great Wain), later a horse-drawn chariot; note the expression 'wheel of the sun' Ved. *sūryasya cakra*, Gr. *hēliou kuklos*, O. Norse *sunnu...hvél*; 'eye of the sun' Welsh *Ilygad y dydd*, Ved. sun = *ōeyeōof* Varuṇa.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. the Iranian (Avestan) idea of a central mountain (*us.həṇḍauua*) in the middle of the world ocean, where the all-healing world tree (*vīspō.biš*) pushes up the sky (Witzel 1984).

that Saule sleeps at night?  
Has Saule not risen over there,  
where she has fallen asleep in the evening? (219)  
The white Saule when she lies down  
stretches herself in the golden ship.  
In the morning, getting up,  
she clothes herself in gold. (222)  
A bush of white flowers grew  
in the middle of the sea, on a stone;  
that is where Saule led the dance  
every evening, going to rest. (213)

However, both Slavic and Baltic myth have also preserved a vague reminiscence of the Vala myth itself (Katicic'1988, 1992). The Lith. god Vėlinas/Vėlnias/Vėls is the god of the netherworld, and the Old Russian Velesu/Volosu is a god of riches and of cattle --which is the same thing for the Indo-Europeans, as we can observe in Latin *pecus: pecunia*. Velesu is often seen in opposition to the 'striker' deity (Lith. Perkūnas, Russ. Perún), an epithet abundantly used for Indra who opens the Vala with his *vajra* weapon. The opposition is even represented in Slavic Dalmatia (Katicic' 1997).

In sum, the Indo-European versions, even those outside the closely related Indo-Iranian area, agree in that they view the reddish morning Sun or Dawn as closely related to the mythical image of reddish cows (Greece, Rome, Lithuania). These peoples present the myth of the liberation of the sun by making use of the cow image, even where the myth is not seen, as in the Veda, in a morning/winter solstice setting but in an evening/summer solstice setting. In Vedic India, it is a standard poetic device to do connect dawn and cows; however, the evidence from the related Indo-European mythologies indicates that this idea precedes the Ṛgveda by many centuries, indeed more by than two millennia. It seems to be a typical Indo-European trait to see nature reflected in a (mainly) pastoralist setting, thus the reddish dawn as reddish cows. As we will see below (§2.4-5), this trait is not shared by other Laurasian mythologies (though faint echoes can be observed in the Chinese myth of the cowherd and the weaver woman as well as in the related Amerindian deer hunter/weaver girl myths.

However, while the Indo-European congruities in the myth of the hidden sun are evident, some of the daughter languages disagree as to the gender of the Sun.

### § 2.3 Male and female Sun

In Indo-European mythology, the female deity of the sun, or rather its dawn aspect (Sūryā, Uṣas, etc.), is different from the "sun god," a male deity that is merely *connected* (IE suffix *-yo*: Greek *Hēl-io-s*, Ved. *Sūr-ya-s*) with the sun, rules it, and drives it across the sky in his stately, four-wheeled ox cart (reflected each night in the asterism of the Great Wain/wagon 'Ursa Maior;' later on, from c. 2000 BCE onwards, a two-wheeled chariot drawn by horses). The distinction is important as it is often thought that Indo-European religion was one of simple nature worship. However, Hēlios or Sūrya have developed their own, very distinct personalities and their own individual myths. Conversely, the 'elements' fire, water, sunlight have the neuter gender. Similarly, in Laurasian mythology, the Japanese, Polynesian, Aztec,

Maya, etc. sun deities each have a character of their own; they are not simply identified with the sun as such. In almost all these cases, the sun god is male.<sup>179</sup>

However, *Uṣas* is a beautiful young maiden, eager to meet her lover, the poet. This concept of a female dawn is very old, indeed Proto-Indo-European, as it occurs in Greek (*Eōs*), Latin (*Aurōra*), Baltic<sup>180</sup> *Aušra/Ausma*, and Germanic (*Ostera*, Engl. *Easter*), which points to a spring goddess. Indeed, *Uṣas* is especially celebrated as the "first dawn" of the New Year, as the harbinger of spring. The female Dawn precedes the rising of the (male) Sun each morning and at New Year. However, the Vedic *Sūryā* "she, who belongs to the sun," seems to be a different goddess. Probably she is the daughter of *Pūṣan*, not of 'Father Heaven.' She was destined to marry *Soma*, the personification of the sacred drink, who became the moon in the late *Ṛgveda*.<sup>181</sup>

In Japan, too, *Amaterasu* does not marry the moon but rather is the sister of the Moon god (*Tsuku-yomi*<sup>182</sup>), one of the children of the primordial parents *Izanami* and *Izanagi*, next to his siblings *Amaterasu* and *Susa.no Wo*. The sun deity, *Amaterasu*, was born from one of *Izanagi*'s eyes<sup>183</sup> at the same time as her brother *Susa.no Wo*, who originally was the god of the ocean. She thus is the sister or twin sister of *Susa.no Wo*. The marriage of the female Sun (*Sūryā*) with the Moon (*Soma*) is substituted in Japan by an indirect, symbolical "marriage" of *Amaterasu* and *Susa.no Wo*, avoiding obvious incest (see above). Another aspect of *Amaterasu*, her warrior-like nature<sup>184</sup> is reflected in India as well. In the *Vṛṣākapi* hymn (RV 10.86) *Indrāṇī*, the wife of *Indra* (of solar nature, see the *Apālā* myth, Schmidt 1987), is said to have traveled with *Indra* in wars or raids.<sup>185</sup> However, in the first few centuries CE, the male and female aspects of the Japanese sun deity (Sun and Dawn) seem to have been joined and subsumed under the dominant deity of Yamato, *Amaterasu* (Matsumura 2003), which accounts for her several male characteristics and the relative insignificance of *Tajikara*, the Japanese 'Indra', and the importance given to *Susa.no Wo*, the correspondent of *Indra*'s competitor and temporary ally, *Varuṇa*(-*Vṛṣākapi*).

In this respect, the usual interpretation given in Japan of the opposition between *Amaterasu* and *Susa.no Wo* may be misleading, that is, as a reflection of the political situation in mid-first millennium CE, a competition between the central Yamato land (or *Jimmu*'s original, legendary home in *Hyūga*) and *Susa.no Wo*'s northwestern land of *Izumo*. This opposition rather seems to reflect the old Eurasian dichotomy of, and contest between, two

179 A reason may be the old Eurasian identification with fire/Sun that they usually are male Latin *ignis*, Skt. *agni*, see below §2.3; however not so in the Germanic/Baltic area, and in S.E. Asia or with the Cherokee (§2.5.).

180 See Jouet 1889.

181 Cf. Hillebrandt 1987 on this topic. Is *Sūryā* to be identified with *Uṣas*?

182 Who quickly disappears, as indicated, from Japanese as well as from most other Eurasian mythologies. Note however, the different scenarios in S.E. Asia and the Americas, below §2.3-51.

183 This is a very common motif in Eurasian and Laurasian myth: note that the sun is the eye of *Mitra/Varuṇa* (cf. n. 177); cf. the wandering eye (*udjat*) of the Egyptian god *Atum*, and the Amerindian myths about the exchange of the eyes, Bierhorst 1988,1990.

184 Japanese scholars debate the origin of *Amaterasu* as supreme deity and conjecture (see K. Matsumura 2003:11) that, originally, the supreme god was *Takamimusuhi*, but that, at some point, the supreme deity was exchanged (Mizoguchi 2000, 241-77), and that the local deity of Ise, *Amaterasu*, was chosen as a symbol for the new national system and of the imperial ancestors, just before the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* were compiled around 700 CE. There is no consensus, however, as to why *Amaterasu* had to be a female goddess (T. Matsumura 1999: 93-118; note some of her male warrior-like characteristics, cf. n. 91). *Amaterasu* also is connected with the east-west 'way of the sun' discovered in the arrangement of sanctuaries in mid-Japan, see Ogawa 1973, Miyatani 1980.

185 Cf. Geldner ad RV 10.86; also found in MS 2.2.5, which identifies *Indrāṇī* with *senā*, 'the army'; and note her epithet *marut-sakhā*, see above, n. 45, 91, 118 *indrasenā*.

groups (moieties) of deities, the third and fourth 'generations' of gods: the Greek Titans and Olympian gods, the Germanic Aesir and Vanir, Indo-Iranian Deva and Asura, or Indra and Varuṇa. The question is in need of a detailed investigation that will be pursued elsewhere.

Finally, the sun deity is female in S.E. Asia as well: the Austro-Asiatic Khasi, and the Tibeto-Burmese Naga (both in Assam), and the Austric Miao (Hmong) in S. China (see below) all agree in a feature that may very well have been an old regional trait among Austric speakers (Tai-Kadai, Austro-Asiatic, Austronesian, see §2.4). In addition, the *original* homeland of the speakers of the Japonic-Koguryo language may have been close to S. China (Beckwith 2004).

Methodologically speaking, it is important that the 'outliers' of Eurasian myth in the south (Veda), east (Koguryo myth, Kojiki/Nihongi) and the west (Germanic and Baltic myth) have preserved ancient details not met with in the rest of Eurasia.

## §2.4. Other Eurasian Mythologies

In other parts of Laurasia, similar myths, or echoes of it, are found in abundance. Only some of them can be described and listed here.<sup>186</sup> The Ainu, along with the Koryak, Kamchadal and other N.E. Siberian peoples, tell that the sun goddess was taken captive and all the deities and human beings died from excessive sleep.<sup>187</sup>

Among the peoples of S.E. Asia, the Miao (Hmong) speak of the "long crying birds" (*naga-naki-dori*, Kiki), the roosters, that were made to cry to summon the sun at dawn, after she had concealed herself for two years.<sup>188</sup> Or they tell that an archer shot down 9 of 10 suns,<sup>189</sup> so that the sun concealed herself. On hearing the rooster cry, she became curious and went to look for it from an eastern summit and the world became bright again. This myth has several similarities with the Japanese Kiki myth (curiosity of the sun, rooster); however, the archer myth is close to the Chinese version;<sup>190</sup> the sun's red dress reminds of the Indian Dawn (Uṣas, and the red cows); the motif of sending out animals to find the sun, too, closely matches the Indian versions in the RV and JB.

Similarly, on the borders of South East Asia, for the linguistically unrelated Khasi and Nāga in Assam, the Sun goddess hides in a cave. The Anganmi-Naga stress that the rooster made the sun move up to heaven and shine on the whole world, and the Khasi tell of a beautiful young woman hiding in a cave until a boy showed her flowers, slowly pulled her to

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<sup>186</sup> For details see my forthcoming book on Laurasian mythology.

<sup>187</sup> See Kindaichi 1923: 113 (cf. Philippi 1979: 81, n. 3). Note the Brothers Grimm fairy tale of *Schneewittchen*/Snowwhite, the sleeping beauty.

<sup>188</sup> T. Matsumura 1954-58, III, 71 -73; Kindaichi 1923: 113; cf. Philippi 1959: 82, n. 8. for the red crown of the rooster, mentioned in the Miao myth, see also RV Khila 5.22.

<sup>189</sup> Note the corresponding old Chinese myth of shooting down nine of the ten suns (archer Yi); cf. the great archer Apollo, and cf. below on Amerindian myths, §2.5. Note also the Avestan and Ṛvedic archers (above n.124); and the inverse version of 'bow shooting' in the Vedic Pravargya myth: Rudra is killed by the severed string of his bow that cut off his head, which becomes the blazing sun (details in Witzel 2004, introduction).

<sup>190</sup> Like several famous old Chinese myths (such as that of the world giant, Pangu) it may have an origin among the Austric peoples. Cf. other archer myths in Iran, Hindukush, India, the Indus Civilization and in Meso-America, above n.124, 189.

the opening and married her.<sup>191</sup> This myth adds the Japanese motif of drawing out the Sun Goddess: not by force as in the IE myths, but by temptation.

In other variants, the sun has a sister or a (younger) brother, just like Amaterasu in Japan<sup>192</sup> and like Uṣas in Indian myth. In many versions, the Sun hides and the world becomes dark. There are Meso-American myths about the brothers of the sun as well (see below §2.5.).

Importantly, as was seen in the preceding selections, Japanese myth, though closest to the Vedic version, takes an intermediate position between the Indo-European and the South-East Asian versions of this myth as far as some details are concerned. The motif of opening the gate of a cave is found in all versions, but the methods differ: force or treachery in the IE versions, stirring the Sun's curiosity, in S.E. Asia and in Japan, where major "Indo-European" echoes have been retained (opening of the gate of the cave by a strong male deity, sexual exhibition by a female deity in a carnival outside the cave; the sun retreats into the cave because of sexual assault by a relative). Such regional variations of Laurasian myth are an important topic to be investigated further,<sup>193</sup> (for initial results see §2.7).

### § 2.5. Amerindian mythologies

The Americas are a continuum of Eurasia, having been settled out of N.E. Asia only fairly recently (by c. 11,500 BCE).<sup>194</sup> As such, the Amerindian myths, notwithstanding some local developments, offer a welcome means of countercheck for the period *before* that date. The Vala/Iwato cave myth can be found in at least three different varieties.

- (A) The sun is hidden in a box or basket
- (B) The (underground ceremonial) chamber of the Sun or the first dawn (in the so-called Emergence myths)
- (C) Marriage of Sun and Moon (several suns are brothers)

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<sup>191</sup> Maenche-Helffen thought that this variant of the myth of the hiding sun resembles the Japanese one, including the mirror and Susa.no Wo's birth from Izanami's purification ceremony (*misogi*): he and Amaterasu are siblings. However, cf. also the Meso-American myths (Kekche, etc.), below (§2.5).

<sup>192</sup> The Thai version is set in a pre-modern Buddhist background. The sun and the moon were brother and sister here on earth, but the third sibling became a monster. He was jealous of the elder brothers and still fights against them, visible as the solar and lunar eclipses. Basically the same story is found in Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Palao, with the northern Thai and the Shan in N. Burma. However, it has a very different variant among the Austro-Asiatic Nicobar islanders, where Laaf is the name of a monster stemming from the beginning of creation; he is not a brother of the sun and moon. The eclipse of the sun is connected with the younger brother only in S.E. Asia.

<sup>193</sup> The various layers of Japanese mythology (and language, see Beckwith 2004) are in urgent need of study as to explain what has commonly called a 'mixture' of northern and southern elements. For example, the Ohogetsu myth of the origin of food (K. 1.17) fits better a planters or an agricultural society (cf. the Indian version in Vādhula Brāhmaṇa) than a pastoral one; the myth clearly is isolated inside the Kojiki, and '...there is a view that the myth of the murder of the food goddess is reflected in the custom of destroying [Jōmon] clay figurines,' (Matsumura 2003) which would lead back to early prehistoric times.

<sup>194</sup> Or much earlier, in some scenarios: Valverde finds in Chile, 35,000 BCE. There also are new theories of immigration by boat along the west coast of North America, (note the thesis by von Sadowsky 1978 about the Uralic origin of the Wintu in the California valley, and the Ice Age immigration of the people represented by Kennebec man, from Western Europe, via the ice sheet, Iceland and Greenland).



Inuit (Eskimo) mythology is still very close to that of Northern Asia; they tell a rather long story about the culture hero/trickster, Raven who found the sun, which may be summarized as follows.

After the first days, sun and moon were taken away and people had only the light of the stars to go by. An orphan boy put on a raven coat and set off southwards. At last, he came to a large hill. One side was brightly lit; the other side was black as night. Close to the house on the hill there was a large ball of fire. The boy got hold of the ball of light by trickery. He then put on his raven coat and flew rapidly northwards, breaking off one little piece of light after another. This made one day following another. When Raven reached his own village, he threw away the last piece of light. He said: "It will be light and then dark, so as to make day and night." ... Sometimes the nights are very long because Raven traveled a long way before again throwing away a piece of light.<sup>195</sup>

The Crow and the Amerindians on the Northwest Coast of Canada have similar tales; in other North American myths, the sun hidden in a sack. The Cherokee tell a long tale about the Daughter of the Sun (here much abbreviated).<sup>196</sup>

The sun lived on the other side of the vault of the sky, directly above the earth. The sun then sent down such heat that people died by the hundreds. The humans went for help to the Little Men who changed two humans into snakes, and one of them, in form of a rattle snake, bit the sun's daughter. When the sun found her daughter dead, she shut herself up in a house and grieved. Now people lived in darkness. The Little Men said, in order to coax the sun out, they must bring back her daughter from the ghost country, the Darkening Land in the west.

The Little Men told the seven men who would make the journey to take along a box and a rod. They must strike the Sun's daughter with the rod, put her into the box and bring her back to her mother. But they must not open the box, even a crack, until they arrived back home... The men did all of this and started back home, towards the east. The girl came to life again and begged to be let out. At last, she cried that she was smothering and begged them to raise the lid just a little. There was a fluttering sound and something flew past them into the bushes. Then they heard a redbird cry. Shutting the lid, they went on again. But when they arrived at the settlements and opened the box, it was empty.

The sun wept until her tears caused a great flood. The people decided to send their handsomest young men and women to amuse the sun and stop her crying. ... At last the sun looked up and was so pleased at the sight of the beautiful young people that she forgot her grief and smiled.

Apart from other motifs already met with earlier (sun shut up in a house/box, Orpheus myth, too hot sun(s) in the beginning, Redland as the evening home of the sun, the Persephone myth, and tying in of the flood myth), it is notable that the seclusion and grieving of the sun was only appeased when young men and women amused her by dancing, which is again similar to the Japanese version, a faint echo of Uzume's dance in front of the cave.

In these myths, the sun is hidden in a box, instead of a cave or house as in Eurasian myths. However, the ancient Eurasian correlation<sup>197</sup> or even identification of sun and fire<sup>198</sup> is

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<sup>195</sup> Van Over 1980: p.83 sqq., Rasmussen 1932.

<sup>196</sup> Erdosi and Ortiz 1984 : 152.

<sup>197</sup> For the concept of correlation between two entities, in Indology often called 'identification', see Farmer *et al.* 2002.

<sup>198</sup> See Witzel 1992.

repeated. The Cherokee myth adds the feature of the Redbird as the (daughter of the) Sun, a theme we will again encounter in South America. The red bird contains the soul of the sun, enclosed in a box, an idea that is rather close to Korean, Japanese, and Dayak ideas about a 'spirit box'. For example, there is the casket in which the spirit of Amaterasu is transported when a new shrine to her is built for her at the national shrine of Ise, every twenty years; or, the soul of the Japanese emperor is contained in such a casket at the New Year festival (*tama-shizume*); Korean farmers keep such a box under their roof, and the Dayaks of N. Borneo carry them on their waist (apparently another East and South East Asian regional feature).

The method used to get the sun out of the box or its chamber usually is trickery, just as in Japan or Nuristan. the Inuit boy tricks the owner of sun light, Raven tricks Sea Gull in the Crow myth, and the Seven Men of the Cherokee bring back the daughter of the sun by a trick, used in connection with the Orpheus motif. The sun's daughter has to be brought back from the netherworld, Ghost Land (as in the Orpheus or Persephone or the Indian Savitri myths). In such journeys, there is some prohibition,<sup>199</sup> -- this time, not to open the box until one has returned home. Not following this injunction brings permanent death into this world, for, before the Seven had opened the box, the dead could return to our world; now this possibility does no longer exist.

The Orpheus motif is tied, in this case, to that of Redbird, the daughter of the Sun. In comparing the various Laurasian versions, it seems that one or two generations down from the solar divinity, beings become mortal. The same is observed in Asia: in India and in Iran, Yama/Yamī and Manu are mortal while their father, Vivasvant (the sun), still is a god, even though he was born misshaped. Once the Gods descend down to earth, as in the case of the first Japanese emperor, Jimmu, his brother and then Jimmu himself eventually have to die.

Interestingly, the Cherokee myth also ties in the well-known flood myth. In short, (re)creation of sunlight, descent from solar ancestors, emergence of death, and the great flood, all brought together in one single, long myth.

#### Meso-and South America

Once we enter the agriculture-dominated world of Meso-America, some new forms of the myth of the Hidden Sun are encountered. Here, the stress is on the emergence of the sun from the earth, not necessarily from a cave from but from *below*. The emergence takes place after a series of after several 'trial creations,' during which the gods unsuccessfully tried to create the world, light, and human beings. These ages surprisingly correspond, sometimes even in name, to the four ages or four generations of the Indian, Near Eastern and Greek mythologies.

In Aztec mythology, during each of the four ages or 'worlds,' called "suns," various 'proto-humans' were produced,<sup>200</sup> and each new age was reigned by a different god. After the destruction of the Fourth World (or "sun"), the gods assemble in Teotihuacán to remove darkness once more and to re-create humankind.<sup>201</sup> They select a certain spirit, Nanahuatl, who jumps into the flames of a "spirit oven" and becomes the Sun; another spirit following him lands in the ashes and becomes the pale Moon.<sup>202</sup> But the new Sun was merely tumbling

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<sup>199</sup> Not to look back to the deceased wife, Eurydike in Greek myth, Izanami in Japanese myth; but in the Indian Sāvitrī myth the male and female roles are reversed, see above n. 166.

<sup>200</sup> See Bierhorst 1988, 1990: 182.

<sup>201</sup> Bierhorst 1988, 1990: 183.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. the Huichol myth of the sun and the fire (Bierhorst 1990).

along, from one side to the other.<sup>203</sup> A falcon was sent to inquire why and the Sun replied: "because I am asking for their blood, their color, their precious substance." Even the collective self-sacrifice of the assembled gods did not really help and the sun moved up into the sky. As an important addition, the ancestors of the Aztecs now enter the tale: the five original Mexica, called the Five Mixcoa, were born in a cave. They offered 400 Mixcoa and several of their descendants to the Sun,<sup>204</sup> and thus continued the gods' self-sacrifice to make the sun move regularly through the sky.

The sacrifice of human blood is not limited to Meso-America. It is, surprisingly, found even in old India, in some Upaniṣads: the gods wished for human sacrifice as the best food possible, an idea that has survived in medieval and modern Tantric rituals (detailed in the *Kālika Purāṇa*), for example at *Kāmakhyā* in Assam, well into British times, and it has even been revived a few years ago, though with a vegetarian substitute for the human to be slaughtered each year.

In Meso-America, too, there were numerous, regular human sacrifices, because the gods of the Toltecs and Aztecs had created war and sacrifice as to extend the end of the Fifth World. The Mexican myths speaking about the release of *the present sun*, after several failures in preceding ages or 'suns', link this Laurasian motif with sacrifice. This also may have been the original Indian idea: 'food' for the gods in form of offered animals is just a substitute for human sacrifice (Witzel 1987), and some rare reference clearly speak about humans being killed and offered; further, if Heesterman (1985) is right with his idea of an original agonistic ritual in India, this would point to humans as being captured in war for sacrifice. In short, the Mexican myth speaks about the release of the sun from the cave or oven in terms of the release and the rising of *the present, fifth sun*, after several earlier failures, but it links this old Laurasian motif to sacrifice.

The 16th century Quiché Maya myth contained in the *Popol Vuh*<sup>205</sup> has a long and involved tale stretching over the five creations, too.

After the creation of the world the sun did not yet rise; there was only "blackness, early dawn." (Tedlock 1985: 73). Various creation attempts follow. Then, the bright bird, *Seven Macaw*, usurped the position of Sun and Moon, and was shot down by two hero boys, Hunahpu and Xbalanque (p. 90), which again reminds of the Chinese and Miao myths of shooting down the nine *extra* suns.

The boys then went to the netherworld, participated in the game of jumping over an oven four times (p. 149), but then went head-first into the oven where they died; but on the *fifth* day they reappeared as handsome boys and tricksters. They finally they killed the lord of the netherworld (p. 153) and ascended again to this world, and straight into the sky: now, the sun belongs to one boy and the moon to the other.<sup>206</sup>

Then, the present generation of human beings were created using new ears of yellow and white maize (p. 164). People were waiting for the dawn and went to the mythical

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. the motif in a Vedic myth where the sun likewise had to be pushed up, PB 25.10.11; see §2.6 on the 'bent' Milky Way/Sarasvatī.

<sup>204</sup> Finally, the wind god Ecatl (a form of Quetzalcoatl) blew it on its course. Humans, too, were flawed: Quetzalcoatl robbed bones of the ancestors from the nether world, but some demons caught him, threw him down into the abyss, where he died but rose again and escaped with bones. With help of a female companion, he recreated humans but he did not quite know how.

<sup>205</sup> *Popol Vuh* (transl. Tedlock 1985); however, for a detailed philological transl., see Schultze-Jena 1944/1972.

<sup>206</sup> Note that the same expression is used in Indo-European: the one who belongs to the sun, *sūr-ya*, *hēl-ios*: they are not identical to the sun or sunlight.

city of Tulan (p. 170). Fire for human sacrifice was exchanged with other tribes. Finally, after a long fast, there was the dawning and the appearance of the sun, the moon, and the stars. The dawn "looked brilliant when it came up, since it was ahead of the sun." Together, people looked towards the place where the sun came out. The first to cry out was a bird, a parrot.

The core of this long myth is quite similar to the release and rising of the sun in Aztec myth. The Laurasian motif of release and rising of the sun is repeated several times. However, the Maya myth ties in the (South) East Asian motifs of ten suns and of shooting down most (nine) of them, as well as that of a bird announcing the rise of the sun. Again, human sacrifice is added to make the world livable and to sustain its functioning. The creation of humans from maize is a local development (substituting for earlier creation from primordial giant or animal). It is one that is echoed elsewhere in food producing societies

Other Amerindian variants of the Sun myth speak, just as in S.E. Asia and in some Indo-European areas, especially in those of Baltic and Germanic speech, of the sun and the moon as siblings. The Kekchi of Guatemala<sup>207</sup> tell a long story about the courtship of Sun and Moon. Again, the sun was shut up in room, released by a hero, both escaping as birds who were killed by fire but then reborn as sun and moon. A summary runs like this.

A certain king's daughter used to do her weaving in the patio. A young man passed by, carrying a deer while returning from a hunt. He slipped on water for washing corn that had been thrown away by the young woman. When his deer hit the ground it burst and ashes fell out. He turned himself into a humming bird.<sup>208</sup> Her father shot at the bird and the girl kept it by her side when she slept in the kitchen locked by her father with a key. At night, the hummingbird regained consciousness, stood up as a young man, and began to make love to the girl. They left the room through the keyhole...

Her father told the volcano to blow lightning on them. The young man put himself in the shell of the turtle, but when lightning struck, the girl burst open. He saw her blood spilled on the water. The young man borrowed some dragonflies and told them to gather up the blood in bottles and left them behind. Two weeks later the little animals began to stir.<sup>209</sup> He returned and opened the bottles. Little snakes and other creatures came out. When he opened the one with blood he saw a little woman there. They left together. A certain man told him: "Your wife now needs you to talk to the deer," and said that the deer must step over the wife,<sup>210</sup> and with that she might be his companion again. The deer jumped over the wife three times, and then she became a woman...

After that she was the moon, and the man was the sun, and she was his wife.

This complicated tale provides for a structuralist's field day and is in need of a more detailed interpretation.<sup>211</sup> Briefly put, it revolves around the marriage of the Hunter and the Weaver girl. Whatever happens before the joining of the two, is seen in reverse after it. The Hunter kills the Deer (fire) before the two meet, the not so dead Deer revives the Weaver girl after their flight. Hunter is killed by water, Water keeps the blood of Weaver girl and revives her in miniature form. Hunter is again killed by the girl's father, and turns into a (small) humming

<sup>207</sup> Bierhorst 1990: 112, Shaw 1971.

<sup>208</sup> Note the long beak of this bird, and the role of sun birds in the other Amerindian myths in this section.

<sup>209</sup> Obviously, a connection with the phases of the moon and the menstrual cycle.

<sup>210</sup> A frequently seen method to get pregnant, for example in the late Vedic *Gṛhyasūtras*, where a widow has to step over the offerings made to her deceased husband to conceive a child (actually, from his brother, levirate).

<sup>211</sup> See my forthcoming book, *Origins*, on Laurasian mythology.

bird; Weaver Girl is killed by her father's stand-in, Volcano, and turns into a little woman. Weaver Girl was protected by being locked up in the kitchen, now Hunter is protected by a turtle shell. The single entities, Hunter and Weaver girl, are again separated after their revival, as Sun and Moon.

This myth evokes many Eurasian echoes. In the beginning, the (male) sun, a Hunter, is killed by the (female) moon, a Weaver Girl, when the woman throws maize water on the path of the hunter. Maize and water stand for human life also in the Quiché Maya myth, where humans are formed by them.

The deer, too, has a complicated symbolism: as it becomes clear later in the myth, it can stand for fire. Note also that the Indian heavenly deity (Father Heaven) pursuing his daughter, Dawn, is shot at and killed while having assumed the form of a deer.<sup>212</sup> The giver of life, maize water, thus kills the Sun, and it loses its fire in form of ashes emerging from the deer. One would expect that it is completely dead and extinguished, but this is not so, as we shall see.

Both the Hunter (Sun) and the Weaver Girl (Moon) have to die due to subterranean (volcanic) fire: that is, they have to go through the Mexican "oven of fire" to be reborn.<sup>213</sup> Sun is shielded by a turtle shell, but Moon, who had earlier on been protected by her kitchen walls and gate, dies and her blood is spilled all over the water. From her blood --the life force that the Meso-American gods covet just like the ancient Greek or Indian deities -- the Moon woman is partly reborn in form of snakes and partly<sup>214</sup> as a little woman. This transformation is exactly parallel to the earlier rebirth of Sun as a small bird, the hummingbird.

In order to regain her original size, a deer has to step over her thrice. The deer, a symbol of fire, had been killed first by the Sun male (Hunter) and then extinguished by the maize water (i.e., future humans) as well. Now it is the (revived) deer, fire, that gives light and life to Moon, just as the Aztec/Maya sun and moon gods had to go through fire to be reborn. And, only now both can marry and ascend to the sky.

The prototype for the framework of the myth seems to be the Chinese myth of the Cowherd (K'ien-niu) and the Weaver Girl (Chih-nü), who live on both sides of the Milky Way and can meet only once per year (see n. 150). The myth been imported into Japan as Tanabata tale. The Cowherd is substituted in this non-pastoral culture by someone else who deals with animals, the Hunter. Both he and the Weaver Girl can meet just once, like their Chinese counterparts, and are separated forever, even after their revival, as Sun and Moon.

The sexual aspect of their relationship, seen earlier in that of Uşas/Amaterasu and their brothers/father, is prominent here as well, only that in this myth the role of Sun and Moon are reversed: the female moon is shut up in a house, not the female sun. However, a male deity "opens" the gate when they both escape through the keyhole,<sup>215</sup> a faint echo of the Vala/Iwato myth discussed in detail, above. Note also that the new Japanese emperor and his "sister", his ancestress Amaterasu, get together for a joint, secretive meal during the night of his installation, in a secluded house on the ceremonial ground.

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<sup>212</sup> Heaven and sunlight are often not distinguished in the Veda, both are called *suvar/svar*. Note that in an Oaxaca story (Mexico, see Bierhorst 1990) the husband of the old woman, who is the substitute mother of Sun and Moon, is a deer and is killed by them: fire has to die so that the sun can re-emerge. Cf. the South American Xingu myth, where it is not a deer but a tapir substitute who has to die to attract sunlight.

<sup>213</sup> Like the Biblical Daniel in the oven.

<sup>214</sup> Snakes (and birds, butterflies) often figure in rebirth motifs, because of their 'double' birth: they are first born as eggs, then again from these eggs, and then change their skin and thus are reborn that way for a third and more times. The motif is common in India, see again PB 25.15.

<sup>215</sup> One wonders what this stands for before the introduction of Spanish doors.

Leaving aside the characterization as sun and moon, it almost looks as if the girl's father (who remains unnamed and uncharacterized) is a faint echo of Father Heaven, and the Weaver Girl of his daughter Dawn (sexually assaulted by her brothers). If so, the role of the Hunter who takes away Fire (the deer) would correspond to stealing (Ved. *pra-math*) the fire by Prometheus/Mātariśvan (RV 1.93.6). The Hunter is punished by death (slipping on water), Prometheus is punished by Father Heaven: he is chained to a rock while an eagle eats his liver. Notable is that, in Kekchi myth, Sun "steals" Fire all by himself, but is punished, indirectly, by proto-humans (maize water); in Greek myth, Prometheus steals it from Zeus for the humans. In Indian myth, the Stealer of fire does so for the current generation of gods, Indra etc., --which is closer to the Kekchi version. Indeed, the role of Fire is to revive both Sun and Moon, not to 'work' for humans. The role of "Father Heaven" in killing his daughter is remarkable as well: he orders 'Volcano', thus a god or force of the netherworld (like Hephaistons/Vulcanus) to act and throw fire at her and her lover, Hunter. The "theft" of fire thus is avenged and "reversed" by killing with divine fire.

In sum, the myth echoes many aspects of Greek, Indian, Japanese and Chinese myth. If the Laurasian pattern is applied, this does not surprise. We can expect that Eurasian myths, motifs and mythemes are reflected in those of the immigrants from Siberia, the Amerindians. It is remarkable, though, how well some minute aspects of Eurasian myth have been retained, some 10,000 years or more after the migration. The myth also serves as another useful reminder of the fact that a small, illiterate culture can retain important archaisms, while neighboring literate cultures (in case, the Maya) may have altered, re-interpreted and re-assembled the old myths and motif as to fit their advanced, agriculture-based city civilization. In the end, we have to take into account all versions of a tale as we cannot predict which trait or mytheme will become important.

In still other cases, the sun has several brothers which reminds of the Chinese myth of the ten suns. For example, the tale of the origin of day and night, told by the Yabarana on the upper Orinoco, occupies a curious position, with a mixture of North, Central and South American motives.<sup>216</sup>

After two preceding eras had been destroyed by fire and by a flood, the sun stood in heaven without movement. <sup>217</sup> There were two brothers, Ochi and Mayowoca. Ochi caught the sun in a basket. Mayowoca was instructed that it must never be opened. However, Ochi opened it when Mayowoca was looking for fruits on a tree. The Sun bird flew out of the box and night descended.

After several years, Mayowoca sent the *conoto* bird to search for the sun; *conoto* found a shining ball of light, here on earth. The sun had been running back and forth at the zenith, and this had created day and night. The *conoto* bird threw the sun back to earth and put it back into the basket. Afterwards, it rose again to the sky, standing still only momentarily.

Mayowoca told Ochi that they will live separately in the West and the East, (as Moon and Sun). Mayowoca then created the third world, released new humans from a mountain, and finally rose up to the clouds.

As in the Cherokee myth, the sun is caught in a basket and her voice *viz.* bird song is heard from within; when the box is opened the sun bird flies out. However, differently from the Cherokee and Xingu versions (below), night descends. Again, as in the Cherokee (and the

<sup>216</sup> Lévi-Strauss, 1972: 168, M. 416 (Yabarana). It is important to note that the original myth must have been widespread in Amazonia.

<sup>217</sup> See above n. 12 (Bible: Joshua, Hawai'i: Maui; Inca ritual).

Biblical Joshua, Hawai'ian Maui, and Inca) myths, the sun was fixed in the sky and therefore too hot. It is not shot down as in Chinese and Hmong myth, but induced to move about and standing still only momentarily (at the solstices). In these versions it is not the fear that the sun may never return from its home at the cold winter solstice but that it may stay on top of us forever, creating perpetual heat. Obviously, this is the summer solstice version of the sun myth, which needs to be discussed elsewhere in more detail.

Finally, a myth of the Xingu who live on the Brazilian highlands, briefly summarized as follows.<sup>218</sup>

In the beginning it was all dark. It was always night. There was no day. There was no fire. The brothers Kuát and Iaê, the sun and the moon, did not know what to do with their people: they were all dying of hunger.

After much thought they made an image of a tapir and filled it with manioc and other things that would rot. After a few days the sun gave it to the flies to take it to the village of the birds. The birds' village already had the day.

The *iapi-aruiipa* bird understood the flies: that there were a lot of rotten things like the maggot package they had brought that were good to eat down below. The birds flew down to earth and began to eat the food left for them near the tapir effigy in which the sun had hidden.

Finally the king vulture also approached. The sun grabbed one of his feet and the other birds fled. The sun told the king vulture: "we're not going to kill you. We only want they day. That was the reason we called you." The king vulture ordered to other birds to bring the day.

After several, increasingly successful trials by various birds, the *jacubim* bird finally came back, all decked out with a red macaw headdress, earrings, armbands and leg ornaments. The Moon said: "This is the day. That is the true red macaw. The other one wasn't pure." When the bird landed everything became bright.

Then the vulture began to instruct the Sun and the Moon, saying: "In the morning, the day is born, in the afternoon it starts to fade, and then it disappears all at once. When this happens, don't think we took it back. The day disappears, and afterwards comes the night. When the night comes, don't think that it will stay dark and that we stole the day from you. Don't be afraid. It will always come back."

The birds, with the vulture as their king, live high up in the sky in their own village, like the Eurasian gods. Apparently they already had the day, in their heavenly realm, but not the humans down on earth. The first rising of the sun (and apparently also fire) are brought from heaven down to earth by the Sun and Moon themselves. We notice echoes of Prometheus who steals fire for the humans. As in most Amerindian and some Eurasian versions, the sun and the first day are gained by trickery. Here, too, the sun is hidden in a receptacle. This is neither a cave nor underground, but an animal, the tapir, which recalls the Kekchi myth from Guatemala, where the sun is hidden in a deer. The day is delivered by a red messenger bird, not liberated by a hero as frequently in Eurasia and North America. Nevertheless, the main ingredients of Laurasian myth are present: the hidden sun, the messenger bird finding/bringing it for the first time, delivery by trickery of the sun from its rightful owners.

In sum, the myth of the Hidden Sun is found all the way from Europe, via the Greater Near East, India, South East Asia and Japan to the Americas. The sun is captured in an

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<sup>218</sup> Raymond van Over 1980: 108, derived from from Orlando Villas and Claudio Vilas Bôas, *Xingu: The Indians, their Myths*, New York 1970: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

enclosed space and must be delivered, usually by a heroic trickster figure, through trickery, ritual or blunt force. It seems to be a very old feature that the sun can be represented in myth by an animal, either a deer in the Americas, or a cow in Chinese (cowherd and weaver girl) and in Indo-European myth. The two major Laurasian versions reflect the evolution of ensuring food supply, from hunting to (predominant) pastoralism even where some agriculture was already present. (In agricultural societies, such as those of the ancient Near East and early India, the image of the Bull of Heaven became more important, note RV 3.38; cf. Lincoln 1981: 65 sqq).

In short, the basic features of the Laurasian cave myth agree with each other, and its position within the Laurasian creation myths is the same: soon after initial the creation of heaven and earth, in the second age. The Polynesians (and the Vedic Indians) put it most succinctly: between Father Heaven and Mother Earth, lying on top of each other, there was no space; it was too dark for their children. They had to be pushed apart by a hero deity (Toko, Indra), who then delivers the Sun from its home (Indra, Maui).

### The Four Ages

As has been stressed several times, in Meso- and South America, the appearance of the sun is not a re-appearance, as it often is in Eurasia, but the long-awaited *first* rising in our (present) world. An inkling of this concept is also present in Eurasia: in Indian myth, the first rising of the sun or, as the Veda has it, the first dawn, is always equated with the its yearly re-occurrence at New Year. What has happened *in illo tempore* has to be repeated now. The question therefore rises whether the scheme of three (or four) previous worlds is the original one, or whether it is a unique local development in the Meso-America. The latter seems to be the case. The Amerindians in North and South America usually do not share the same concept and agree more with the Eurasian myths about a creation of light/sun soon after the initial creation.<sup>219</sup> However, from the important Meso-American zone, the new concept has radiated to some neighboring areas, as was seen in the Yabarana myth quote above.

We can even find some traces of the Meso-American myth in Eurasia, though in a different garb: there is the Southern Chinese (Miao) and South East Asian (Hmong) myth of several (usually ten) suns that existed once, before the present one remained. The Miao and Chinese have ten previous suns that were too hot (apparently at Summer solstice), and thus nine of them had to be shot down by a great archer.<sup>220</sup> This recalls other archer myths such as that of Rudra (Śiva) who shoots at Father Heaven.<sup>221</sup> A similar myth may have existed even earlier in India, as a bow shooter appears in Indus iconography (2600-1900 BCE) as well as in

<sup>219</sup> With some local exceptions, such as the Yabarana tale (above) or the Vedic myth of Yama and Yamī (MS 1.4.) where the gods, *nota bene* still in their heavenly world, create the night to end the eternal day that lets Yamī forever remember the death of her brother Yama, a god but the first mortal. (Cf. the reverse Izanami motif, Kojiki 1. 7).

<sup>220</sup> Note the importance of the number '10' in connection with the sun; for such decades see Lévi-Strauss 1972; note also that in the Kyujiki, Uzume counts up to ten on her upturned tubb; see Aston 1896: 44.

<sup>221</sup> Often the bright day time heaven (*dyaus*) = *svar* 'sunlight' and thus = Sun. The sun itself is 'shot at' in the slightly later Indian Pravargya myth (Kaṭha Āraṇyaka), where the Rudra's, the great archer's, bow string is gnawed at by ants, the bow suddenly expands, cuts off the head of Rudra and sends it hurling through space as the Sun; in this ritual Rudra = glowing Pravargya clay vessel = Sun. (This version looks like one of Lévy-Strauss' mythical inversions.) However, the Pravargya myth is connected with summer solstice; therefore, the hurled, cut off head of Rudra may represent the typical Southerners' preoccupation with moving the sun from its 'fixed' position at Summer solstice, at the end of June. This point may be added to the interpretations given in Witzel 2004. -- As for other archer myths (see n.124, 151, 189), cf. also Herakles shooting at the eagle devouring Prometheus' liver, and at the eagle carrying mead (in India rephrased as the eagle carrying Soma).



Dravidian religion (Murugan). However, the idea of shooting at the new sun(s) is also found in Central America, for example with the Maya (see above) or with the Huichol of Mexico, where the new sun is shot at. The Baltic myth of the three suns (Saule) may provide another clue. Here, it is the three aspects of the sun that are meant: the morning sun at dawn, the hot midday sun, and the evening sun at dusk. In India, we find similar appellations of the sun. All of this indicates that there are ideas about previous suns, not just three or four but frequently, ten.

Apparently the Meso-Americans (and their old Eurasian continental neighbors before immigration to America, the Miao and Chinese), have combined the myth of the four ages (Greece, India, Iran, etc.) with that of the ten (or three) suns. Iranian myth has three previous ages before the sun and all living beings retreat into the cave-like fortress of Yima. Another trans-Laurasian feature is that the Apache even name their eras in the same way as the western Eurasians (golden, silver, red, black).<sup>222</sup>

That we indeed are dealing with an ancient myth of four ages also appears from the confusion in Maya myth about the proper position in the mythical sequence of the great heroes, Xbalanque and Hunahpu, so that we now live in the fifth one. This is a point that also confused Hesiod (Theogony), who has the famous Four Ages (gold, silver, bronze, iron), but adds also an extra one for the Greek heroes. Though Hunahpu clearly is a god, he has attracted much of the heroic features of such semi-divine trickster characters as Herakles, a son of Zeus (Father Heaven).

Even given these Amerindian developments, the underlying idea of a succession of generations of gods and their corresponding 'four ages' is found in many Laurasian mythologies. The Indo-Europeans and Near Eastern peoples usually saw it as a succession issue: as a (violent) takeover by a younger generation of gods, in Greek myth, Uranos by Kronos, Kronos by Zeus. Hesiod presents these successive ages in pessimistic fashion, from the blissful golden age to the current evil iron age. In Amerindian myth, one is more optimistic: the gods succeeded, through several not very successful trials, to improve upon their creation, until the state reached in the current, 'fifth sun,' where humans finally can speak and act properly.

## § 2.6. Eurasian and Amerindian myths

As seen above time and again, the basic structure or the Amerindian stories is quite similar to those of Eurasia. However, in Meso-American myth, the sun is usually delivered not from a cave or a house but from *below* the surface of the earth. This is the home of the ancestors of mankind,<sup>223</sup> where they lived in semi-darkness, and it also is the spirit world of the departed ancestors.

These concepts provide a close link to some features only hinted at in Eurasian myth. Japanese scholars have often stressed that the sun in the Iwato cave has really died and is reborn at New Year or, at the first occurrence, in primordial times. The Vara myth of Iran shares some of these features, too: the sun, and all other sources of light, have retreated into the underground Vara fortress, and the sun released from there only when Yima's terrible

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<sup>222</sup> However, the Chinese and Iranian colors representing the directions of the sky are different: E = blue/green, W = white, N = black, S = red.

<sup>223</sup> The emergence of humans from below is mixed with emergence from a tree, which is prominently found in Iceland, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and Africa, cf. n. 229.

winter has passed. In such Zoroastrian versions, the new world, another golden age, will start only at the end of the present age, and the same is hoped for in Old Norse myth (Edda).<sup>224</sup>

While the topic of death and rebirth of the sun is not directly expressed in Eurasian myth but clearly present in the annual and daily rebirth of the sun, it is expressively affirmed in Meso-American myth. The future sun has to die in an oven and has to be reborn out of fire.<sup>225</sup> The oven is a likely emblem for transforming something into fire or by fire, which is the equivalent of the sun all over Laurasia. In some myths, ashes are accompaniments or substitutes of fire, as in the Kekchi myth, where ashes emerge from a killed deer. Both in the formalized Quiché myth as well as in the more popular Huichol one (Bierhorst 1990), the sun can only be reborn after five days, apparently the 5 and 1/4 days that are in excess in the year of 12x30 days.<sup>226</sup>

It must then be fed by blood as, in the beginning, the sun was too weak to rise properly and had an unsteady, wobbling course. It could only be strengthened by something of its own color, by red human blood. Maya kings (and others) pierced and cut themselves, and offered their blood, just like their mythical ancestors had done. In Quiché myth, humans are sacrificed when fire, the symbol of sunlight, was first distributed among the various tribes. (The Quiché demanded human sacrifice from the other tribes before they shared fire with them.) However, the concept of a "wobbling sun" has its parallels or antecedents in Eurasia. According to the Vedic Indian text, *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (25. 10.11), the sun at first could not stay up in the sky; the gods had to support it. As usual in old India, they did so with a ritual, and got additional help from the Sarasvatī river (= Milky Way, Witzel 1984). That is why both the heavenly and the mundane Sarasvatī are meandering, "bent" as the text says, because they could not fully support the sun.

In most Meso-American cases dealt with so far, the sun was unable to emerge, rise or stay up in the sky. All of them reflect the re-emergence of the sun at winter solstice, when it has to make the difficult turn around the southeastern bend of its yearly course north and south. It seems, therefore, that the Mexican myth has preserved an ancient topic, otherwise lost.<sup>227</sup>

Occasionally, however, the sun stops altogether, in mid-sky, such as was seen in Yabarana myth and is found in other (sub-)tropical myths, for example in Hawai'i (Maui myth), with the Incas (stone pole in a temple, to which the sun is tied), or in the Hebrew Bible (Joshua).<sup>228</sup> This refers to a summer solstice myth which is contrasted to the temperate climate myth of winter solstice (Indo-European, pre-Yayoi Japan, etc.). It has to be dealt with in detail, separately.

In sum, even Meso-American mythology, aberrant at first sight, appears to be closely linked to the ancestral Eurasian one. It has transformed some features, apparently due to

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<sup>224</sup> Theoretically, we can think of --and investigate-- whether the Icelandic idea has been borrowed 'back', via the Ukrainian Goths, from Northern Iranian tribes, such as the Scythians/Sauromatians. In that case, corroborating evidence is required, say, a description of the cave of the sun (not found), or of the search for the sun. Cf. the later Indian myth of the four ages (González Reimann 2002) and similar first mill. CE Zoroastrian concepts.

<sup>225</sup> Note the Egyptian and Greek myth of the phoenix (*bennu*), who arises out of fire and ashes.

<sup>226</sup> Note that this feature of the myth appears as far south as with the Houarochiri Quechua, along with a New Year carnival motif, see Bierhorst 1988: 224; just as in Quiché Maya myth (*Popol Vuh*), this motif is accompanied by that of a revolt of the cooking utensils, in short, a sort of primitive carnival at the five day period at the end of the year; cf. the 13th month of Vedic calendar and the European '12 Nights' around Winter solstice and New Year.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. also the snake motif: the plumed serpent or the shadow of a snake, slithering down the steps of the Maya pyramid of Kukulcan at Chichen Itza, at equinox.

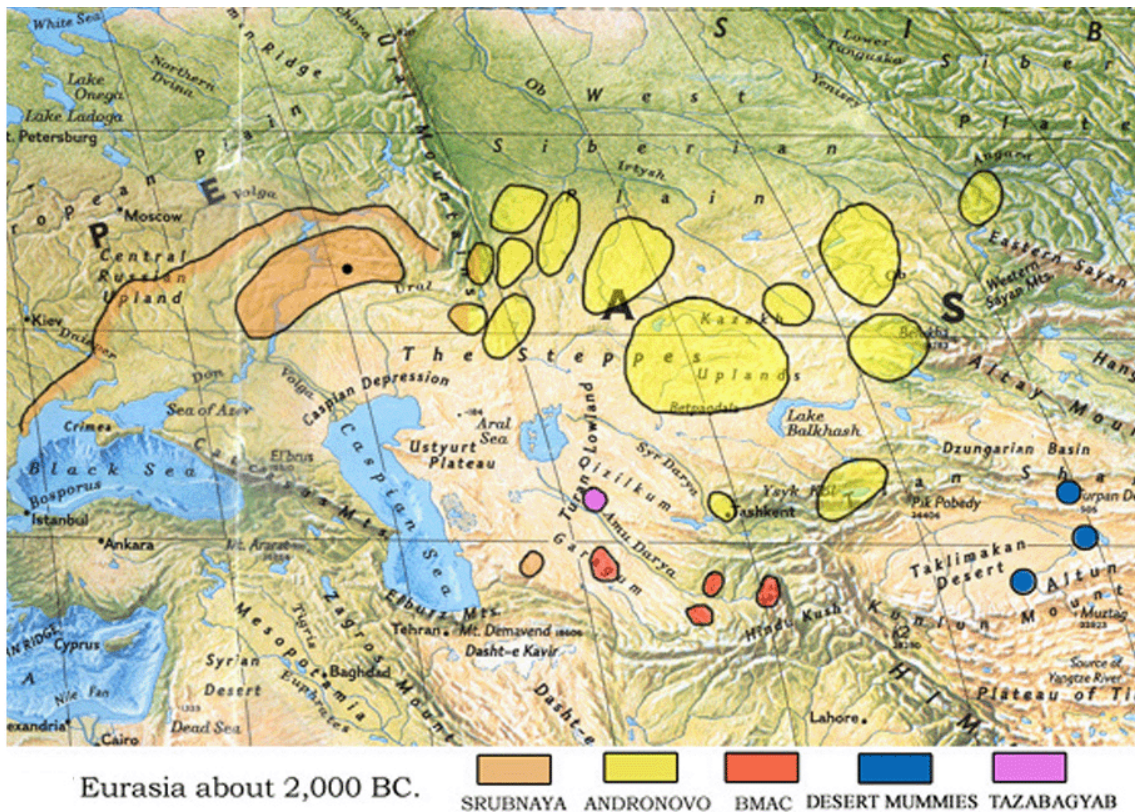
<sup>228</sup> For details see a further paper (in work) on the Laurasian myths of Summer solstice.

individual, local environment, new social and economic configurations, and especially in emerging large chiefdoms and states, the stress on maize agriculture (origins of humans from maize).

At the same time, due to the isolation of the Americas and the early date of Amerindian immigration from Northeast Asia, the extent variation provides a good test case, a prime example, of what can happen to ancient Laurasian myth: how it can be transformed independently, but also how we can retrieve many old features once we start comparing data all across Laurasia.

### § 2.7 An old subregion of Laurasian myth in Central Asia

In Eurasia, another important variation of Laurasian mythology can be detected through the comparison of the Old Indian and Old Japanese myth of the Hidden Sun. It is obvious that these myths (and related rituals) share many more features with each other than with those of the surrounding Eurasian area. This points to a close relationship, in addition and going beyond the common Laurasian inheritance seen in the variants of the myth found in Eurasia and the Americas. A. Yoshida (1962, 1974) has looked for precisely such a relationship of Japanese myths in Greek and Scythian mythology as well as for possible intermediate links -- which are largely missing in Central Asia. However, the Vedic evidence detailed above and its reconstructed Indo-Iranian predecessors provide just that missing link.



From: D. Anthony: Samara Project, <http://users.hartwick.edu/iaes/newsletter/newsletter.html>)

The mainly pastoral cultures of the Eurasian steppes (here represented by the Andronovo) culture, extend further east, up to the borders of Korea.

The early Indo-Iranian area has to be located, around 2000 BCE, somewhere in the Central Eurasian steppe belt close to the homeland of the Uralic speakers (Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian etc.) as well as that of the Yeneseian language family (Ket, etc.). Early Uralic and Yeneseian loanwords, such as the word for the group of gods, the Asura, indicate a close geographical relationship between the speakers of these three language families. The Indo-Iranians thus lived south of the Eurasian woodlands (*taiga*), in the Eurasian steppe belt that stretched from Hungary and Rumania all the way to eastern Manchuria.

Given the common transhumance movements and the quick communications across the wide grasslands, they lived close enough to the peoples of the eastern steppes, precisely the area where we find, admittedly much later, in mid-first millennium CE, the speakers of the Koguryo (Kōkuri) language in Manchuria and North Korea. The Kōkuri language is closest related to Old Japanese (Beckwith 2004) among all their mutual neighbors in East Asia. Further, the intrusive Yayoi culture that was brought into Japan via the Korean mainland, can now be dated back to 1000 BCE. Therefore, somewhere between the Tien Shan/Altai mountains and Manchuria, pre-Koguryo-Japonic and pre-Vedic speakers can have been in contact. This ought to have taken place before c.1500-1000 BCE, when the western steppes took on an Iranian (thus, decidedly non-Vedic) character. Obviously, the whole question needs to be examined in detail by evaluating all archaeological and methodical data from early Central Asia.

Nevertheless, the basic features of the underlying Eurasian myth of the Hidden Sun are widely found also outside the Pre-Vedic/Pre-Japonic area, as discussed above (§2.4-6). This version must go back to Laurasian times, before the immigration into the Americas, which is minimally put at 11,500 BCE but perhaps, according to recent finds in S. America, rather before 35,000 BCE.

The Vala-Iwato case may thus be one of the earliest cases where a particular (Central Asian) mythological sub-regional area can be traced, similar to the one that existed, around 1500/1000 BCE, in Greece and the Near East (myth of castrating and killing the last king of heaven by Kronos/Zeus), or of Central America (emergence myths of the sun and of humans).

In short, in Laurasian mythology, the myth of the Hidden Sun functions as a proof of unexpected long distance relationships, similar to those between Old Icelandic or Old Irish and Vedic in linguistics. But, it also is an example of an equally unexpected, ancient subgrouping, that may be comparable to that of the easternmost Indo-European language, Tocharian in Xinjiang, with the western Indo-European *kentum* languages such as Greek, Latin, Germanic, etc. In both cases, mythological and linguistic, an isolated archaism leads on to the right track and soon reveals the underlying structure, the Laurasian story line.

Below: Natural vegetation in Eurasia from c. 2000 BCE until present. Available at: [http://www.esd.ornl.gov/projects/qen/NEW\\_MAPS/eurasia0.gif](http://www.esd.ornl.gov/projects/qen/NEW_MAPS/eurasia0.gif); for more details see: <http://members.cox.net/quaternary/nercEURASIA.html>.

Present-Potential (i.e. in absence of agriculture) 4,000-0 y.a.



## § 2.8. Summary and Outlook

Reconsidering the features of the Laurasian myths dealing with the emergence of the Sun, we must recall the difference between *first emergence* of the sun in Meso-American myth and the (*re-*)*emergence* of the sun/dawn in the myths of the Indo-Europeans, Japanese, Miao, etc.<sup>229</sup> Within the general framework of the Laurasian Four Ages, there is either

<sup>229</sup> The emergence from a tree (cf. n. 221) is prominently found in Iceland (*Askr* and *Embla*), Japanese folktales (Kaguyahime), non-Chinese (i.e. Austronesian) Taiwan, etc., and also in Australia, C. Africa. This seems to be one of the oldest motifs of human mythology, much older than Laurasian myth itself; see my *Origins* (forthc.)

- emergence, in Central America, with the increasingly *positive* nature of each succeeding world,<sup>230</sup> or
- first dawn, with the Indo-Europeans and in the greater Near East, with the increasingly *negative* aspects of declining "goodness/righteousness" of each of the Four Ages.

Taking into account both the Eurasian and general Laurasian aspects of the myth of the hidden sun, we can now take several steps beyond the well-reconstructable Indo-Iranian myth, described in the initial sections (§1.1sq), and can begin to describe its *earliest traceable* form (and some of its very early variants). Only then, we can ask the question: what does the Laurasian cave myth mean?

In condensed form, the Laurasian myth of the Hidden Sun can be summed up as follows.

1. - sun/dawn/light has not (yet) appeared / is hidden in a receptacle, frequently because of older gods, and often annoyed due to (sexual) molestation
2. - gods/trickster try to remedy this, often in association with early humans
3. - they send animal/human-like messengers to explore and to entice the keeper of sun
4. - they approach the place of the sun and use tricks, magic, poetry, and force to succeed
5. - the receptacle (cave/chamber/box ) containing the sun is opened
6. - sun comes out (often because of curiosity)
7. - sun is hindered to go back permanently / or only periodically so (days, seasons)
8. - sun light appears; life becomes possible
9. - the owners/keepers of the sun are defeated and an exchange is arranged

These basic features are played out, time and again, in the various parts of Laurasia, with some secondary regional variants:

- sun as cow (Indo-Europeans, Chinese) or deer (Americas), hiding because of molestation (Indo-Europeans, Japan); mostly though, sun is simply shut up;
- sun is delivered by combined magic/powerful speech/heroic force (Japan, Indo-Eur.), own curiosity (Japan, S. China, S.E. Asia) or that of the messengers (N./S. America), though most commonly by trickery;
- sun must be 'revived' after the stay in the cave (Japan, Indo-Eur.), or must actually be reborn from fire (Meso-America), based on an old Laurasian motif (fire = sun);
- previous owners are beaten off (Indo-Eur.), offenders of sun are punished (Japan, Americas: Cherokee, Maya), agreements are reached (S. America, Veda); more generally, a balance of forces is achieved.

The inherent regional subgroupings are in need of detailed investigation through a comparison of other foundational myths (slaying the dragon, flood myths, creation myths, etc.). Then, it will be possible to determine whether the indicated regional features are more generally sustained or whether they appear just in the present myth complex. A preliminary investigation indicates that the former is the case.

Looking for an understanding of the myth complex dealing with the Hidden Sun, one can discern, at various interpretative levels:

- \* nature mythology: explanation of winter solstice / of day and night / of original creation of light / of the close family relation and yet spatially distant relationship of sun and moon; rebirth of sun and nature after winter solstice.

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<sup>230</sup> An exception are the Hopi who tell of a flood that was avoided, after two previous destructions, cf. Thompson 1932-36: A1018.

- \* family/society: discussion whether (primordial) incest is allowed or not; thus, whether sun/moon are married or just cooperative siblings; other relations are explored (sun and brothers, sun and father, etc.) ;
- \* contests at winter solstice between moieties of the people, or inside a family, to reestablish cosmic and social order and harmony ;
- \* arrangement of exchange 'circles': between god/humans, humans/others; family/deceased ancestors, as to keep cosmic and societal order in place.

Myth artistically combines many of such features into a meaningful whole, varying the original Laurasian layout according to individual local conditions. They are preconditioned by path dependencies (Farmer *et al.* 2002) due to earlier cultural stages, and by the contemporary social and religious conditions. Myth tries to make a significant statement about human life: "where do we come from, why are we here, where do we go?" In the present case, the focus is on the original creation and yearly re-creation of light/sunshine and its beneficial effects on human life and society. This myth binds humans to their natural habitat and social background as well as their regularly repeated annual changes. It provides them with reasons for the cyclical seasons of nature, for their festivals and rituals, and tells of a deep underlying meaning of these yearly rhythms, satisfying basic spiritual needs.

The present myth is part of a larger narrative frame work that cannot be dealt with here in any detail,<sup>231</sup> and it is part of the initial stages of creation, after the emergence of the universe and of heaven and earth. This process leads from original creation (conception) and birth of the world to its end, reflecting the life cycle of a human being, along with the old hope for an eventual return and rebirth. In other words, the early Laurasian shamans<sup>232</sup> saw the world, not entirely unexpectedly, in analogy to the human body and human experience. Those who came up with this scheme found a convenient way to arrange their still older (African/Gondwana) stories along a 'logical' story line, of which the present myth complex is but a small section.

The shamans' concept of *birth-death-rebirth*, familiar to their contemporaries from observance and experience of nature, has struck such a profound cord with the people coming *Out of Africa*, that these very early path dependencies of Laurasian myth still are *unwittingly* followed by the great majority of humans --and some prominent contemporary

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<sup>231</sup> It includes some 15 major themes and stages:

- 1 primordial waters/chaos
- 2 primordial egg/ giant
- 3 primordial hill/island
- 4 Father Heaven/Mother Earth
- 5 Heaven is pushed up / Milky Way
- 6 incest of heaven and his daughter/dawn / the hidden sun
- 7 the gods beat off / kill their predecessors
- 8 the Sun is the father of mankind, especially of chieftains/kings; "royal" rituals
- 9 first humans and first evil deeds ("sin", also by a demi-god) / incest
- 10 heroes and nymphs
- 11 killing the dragon / heavenly drink
- 12 bringing of fire / culture / food
- 13 spread of humankind / local chieftains/kings
- 14 final destruction of humans, world/gods (variant of Four Ages theme)
- 15 emergence of a new heaven and a new earth.

<sup>232</sup> More about these early spiritual leaders, in a Laurasian context, in a companion paper.

politicians-- whether they call themselves Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, or else. After all, even our scientific views about the human life cycle and about the shadowy emergence and predictable end of the universe still follow similar paths.

For us, just like for our early Laurasian ancestors some 75,000 years ago, the basic questions have remained the same, and the answers given still are strikingly similar.

[**Note:** additional pictures and maps are presented in the accompanying picture file]

### ABBREVIATIONS

A.	Amaterasu ō-mikami
ĀpŚS	Āpastamba Śrautasūtra
Armen.	Armenian
ĀŚS	Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra
Cher.	Cherokee
IJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JB	Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa
Kal.	Kalasha
K.	Kojiki
Kiki	Kojiki & Nihon Shoki
KZ	Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung
Laur.	Lurasian
Mbh	Mahābhārata
MS	Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā
N.	Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)
Nur.	Nuristani
PB	Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa
RV	Ṛgveda (Saṃhitā)
RVKh	Ṛgveda Khila
SnW.	Susa.no Wo
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
StII	Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft



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