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Long-range mythical continuities across Asia and Africa

Iconographic and linguistic evidence concerning leopard symbolism

Slide presentation, 6th Round Table on Myth

Harvard University, Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, 8-10 May 2004



Acknowledgments etc.

- This is an updated version of the slide presentation as delivered at the Harvard Round Table, 8-10 May 2004: superficially revised in the light of the conference discussions
- I am indebted to my colleagues at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands, who discussed earlier versions of this presentation in November-December 2003; to my family, who after years of my terrorising them with global honey-bee symbolism took the transition to global leopard symbolism in their stride; to Michael Witzel and Harvard University, for inviting me to this Round Table and extending the means towards my participation; and to the conference participants, for welcoming me (a 'sacred outsider' – only in terms of my argument below – from outside their circle, discipline, and regional specialisation) into their circle, greatly inspiring and instructing me with their own papers and discussions, suffering the imposition of my close to a hundred slides at the very end of conference day 2, suggesting helpful additions and possible confirmations (Michael Witzel, Richard Villems, Whalen Lai, and George Thompson), and particularly helping me to find state-of-the-art alternatives for what they pointed out were still glaring defects, omissions, and sources of misunderstanding in the version as presented (Steve Farmer, Vaclav Blazek, Anne Daladier)
- Meanwhile the reader/viewer is warned that this presentation is a limited selection from a complex book-length argument; both linguistically and iconographically a much wider range of data is reviewed and analysed in the book (*The leopard's unchanging spots*, 2005)
- For this post-conference revised version of the presentation, I have added a number of slides which are likely to be of interest to Asianists



0. Where to begin?: the high priest's two riddles

- The project reported on in this presentation is unmistakably of an impossible scope, a fool's errand through time, space, and specialist disciplines ranging from Africanist social science to history, linguistics, genetics, archaeology, art history, comparative mythology, comparative religion, etc. No person in his right mind would ever embark on such a project, no specialist team would ever be prepared to execute it collectively, and under normal circumstances, no funding agency would ever find it eligible.
- For me it has been the most recent project in a long series, ever since the 1970s, in which I seek to go, perfectly scholarly, beyond the narrow local horizons of time and space in which most Africanist anthropological work is conducted, to diversify and actualise my additional resources in the methodological and linguistic field, addressing new paradigms -- such as modes of production, (proto-)globalisation, and (neo)diffusionism,-- and in the process helping to explode the prevailing isolated and essentialised view of Africa that merely reflects 19-20th c. CE global geopolitics.



- However, in this case there was an additional, personal factor that fuelled my passion, and one that will be difficult to appreciate in the Harvard Round Table context,
 - where only a few linguists rely on an intensive personal intercultural encounter in the context of fieldwork in Asia, but most base their research on texts, digs and lexical data bases relating to the distant past and to people they will never encounter in person
 - And where the onslaught of New Age self-indulging, politically suspect pseudo-scholarship is a genuine threat
- From the 1960s, I spent two decades *objectifyingly and distantly* studying ecstatic religion in North and Central Africa as an anthropologist and historian, with considerable success. However, in 1988, during fieldwork in Francistown, Botswana, and typically as a result of a profound personal and professional crisis (see my book *Intercultural encounters*, 2003), an apprenticeship started which culminated, three years later, in my graduation as a sangoma in Southern Africa's main divinatory and healing cult – a status which I have kept up ever since in the form of a world-wide, partly e-based therapeutic practice and on which I have extensively published.
- There is no denying that this positioning was unusual for a professor of anthropology, and smacked more of New Age than I would prefer to be the case. However, my position brings out an underlying collective dilemma that goes very far beyond my person case. The objectifying and distancing of the cultural Other as the self-evident object of our North Atlantic academic research is merely one, and highly contentious, possible stance in the politics of global intercultural knowledge construction. I have used my *sangomahood* to academically explore other, less condescending, less subordinative, less hegemonic and less naïve positions, from 1998 onwards no longer as an anthropologist but in the Rotterdam chair of intercultural philosophy.
- Meanwhile the passion and the bewilderment generated by the *sangoma* initiation clung on to me, and it has been an important motivation why I have embarked on the present project, and stuck to it even when its monstrous proportions were driven home to me. To speak with the *Blues Brothers* in the motion picture of that name, and as self-ironically as they do, 'I am on a mission from God'. The high priest's two riddles will show what this boast means.



This is not the High God shrine at Nata (which it would be sacrilegious to photograph) but a very similar, secular construction, not in Botswana but in Swaziland. The Nata shrine however actually consists of two adjacent wickerwork huts: one where the supplicants kneel, each covered under a white sheet and with their back to the other hut, where the high priest officiates and where the High God's voice emanates from

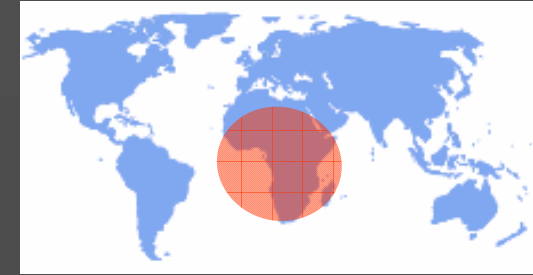


- At the beginning of my training period, my mentrix had me taken to the local shrine of the high god, Mwali, at Nata, in Central Botswana, 200 km from Francistown.
- Over a year later, after my graduation, she took me there herself for final confirmation of my new responsibilities. On that occasion, the high priest intimated two riddles to me:
 1. He claimed the enigmatic title of 'Mbedzi', and
 2. *I could only enter his High God shrine with the 'traditional uniform of my kind of people, a leopard skin'*
- Riddle (1) led me to consider, briefly, possible historical links between South Asia, Southern Africa, and the Bight of Benin.
- Riddle (2) made me embark on a grand tour of leopard symbolism, the provisional result of which is hereby presented.





- I propose to make a trip around the world, looking for attestations of leopard symbolism and *pardivesture*, i.e. the custom of humans cloaking themselves in leopard skins
- Initially our trip will be mere naive sight-seeing, a feast of rapid visual impressions without theoretical and methodological questions being asked
- such questions will yet become central to our analysis,
 - for given current analytical paradigms in African studies it is far from obvious that African puzzles can be solved by reference to non-African data
 - nor is scholarly support for long-range, intercontinental comparison as extensive as it should be



1. The leopard in Africa

- The prominent Africanist Roy Willis (1997) describes African leopard symbolism in the following terms:
 - ‘...with the aardvark and pangolin, it is the leopard’s appearance, as well as its nature and habits, that underlies its symbolic significance.
 - The variegated coat of the leopard, black and white on a reddish field [this is wrong – WvB] makes it an apt vehicle for that combination of opposed qualities and attributes which, as with the scaly anteaters, carries a cosmic resonance.
 - Thus the leopard’s patterned coat stands in many local African cosmologies for the alternation of day and night, and of wet and dry seasons, as well as for the contrast of human village and wild forest.
 - The fierce and relentless character of the leopard, its unpredictable and treacherous disposition, make of it a convincing animal alter ego for the human despot, as stories, sayings, and artworks all over the continent attest.
 - In the words of a wry proverb from the Fipa of southwest Tanzania:
 - “He who dines with the leopard is liable to be eaten”.’
- *This brings out the leopard as a symbol of the ‘Exalted Insider’*

The late President Mobutu Sese Seko, emblematic of political leopard connotations in modern Africa, and explicitly insisting on leopard symbolism himself





1 A late 20th century *gelede* Yoruba mask from Benin, depicting a leopard on a fenced space as a symbol of unaccountable and violent royal rule: the Exalter Insider *par excellence*



2 Figurine in the form of a leopard skull, Igbo Ukwu 9th-14th C. CE



3 Elephant Mask with Leopard Crest, Bamileke, Grassfields, Cameroon, 20th century, textile and glass



4 Benin bronze leopard, 17th-19th c. CE, British war trophy



5 Leopard depicted on a shell, Igbo Ukwu 9th-14th c. CE, Nigeria





- The terrible connotations of the leopard provided food for the imagination
 - one of whose major representatives was Burroughs with his Tarzan books
- ivory figurine of a 'leopard man' subduing a human victim (Congo-Kinshasa, mid-20th century CE)
 - similar artificial iron claws are on display at the Tervuren Museum of Central Africa, near Brussels
- These 'leopard men' represent a form of *therianthropy*: identification between human person and animal species
- therianthropy is different from the ritual wearing of a leopard skin '*pardivesture*'
 - here the skin is put on and subsequently divested, clearly detached from the human person wearing it, thus leaving no doubt as to fact that the association between person and leopard is only temporary and – literally – superficial
 - *pardivesture* is a sign both of identification and (when divested) dissociation between human person and leopard
- While the leopard abounds in African art and myth, African '*pardivesture*' is limited to a few specific cases now to be inspected (1-5):



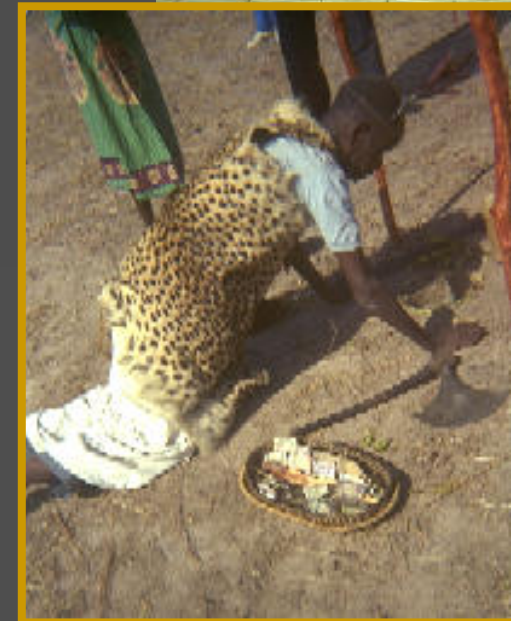
- 1. The ‘leopard-skin chief’

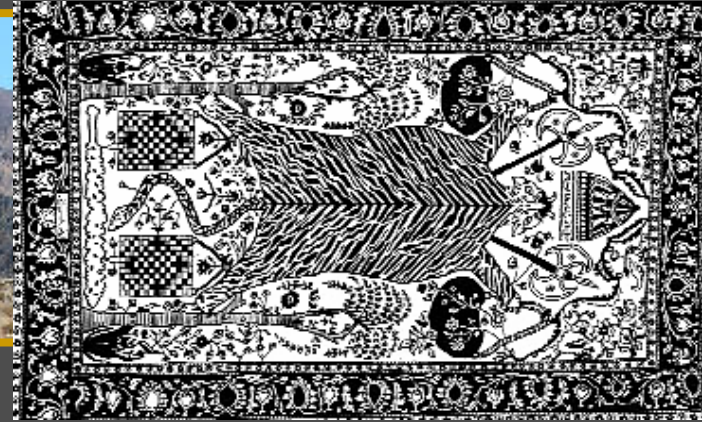
- Among the Nilotic-speaking peoples of southern Sudan, the ‘leopard-skin chief’ (famous through Evans-Pritchard’s description in *The Nuer*) is the typical leopard-skin wearer: representing (and being protected by) the sacred power of the earth, he has no formal sanctions, yet he arbitrates major conflicts successfully



■ 2. The king

- A presentday African king ('chief') posing in state; Mwene Mutondo Chipimbi, 1991, Shikombwe Royal Establishment, Kaoma, Zambia
- The 2nd picture shows king Kabambi Kahare, Nkoya, Western Zambia, sacrificing to his ancestors at the Kazanga festival, 1991.
 - The shrine (obscured by the king's shadow) has the form of an enamel bowl dug to its rim into the ground at the foot of a sacred shrub, and filled with home-brewed beer.
 - In the 19th c., the bowl was the occiput of a slain captive, and human blood served instead of beer. Hence the executioner's axe. The parallels with the Ancient Egyptian *imiut* shrine (and the *Sd* festival, for that matter) are considerable.





- 3. The marabout (Islamic specialist)
 - Maraboutism in North and West Africa largely derives from Middle Eastern Sufism, and while marabouts no longer wear animal skins, there is evidence that they once did
 - A marabout from Gambia; note the variegated necklace and shawl. Inset: Draa valley, Morocco – a typical marabout’s grave
- Leopard and tiger skins were conspicuous attributes of *Sufis*, member of brotherhoods often engaging in ecstatic practices: a Muslim variety of shamans, or at least of Sacred Outsiders
- Right: The poet Fakhr ad-Din ‘Iraqi preceded by Qalandari *Sufi* adepts, some wearing leopard skins.
- Top: A 17th c. CE Iran carpet belonging to a Shi’i Sufi dervish; the image is dominated by a tiger skin



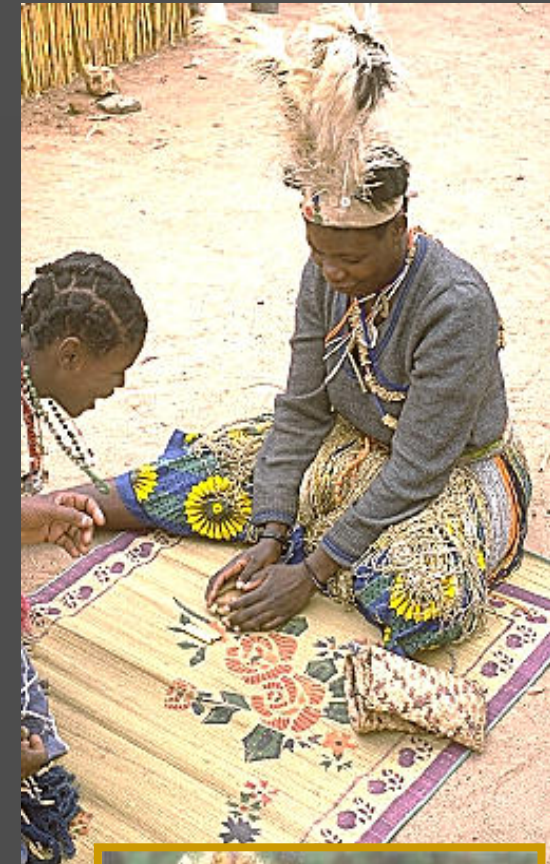


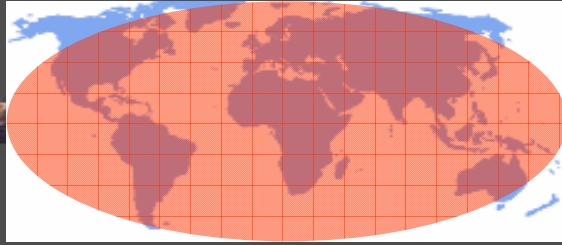
- 4. The bard ('griot', *jeeli*)
 - Ideally buried in baobab trees so as to bring out their special link with the earth and with the past when tree burial was more widely practiced, West African griots are among the vicarious specialists without formal power who mark the interface between the African domain of Exalted Insider, and the Asian domain of the Sacred Outsider.
 - While today the Muslim-inspired *boubou* is their standard dress, there is evidence (Ibn Battuta, Camara) suggesting that once they donned animal, specifically leopard skins.



■ 5. The sangoma

- The fifth category of African leopard-skin wearers is that of the Southern African sangomas: they are
 - ancestral spirit mediums,
 - diviners, and
 - dispensers of healing through a combination of the ecstatic cult and herbal medicine
- I propose to make a trip around the world, looking for attestations of leopard symbolism and *pardivesture*
- Initially our trip will be mere naive sight-seeing, a feast of rapid visual impressions without theoretical and methodological questions being asked at first
- Yet, gradually such questions will become central to our analysis,
 - for given current analytical paradigms in African studies it is far from obvious that African puzzles can be solved by reference to non-African data
 - scholarly support for long-range, intercontinental comparison across millennia is only to be bought at the price of the greatest possible methodological care



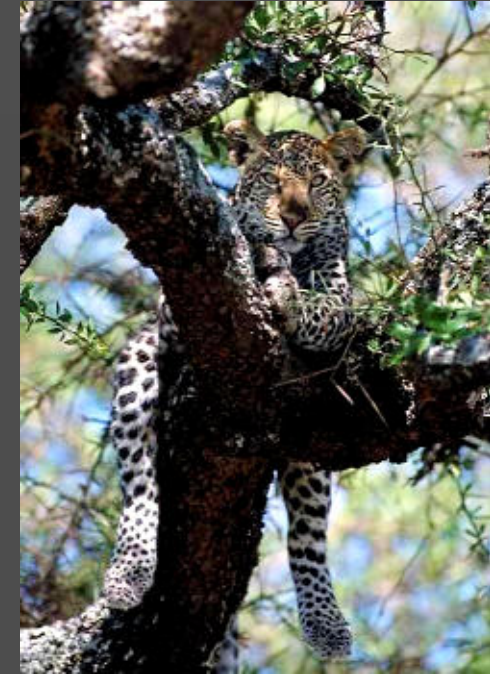


2. Glimpses of ancient leopard symbolism world-wide

2.1. A look at the leopard as a zoological species



1



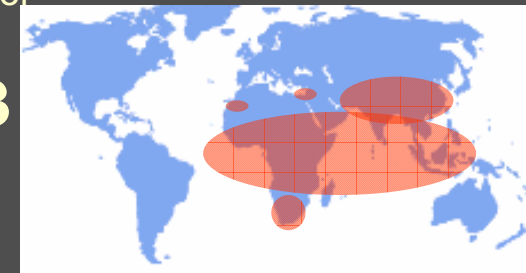
To appreciate the symbolic elaboration of the leopard and its skin, we need to know a few zoological facts.

- Leopard and panther (present-day distributin (3)) are the same species *Panthera pardus* (obsolete: *Felis pardus*) – to be distinguished from the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
- The leopard's pelt is subject to considerable variation (a speckled mother may produce a black cub) but its basic features are *speckledness* in black and yellow/red/brown on a whitish fond
- The leopard is solitary, its favourite resting and feeding position up in a tree, where it also tends to drag it prey for safekeeping (1)
- Leopards mainly come together for mating. (2) A female's preferred style of mating is with several different males in immediate succession.
- The only close bond in leopard life is that between mother and child.
- Many young leopards die of hunger in the first year after separating from their mother.
- Leopards have difficulty protecting their kill from other predators, especially lion and hyena.
- Their hunting shows cunning and stealth; and when chasing a prey they can develop a phenomenal speed
- Against this background one can understand the leopard to become a symbol
 - Of female and maternal autonomy,
 - of trickery,
 - Of high yet secondary socio-political position (second to the lion),
 - Of Africa's sacred colour triad black-red-white (Turner, Jacobson-Widding)
 - Of everything else that is speckled, especially the star-spangled night sky (as opposed to fair, bright and even, e.g. the lion's pelt and the diurnal sky), and
 - Of rain

2



3





Australian Aboriginal headman, 1870s



Zambian king, 1992



Early modern European depiction of a werewolf attacking a man

Bull men and lion men, Carchemish, c. 1,000 BCE

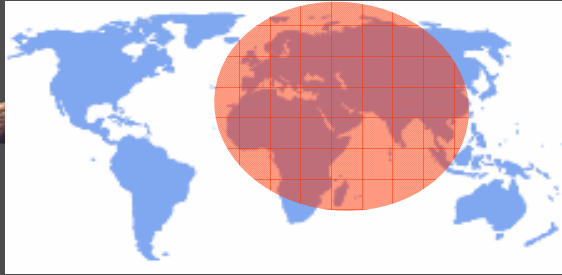


- From the Middle Palaeolithic (Neanderthal times) onwards, there is evidence of human beings putting on animal skins,
 - for clothing,
 - but also for symbolic purposes:
 - impersonating animals, their power, and their cosmological associations (the anthropology, history and philology of animal symbolism are very extensive fields, which we can deal with only very selectively here)
 - claiming the exalted status that the possession of rare pelts conveys
 - or the low and atavistic status that animal skins as dress suggest in a cultural environment where most clothing no longer comes from animal skins, etc.
- The oldest recorded (but contested) case of a human donning a leopard skin is from the Moustérien in France, ca. 60,000 years BP, reported in 1972 (Lumley)
- We will concentrate on leopard skin symbolism, and try to decode its historical message



Picture of a leopard being sacrificed in East Africa (de Heusch). Such enigmatic sacrifices are also reported from tribal Northeastern India (Daladier)

- The fervour with which the leopard is hunted down and destroyed in the Middle East and among commercial farmers in SC and S Africa suggests a motivation beyond economic loss: as if the locals are *confronting an ancient god now demonised*
- Something similar may be encountered in the iconographies of Ancient Egypt and classical China: the leopard is symbolically present through its skin and in astronomical nomenclature, but (with the exception of the ancient Egyptian goddess Mfdt) is never depicted as the god it is yet implied to be
- Also in the 'Old European' Neolithic record (Gimbutas), the Middle Eastern Neolithic record, and the classic South Asian record, the leopard is there by association only, not in the flesh (with the exception of the very early representations at Çatal Huyuk)
- And even in Khoi-San rock art and ritual dance today, the leopard is implied but scarcely explicitly referred to
 - Instead it is the eland that dominates the actors' conscious representations
- It is almost as if the leopard became more or less *unmentionable* in early historical times (3rd mill. BCE)
- This does not preclude a long series of iconographic and documentary attestations of leopard symbolis, which we shall presently explore



2.2. The Paleolithic record

- Two theories suggest that the great feline predators played a decisive role in human origins, in the East African savannah a few million years ago:
 - 1. Lions (but not leopards!) hunt collectively, and humans may have begun to organise themselves socially after the leonine example
 - 2. Humans emerged as scavengers on the leftovers of feline predators' quarry
 - A hitherto unrealised implication of (2) is that the predators could have been conceived as both dispensers of food, and as killers – as gods and as demons
- Intriguing though this line of argument may seem, its time scale is way out of dimension for our present analysis, which is measured, not in millions, but in thousands of years
- A leopard's fangs have left their marks on the skull of the so-called *Taung child*, a young Australopithecus, 600,000 BP, found at Taung, Northern South Africa
- Ironically, *taung* means: 'lion's place' in Tswana



- From the early 1980s, a sharp divide, 'the Human Revolution' is claimed to separate
 - all other forms of humanity (including Neanderthaloids such as from the Mousterian period) from
 - 'anatomically modern man', the latter capable of
 - fully-fledged speech,
 - representation
 - symbolic thought
 - art
 - We do not really expect animal symbolism, let alone shamanism, before the emergence of 'anatomically modern man'
 - Although the Neanderthaloid context of what has been claimed to be 'the cave-bear cult', the unmistakable evidence of a Neanderthal flute, and the suggestion of Neanderthal stellar maps, make us less sure on this point
- But whereas the 1868 discoveries at Cro Magnon, France, placed this divide
 - after 40,000 BP and
 - in Europe,anatomically modern man is now generally agreed to have emerged
 - in Africa
 - 150,000-200,000 BP
 - After which anatomically modern man spread to other continents from c. 140,000 BP onwards
- This means that conceivably the origins of pardivesture
 - *could* have been in Africa
 - but need not be, if pardivesture is a relatively recent phenomenon to be measured in 10K rather than 100K years



- Animal representation from the Apollo 11 Cave, Namibia – from 27,000 BP and therefore ranking among the oldest attested animal representations, twice as old as most rock art of the Franco-Cantabrian region.
- With its relatively long legs, inconspicuous ears, absence of horns, and catlike face with continuous curve between brow and nose (as distinct from canines) this may well represent a leopard
- Meanwhile animal representations from Tanzania are claimed to have twice this age.



- At the interface between serious archaeology and spiritual trends in contemporary, postmodern society ('New Age'), a considerable industry has emerged probing for traces of the shamanic phenomenon in many cultures and throughout history
- Although I am no newcomer to the literature on the Palaeolithic, for a long time I was convinced that leopard representations are practically absent in that period and therefore the emergence of leopard-skin symbolism could only be a more recent event.
- However, I discovered that professional students of the Palaeolithic record tended to see lions where I see leopards.
- Also I realised that *pardivesture*, far from a general feature of shamanism, *only belongs to a very specific variety of shamanism*.
- What is more in evidence in the Upper Palaeolithic, is *therianthropy, including leopard therianthropy*

THE SHAMANS OF PREHISTORY

Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves



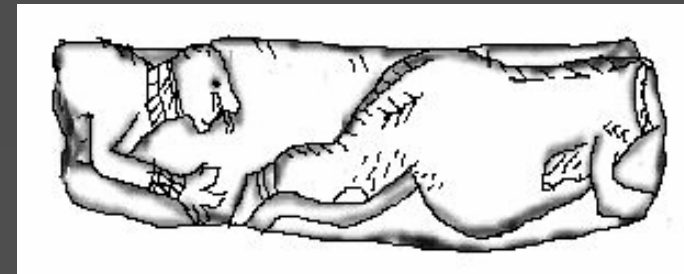
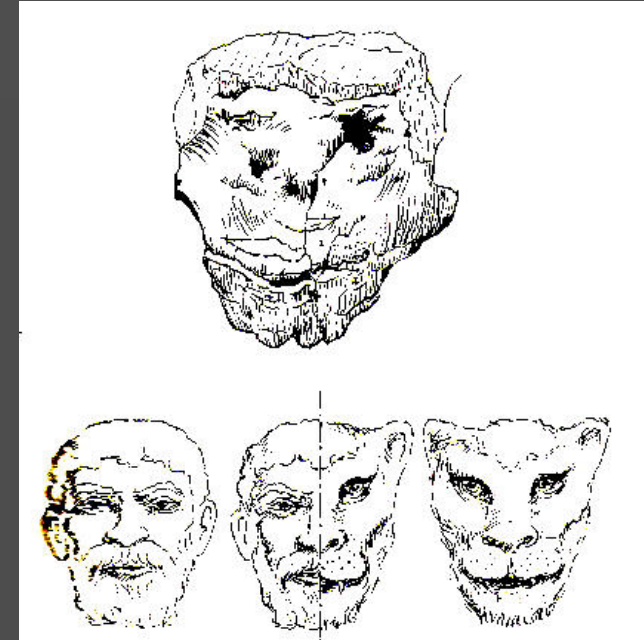
BY JEAN-CLOTTES AND DAVID LEWIS WILLIAMS

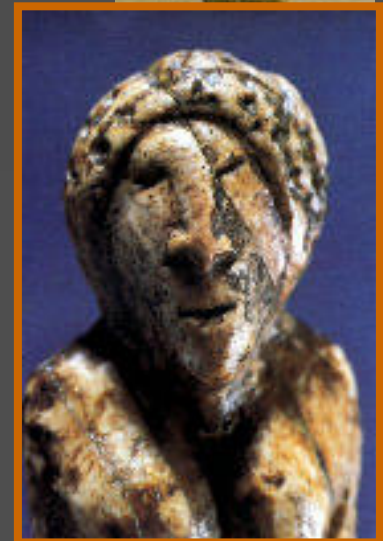
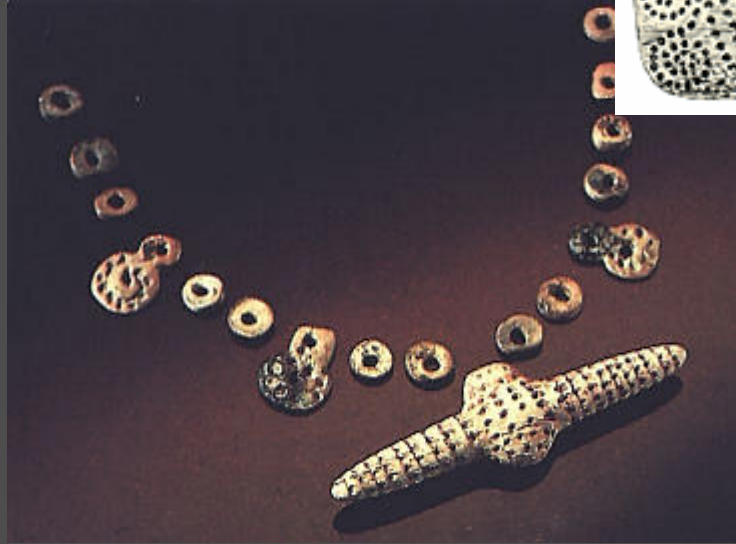
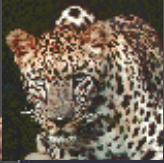


- One of the most famous scenes in Upper Palaeolithic art (Lascaux), the (strangely ithyphallic) human appears to be trampled by a bison, while his weapons and a stick topped by a bird figurine lie idly about, and a rhinoceros exits to the left.
 - Death scene
 - or shamanistic exploit,
 - or both?
- A bird image fixed to a stick is a widespread sign of shamanism in historical times. Archaeologists have been tempted to project the same shamanistic connotations upon the Upper Palaeolithic depiction of a man trampled by a bison, with the bird-topped stick fallen beside him
- The inset shows another possible candidate for shamanism from Lascaux, described in the following terms
 - 'creature of imagination has the hind end of a bison, the belly of a pregnant mare, the front paws of a feline, a "mottled" [speckled!] hide, and two straight horns...the profile of a bearded man'

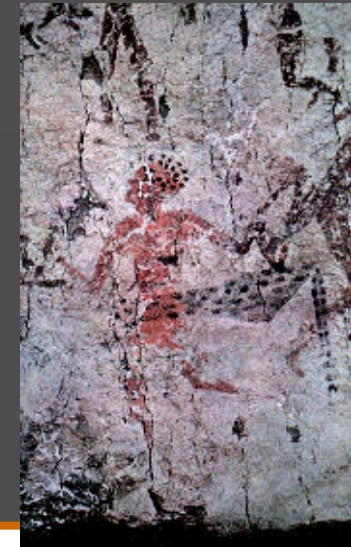
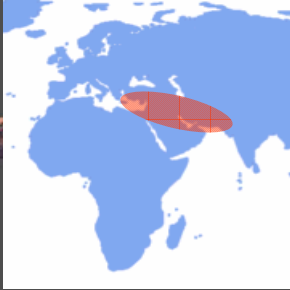


- 1 From the Upper Palaeolithic site of El Juyo, Spain (12,000 BCE), comes a head with a mixture of feline and human features: reminiscent of shamanism, but the close and permanent fusion this case suggests, contrasts sharply with the free movement between vesture and divesture, as implied in leopard-skin symbolism
- 2 How far back can we trace the specific type of leopard symbolism that involves humans donning the animal's skin? One of our oldest clues is an engraved bone from Isturitz, Spain, Upper Palaeolithic. In scholarly opinion, the humans, depicted on all fours and with female breasts, impersonate leopards. Note the tears, the collars, bracelets, and the multiplex arrow elsewhere associated with lightning. Apparently the leopards are celebrated as rain animals, confirming a widespread and very ancient cosmology





- Many of the themes of our quest
 - spirals,
 - snake lines,
 - sacred birds and
 - the wearing of animal skins (according to Harington 1996: 'a striped pelt')
- are manifest, at a very early moment in time (c. 17,000 BCE), at the Upper Palaeolithic site of Mal'ta, near the Baikal Sea, eastern Siberia
- *An so is our principal theme: speckledness*
 - Another stylised bird from Mal'ta is thoroughly speckled, as are some beads



2

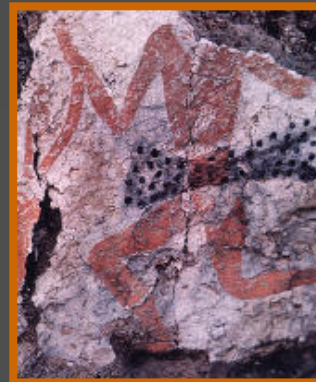
2.3. The Ancient Near East record (not including Ancient Egypt)

- Çatal Huyuk, Anatolia, 7th millennium BCE, has yielded the oldest attestations of unmistakable pardivesture:

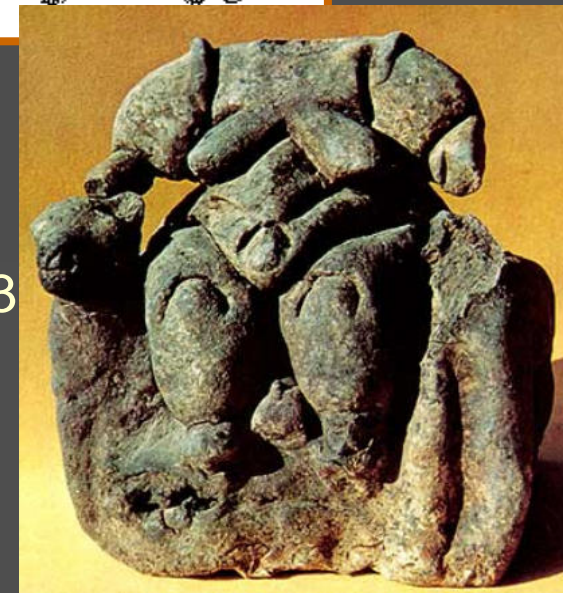
- 1 Human figure wearing leopard skins
- 2 idem
- 3 Mother goddess giving birth while leaning on two leopards
- 4 Two facing leopards, schematised rendering, wall relief
- 5 In another statuette from this site (not shown) the mother goddess is depicted riding a leopard – the surface of the two figures is completely covered with indentures for speckledness



4



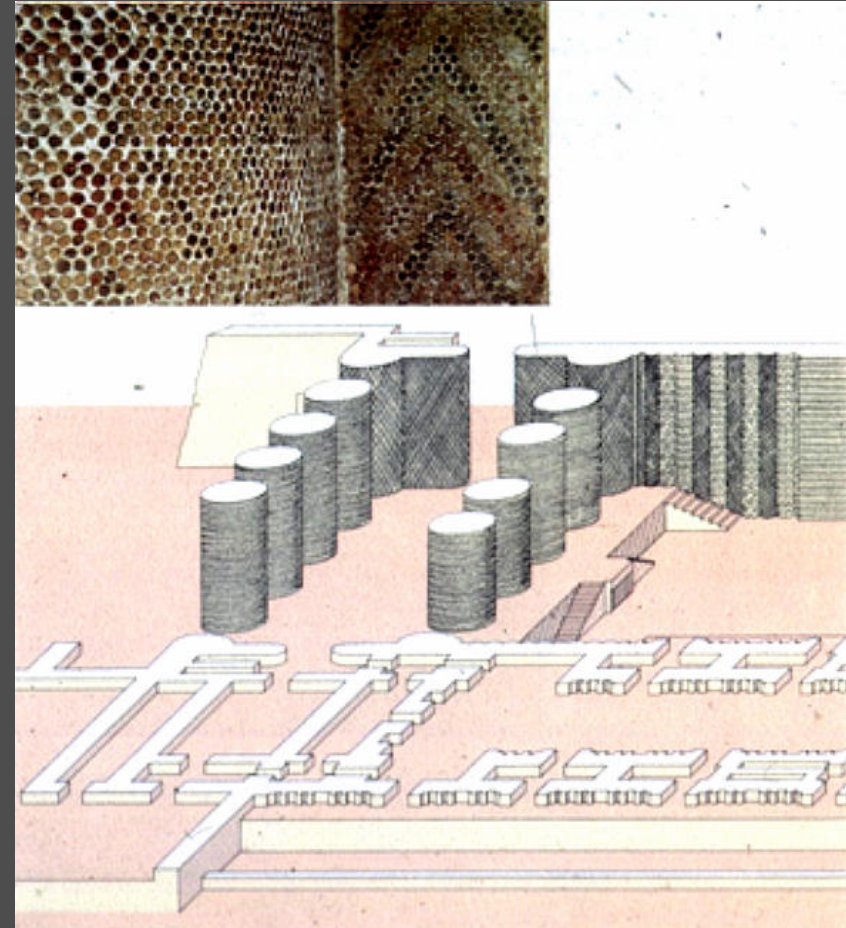
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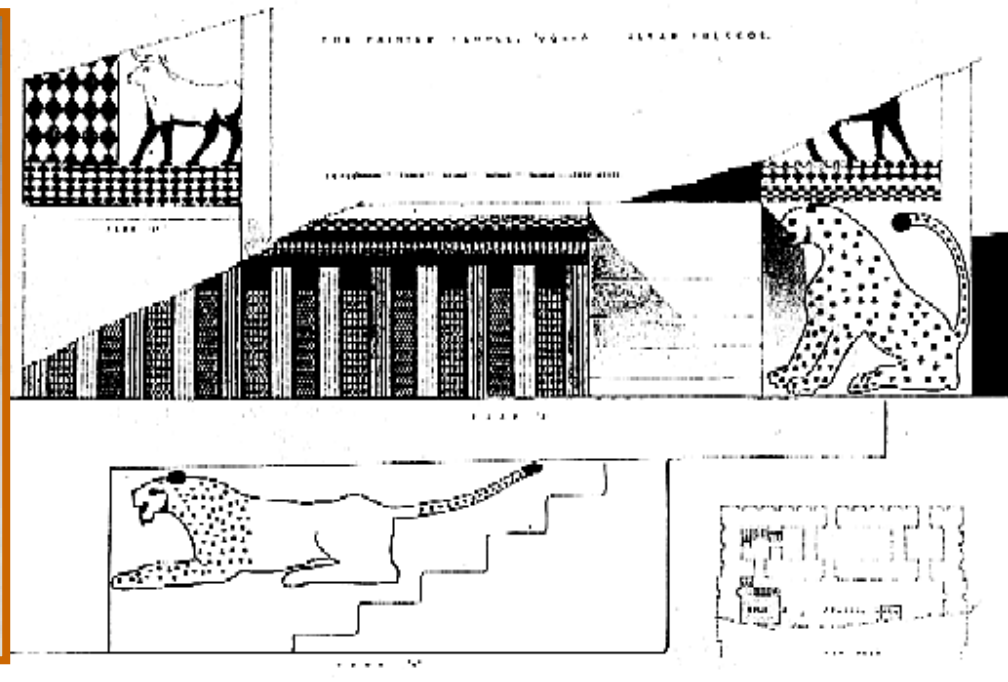


3



- The famous temple of Eanna ('House of Anu', Anu is the Lord of Creation) at Uruk (4th mill. BCE) is decorated with small cones stuck into the plaster;
 - the tops of the cones are coloured and the result is a pattern of snake skin, after the colour scheme of the leopard
- It is not only in symbolic terms, as symbols of the earth and the Goddess, that the leopard and the snake are equated:
 - in several languages (e.g. Vedic) both are designated by the same word, conveying 'speckledness'





- Parallels between early dynastic Egypt and Mesopotamia have been widely acknowledged.
- They are usually attributed to borrowing from Mesopotamia.
- The painted temple at Tell Uqair, c. 3000 BCE, shows remarkable similarities with the *serekh* temple front of early dynastic Egypt (with the falcon the central symbol of the king's power).
- The symmetrical positioning of (once) two seated leopards ('lions', according to the excavators, Lloyd & Safar, *JNES* 1943), and their combination with the bull motif, shows remarkable continuity with Çatal Huyuk across more than three millennia
- Inset: the famous stele of king Wajit of the Ancient Egyptian first dynasty (3000 BCE)



1



2



3



4



Speckledness pervades the iconography of early Mesopotamia,

- Like in this 'eye idol' (Tel Brak)
- While sometimes the sacred, female feline does appear in the shape of a goddess (Jemdet Nasser)

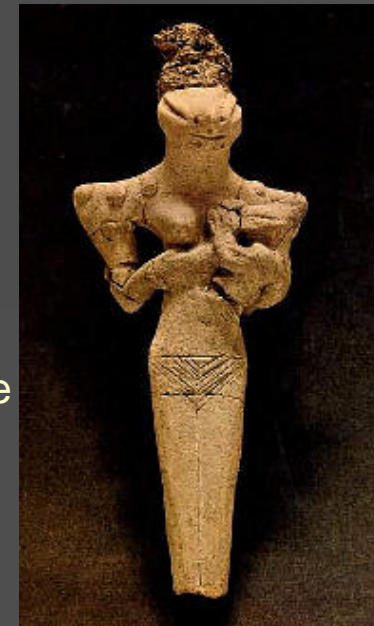
1 The rosettes on the famous gaming board of the royal graves at Ur are generally considered to represent stars, but that places them within the leopard context

note the emphasis on *speckledness*

2 While at an Early Dynastic pyxis (in the 'Intercultural Style' recently to be more specifically associated with the site of Jiroft) we have the entire repertoire of goddess, snakes, leopards and bulls,

in an iconography highly reminiscent of the late pre- and early dynastic Egyptian slate palettes

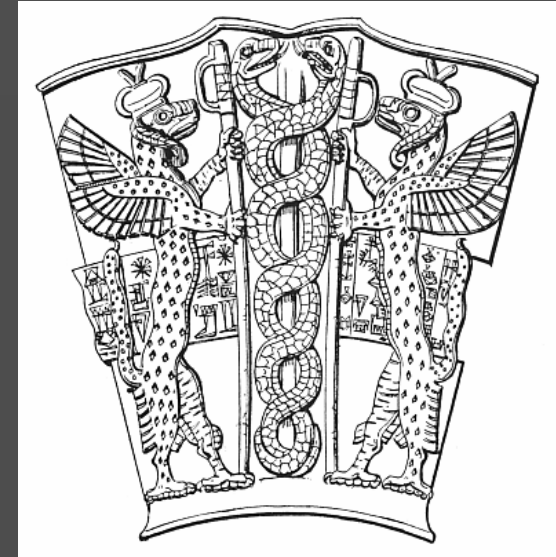
3 A mother goddess from Ur, Southern Mesopotamia, 4th millennium BCE, with animal face and speckled bodice

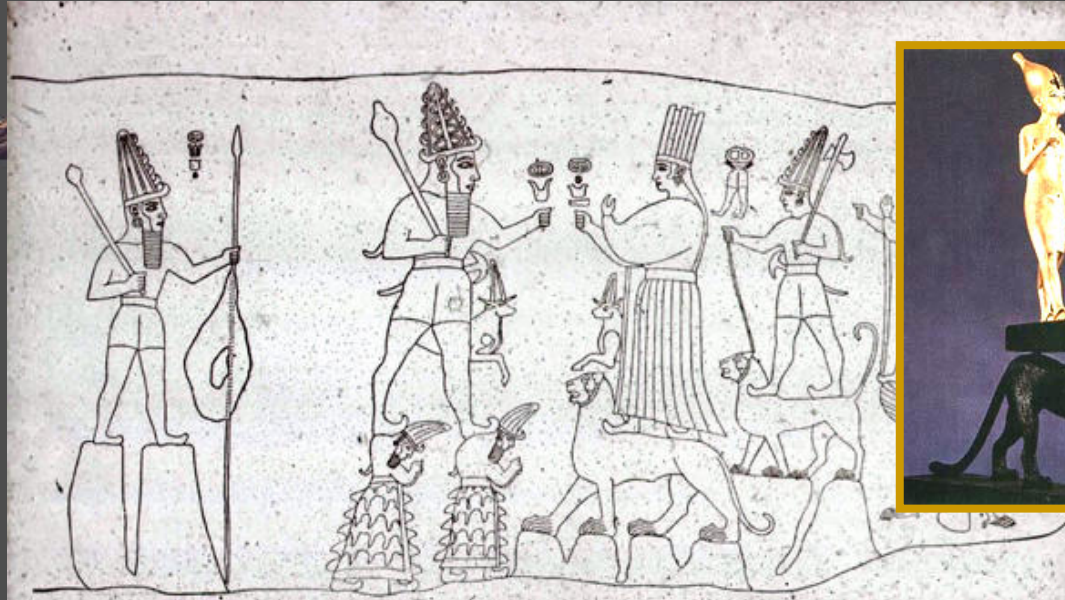


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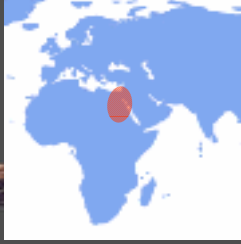


- Two-dimensional projection of the decoration of the Gudea vase, c. 2000 BCE. *The griffin's leopard-like skin pattern ties in with massive influence from the Indus valley in this period of Ancient Mesopotamian civilisation*
 - The speckled griffin with leopard connotations is not only to be found on Gudea's vase, but also on his cylinder seal



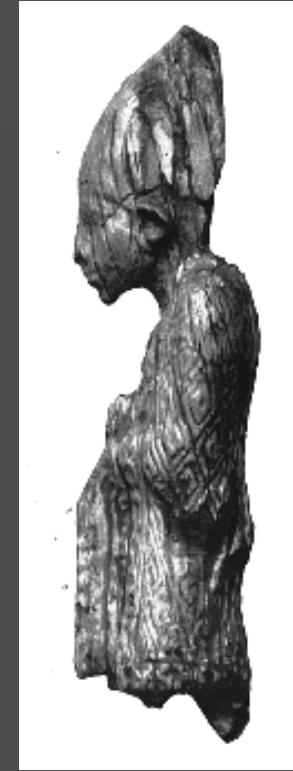


- From the Hittite capital Yazilikaya at Bogaskoy, Chamber A, main panel with Storm God of Hatti (Teshub) and Sun Goddess of Arinna (Hepat), and their son Sharruma (left of Hepat), drawing of main panel
- Note the god to the left, known as ‘god no. 41’ and usually identified as the ‘weather god of Hattusa’
 - his spear is reminiscent of Luwe’s main attribute, the celestial axis
 - In other renderings however the pole, or at least its lower part below the god’s hand, dissolves into a natural crease in the rock surface,
 - The same crease widens to form the sack-like effect, which however could be construed to represent the weather god’s bag containing the winds
- The felines are generally taken to be leopards/panthers rather than lions, even though lions feature prominently in hittitology
- Cf. the thematic continuity with the black leopard found among Tutankhamon’s grave goods
- On a Babylonian seal dating from half a millennium before the Hittite panel, the goddess Ishtar is shown likewise standing on a leopard



2.4. The Ancient Egyptian record

- After millennia of traceable preparation, both in the Nile valley and in the Sahara, the Egyptian kingdom emerged as one of the first states c. 3100
- Writing and an organised priesthood accompanied this development
- From the beginning, the Horus (Hr) falcon was a central symbol of kingship
- So was the Seth (Suteh) animal, convincingly identified as an armadillo, and gradually developed into a symbol of chaos and alienness
- Various architectural and iconographic details reveal short but intensive Mesopotamian influence at this earliest stage
- Ivory figurine depicting a first-dynasty Ancient Egyptian king, from Abydos, c. 3000 BCE.
 - Could the pattern of concentric rectangles (cf. Wadi Hammeh stone slab) on the mantle be
 - in imitation of a leopard skin's rosettes?
 - Is it merely an imitation of textile effects?
 - Or does the pattern imitate a tortoise shell?



- The Horus falcon at the late (Ptolemaean) Ancient Egyptian temple at Edfu



- The famous Nr-Mr cosmetic palette, Ancient Egypt, first dynasty, 3100 BCE
- Besides the official (hieroglyphically identified as *Tt*) wearing a leopard skin in the second register between the king and four carriers of *nome* standards (see next slide), note the two leopards with grossly elongated necks dominating the third register
- A familiar juxtaposition repeats itself here: bulls dominate the first and fourth register
 - the top bovines are usually taken to represent the goddess Ht-Hr ('House of Horus', i.e the sky),
 - and the bottom bovine as the king ravaging an enemy town
- Note the *serekh* palace emblem surrounding Nr-Mr's name in the first register
- On the Nr-Mr palette, the *Tt* official immediately preceding the king has the connotations of a shaman, with his wild bunch of hair and graphically textured animal (leopard's?) skin. Also the -t (halfround loaf sign) suggests otherwise, the assumption of male gender is supported by the fact that this character is usually considered to be the heir apparent. This is also the ideal *Sm* priest to conduct the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony after the king's death – also on that occasion wearing a leopard skin
- The great Egyptologist Helck (1984) sees in this attire the sign of:
 - 'a shaman, practising more intuitive, magical rites, before the institutionalisation of more "ordered" religion at the beginning of the First Dynasty.'
- However, Assmann (2002: 34), one of today's most prominent Egyptologists, considers the *Tt* official only a vizir, and entirely ignores any shamanistic connotations except for noticing his long hair



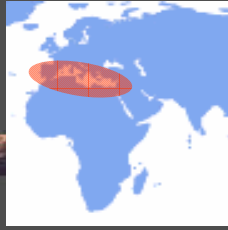


- The *imiut* movable shrine (a pole erected in a basin and draped with, preferably, a leopard skin) was a symbol of rebirth in the Ancient Egyptian funerary cult.
- In this picture from the Book of the Dead of Lady Cheritwebeshet, the feline happens to be a serval.
- Among several symbolic referents involved, prominent is (for the skin) that of the star-spangled sky -- especially the region around the northern celestial pole -- revolving on the celestial axis (the pole).
- Recent interpretations of early dynastic representations of the *imiut* (T. Wilkinson) believe to see evidence of human sacrifice
 - Under that assumption the bowl would have been filled with *human* blood.



- Among the grave goods of Tut-ankh-Amun (Ancient Egypt, New Kingdom, 14th c. BCE) was this folding chair (right), with leopard-skin motif.
- In Ancient Egyptian views, 'sitting on' an iconic representation is a standard way of subduing evil or an enemy; but the association between the king (whom the dead rites transform into Osiris) and the leopard may also be more positive, an attribute of the king himself
- Practically the same motif, but in inlaid trefoils, returns in Tut's funerary bed, adorned with an evocation of the goddess Ht-Hr (= 'House of Horus' i.e. the sky, and the king's patron): two cow's heads carrying the sun-disk between their unrealistically vertical and long horns
- From the Deir al-Bahari chapel of Tuthmosis III (18th dyn) stems a sandstone statue of king Amenhotep II drinking from the udder of Ht-Hr as cow, the latter similarly adorned with inlaid rosettes
- There is, in our data set, a recurrent relationship between leopard and cow – both evoke the sky, with the rosettes as stars
- Also cf. the Indus material where cow, trefoil, and implied leopard references abound, a millennium before Tut





2.5. The record of the Ancient Mediterranean

- We have already noted the relation between the leopard, pardivesture, and speckledness
- *Speckledness* is a recurrent feature in the iconography of the European and Mediterranean Neolithic
- Gimbutas and her school see it as a sign of the Goddess, which comes sufficiently close to our material from Çatal Huyuk to historic times, of a leopard-associated Goddess
- Speckledness is e.g. a striking message of the wall at the Neolithic temples on the Malta and Gozo islands, southern Mediterranean. Various interpretations have been offered but these are not necessarily mutually exclusive:
 - Stars
 - Leopard skin effect
 - Beehive effect (the Mediterranean Great Goddess is often a Bee Goddess; cf. Artemis of Ephese, and Neith)





- In the eastern Mediterranean the leopard, snake and Great Mother themes come together in the famous 'snake goddesses' of Minoan Crete, whose headdress is topped by a leopard
- Half a millennium earlier, the Minoan Snake Goddess already appears painted on the leg of an altar table: speckled, snake-haired, and bird-beaked (left)



■ The goddesses

- Neith,
- Anahita,
- Athena,
- Anit,
- Anath,
- Anatu

2



3



1a

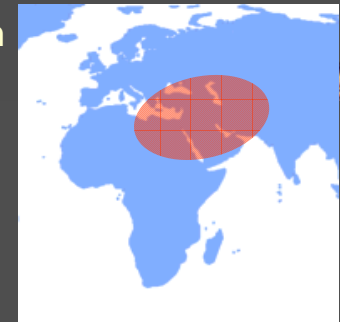


1b

(distributed over a region ranging from Libya to Iran, Turkey to Sudan) have more in common than their names:

- they are all virtuous maidens,
- equally skilled at spinning and weaving (hence their spider associations)
- as in the handling of weapons.
- True to ancient semantics, their virtue lies both in their virginity (the word's etymology related to 'power'), and in their prowess.

- This means that Bernal's adoption of Herodotus' claim that Athena came from Neith misses the very historical truth to which it comes so close; if we have to speak of diffusion at all, it probably went from West Asia to both Egypt and the Aegean



- 1 Two versions of Anahita are shown,
 - A a 4th millenium one (*shaped like a spider's body!*) and
 - B an undated possibly from Parthian times – note the two leopards again.

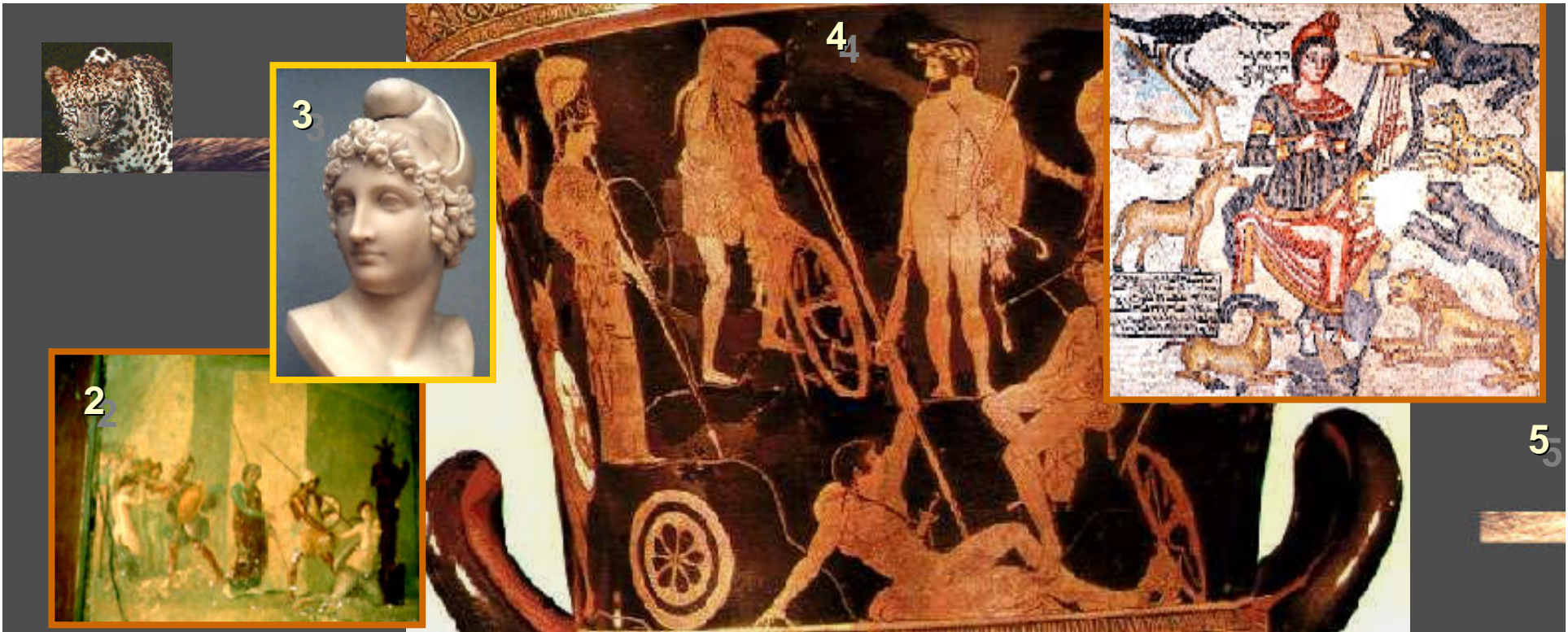
2 A classic Greek stele depicting Athena

3 somewhat matches a stele (3000 BCE) from Ancient Egypt and in honour of first-dynasty Queen Merit-Neith ('Beloved of Neith'); the goddess' emblems (X) can be clearly made out – significantly, there is controversy whether it depicts a bow and arrows, or a weaving shuttle.



■ In Greek Antiquity, wearing of leopard skins was associated with the god **Dionysos**, and with the goddesses **Cybele**, **Aphrodite** and **Circe**

1. The Phrygian goddess Cybele on an early 204 CE coin; felines can be seen on both sides of her, as 7,000 years earlier in nearby Çatal Huyuk.
2. Circe lives amidst felines in this picture by Barker (c. 1890)
3. Aphrodite tends to be depicted after having shed whatever leopard skin or other garment
4. Rising from her bath (like from the grave – Minoan coffins were indistinguishable from tubs), as depicted here, or born from the scum of the sea (in combination with Kronos' genitals cast there after his castration by Zeus) Aphrodite, much like Neith and African parallels (5), retains the connotation of 'goddess of the waters' – whom Gimbutas already sees in Neolithic artefacts.



The Ancient Greek heroes reputed to have worn leopard skin⁴ are: Antenor, Menelaus, Paris (Alexander), Jason and Orpheus.

1. Antenor ('instead of a man', cf. blood feud) was known as a diplomat and spared in the sack of Troy. Whatever the temptations of self-castration contained in the cult of Cybele and its likely predecessors in the Trojan region, he was the father of many sons and is reputed to have founded Padua, even Venice, after the fall of Troy.
2. Menelaus was cuckolded by Helena, but he himself allowed the Egyptian king liberties with his wife, much in the manner of Abraham; so after tearing her hair, as in this Pompeiian fresco, he took her back, realising how beautiful she was
3. Although (under divine tutelage from Aphrodite) he caused the Trojan war by abducting Menelaus' wife Helena, and left the battle-field for love-making, Paris was a great bowsman; he killed Achilles, the chief Greek hero before Troy
4. Jason is shown here amidst the Argonauts, on a ship-shaped two-handed bowl, c. 460 BCE; but wearing an unmistakable leopard skin is not only Jason but also (instead of his usual lion skin) Herakles, standing next to Jason, and identifiable by his club.
5. At the Edessa mosaic (204 CE), Orpheus tames the wild animals including felines with his music, but (perhaps out of consideration with his faunal audience) he is not wearing a leopard skin.

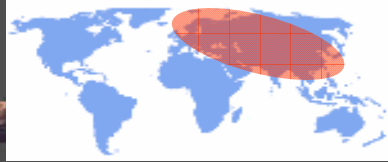
We note here the inconsistency of mythological iconography: characters which texts proclaim to wear leopard skins do not always wear them in images, Herakles known to be associated with the lion (and hence with the sun, which bore his name in classical times) appears here (4) with a leopard skin, etc.



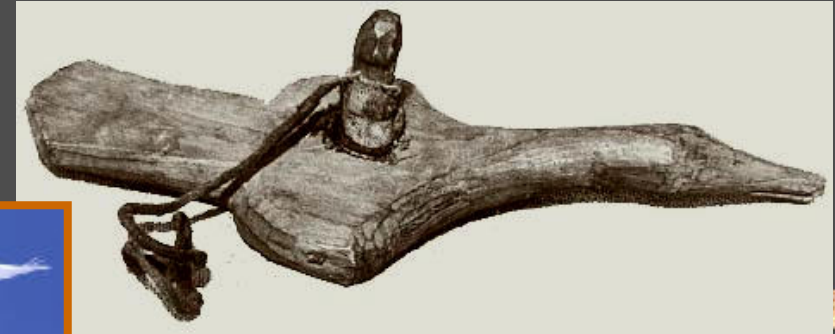
- At least since the leopard-associated Ancient Greek god Dionysus, after a tragic infancy, was known for his military successes (e.g. his alleged conquest of India), the leopard too had military connotations
- Right into modern times, the leopard continued to be associated with military prowess in Europe
- An eastern European hussar regiment massively equipped with leopard skins
- And one ceremonial cuirass adorned with a leopard skin
- Given his association with a mother goddess and his androgynous nature, the combination of Dionysos and military prowess seems to be out of character. Could it be that this military prowess celebrates an original female association with weaponry, also retained in Neith, Athena, various mythical accounts of Amazones in North and West Africa and West Asia, warrior queens in South Central Africa, and warrior priestesses in South Uralic Bronze age



- Dionysus' name is first attested in a Pylos Linear-B tablet dating from 1,200 BCE
 - Dionysus riding a leopard on Hellenistic (1) and Imperial Roman (2) representations.
 - and on an Islamic coin, 12th c. CE, riding a leopard (3)
 - The one from Pompeii (2) makes clear that the equivalence between leopard and tiger was already established in Graeco-Roman times
- What unites the five great leopard-skin wearing heroes of Antiquity, and Dionysus?
- Our exploration of the leopard skin in the Ancient Greek world allows us to identify tentatively the leopard skin as
 - the recognised attribute of a particular category of men:
 - *Sacred Outsiders*
 - *with vicarious power*
 - *on the basis of which they may enjoy sanctuary*
 - *essentially solitary in their spiritual pursuits,*
 - *secure in the protection afforded them from a higher, divine source*
 - *a source with typically female connotations,*
 - *leopard-bearers are therefore essentially androgynous,*
 - *straddling not only the genders but also the worlds of life and death,*
 - *and tapping the mysteries and divinatory resources available at that strategic point.*
 - *notably divination*
 - *and rebirth*



2.6. The Eurasian record



- Throughout Asia we can trace some of the themes that have guided us so far: the leopard, its associates, speckledness, pardivesture, and shamanism
- A figurine said to depict a cuckoo as a shaman's familiar spirit in the Amur region, extreme eastern Siberia, c. 1900 CE;
- as the inset suggests, a swan might be a more fitting interpretation, cf. the Mal'ta material, with which this figurine has a remarkable continuity across nearly 20 millennia, in eastern Siberia

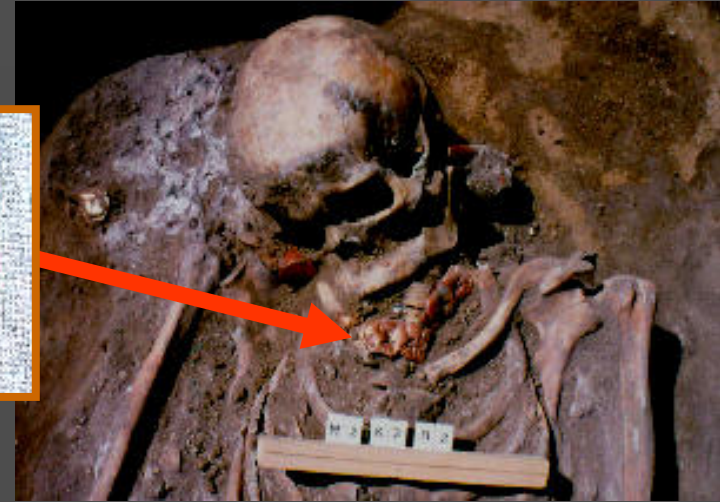


1



2

1. The southern Caucasus region is rich with rock art depicting leopards, often in association with caprids (especially bezoars)
 - As if the 'Cosmology of the lion and the leopard' (see below) is not yet in place
 - or no longer...
2. A similar motif: leopards chasing deer on Tibetan rock art



- Recent archaeological research (Davis-Kimball 2002) has found evidence that, a few millennia before the Common Era, the southern Uralic region was under the sway of warrior priestesses among whose grave goods golden figurines of leopards are conspicuous.
- The link between
 - female divine power,
 - violence,
 - and the leopard,has a long history in West Asia, as is borne out by the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean material
- Are the parallels with African warrior queens (2nd mill. CE) merely accidental?
- Remarkably, no rendering of speckledness here
 - As if the leopard ('the essence of speckledness') is not referred to in its own right
 - But merely as a conventionalised attribute of female divine power
 - Such as embodied in Great Goddesses such as Cybele, Anahita, etc.
 - Whose representatives on earth these warrior priestesses were



- The Caucasus has retained an association with leopard-skin symbolism for millennia. Georgia celebrates the eighthundred's anniversary of Shot'ha Rust'hveli's *The Knight in the Tiger- (evidently Leopard-) Skin*, here depicted in a late 19th c. CE staging





2

But while there is evidence of older forms of leopard symbolism, also the fully fledged shamanic pardivesture is attested in ancient Asia.

1. Fu Xi 伏羲, the legendary Chinese culture hero (inventor of writing and divination) and emperor, with on his knees a leopard skin and an antelope skin, both emblematic of shamanism; from a 13th c. CE painting still very popular in Taoist circles.
 - Note the eight trigrams (*pa kua* 八卦) and the tortoise at his feet, the basis of *I Ching* symbolism.

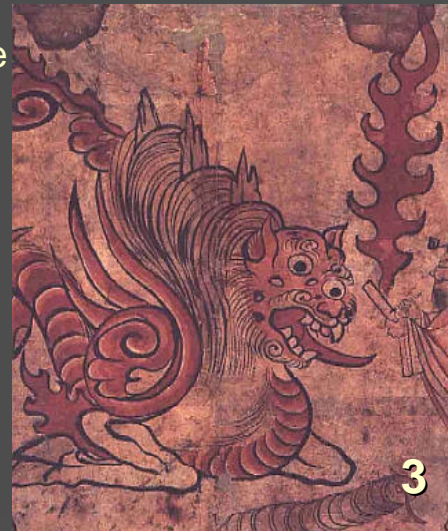
2. The inset, a rubbing from a 1st c. CE Han tomb, shows snake-footed Fu Xi and his wife Nu Wa 女娲 as sun god and moon goddess, both with their emblematic tools; other images in the same tomb depict them as birds; the animal in the moon (traditionally a toad; leopard?) is considered a transformation of the moon goddess' bird

3. A hooved Fu Xi standing before a hooved dragon. One tradition claims that Fu Xi invented writing when he saw the eight trigrams on the back of a 'horse dragon' emerging from the Yang tse river. Horse and dragon may well be inter-changeable, and both may have leopard connotations. Another tradition speaks of the back of a tortoise. From a Tang dynasty (c. 9th c. CE) painting

4. Further Chinese leopard symbolism: the Emperor's car had leopard tails; leopard military ranks; leopard (and tiger) as moon stations



伏羲氏之精魂道
 靈珠曰春
 應秋為其時時時水戰精
 離之通也之精可以成也
 于五子九道而取上道
 付醫而在下其教則殊其
 大時亦為之實雖未始精
 魂精微始以寓焉其則
 元意亦爾
 伏羲
 應天三神 為百王先
 法度肇建 道法純全
 八卦成文 三墳不傳
 無言而化 至道自然



3



1

There has been some scholarly discussion as to the postulated diffusion of the Dionysus theme. The parallels are too close (cf. leopard skin, wagon and military prowess) to deny a connection. West-East, from the Hellenic/Hellenistic world to China. Or the other way around?



- Also in Ancient South Asia there is evidence of pardivesture
- ‘Priest-king’ (more likely: divinity) from Indus civilisation, 3rd millennium BCE, steatite – the trefoils still contain remnants of red paint
- One of the associations of the trefoil motif is that of the leopard skin’s rosettes
- However, in the Indus context trefoil motifs in *bas relief* also feature on bull statuettes, *lingams*, and *lingam* bases, which suggests an astral interpretation (Parpola)
- Also outside the Indus context, the leopard’s rosettes are widely interpreted as stars
- Considering the ubiquitous celestial associations of the leopard (see below), the above alternatives are complementary rather than mutually exclusive

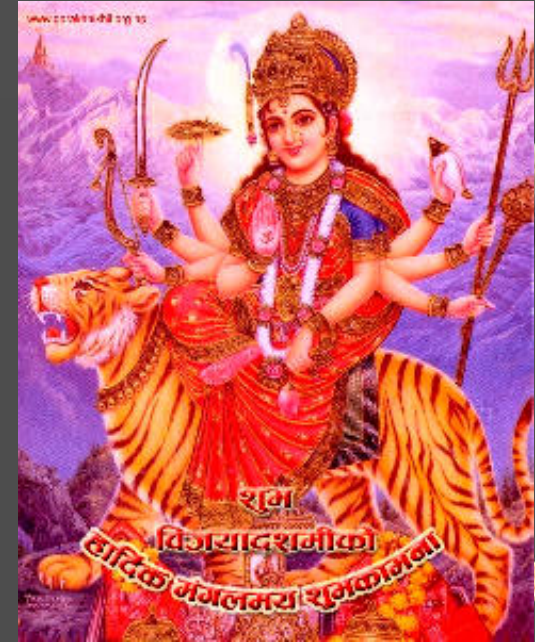




- The tiger skin features prominently in the Ancient Indian literature (esp. the *Satapatha-Brahmana*)
- in a form that often suggests shamanistic themes –
- And one highly reminiscent of Ancient Egyptian (and sub-Saharan African) contexts if leopard skin were substituted for tiger skin.
- The tiger's skin is used at coronations. Here a shamanistic motif appears in connection with the god Indra: he becomes a tiger when *Soma* flows through him.
 - Modern Indologists now tend to view Indra as a shamanistic element which the Indo-Aryans borrowed from local groups; typically, the emphasis on Indra wanes as script, statehood and organised religion become established
- *Soma* is a sacred liquid pressed from a particular plant; it is also mead (honey-beer); the moon (a luminary we have repeatedly seen associated with the leopard and the female power it often represents); and a god in his own right.
- A shamanistic sacrificial ritual of creation or rebirth is described; if in this rite the entrails are not cleaned out it produces – as an undesirable result – a tiger or a jackal.
- A tiger is also produced from the contents of Indra's intestines when drinking *Soma*.
- Mention is made of the equally shamanistic concept of the man-tiger; the prescribed sacrifice to the latter happens to be 'the mono-maniac' (? , *sic*).



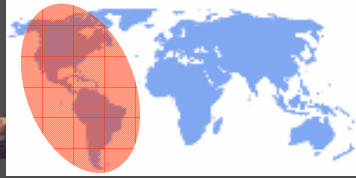
- In the South Asian cults of the Great Goddess, (whose manifestations are Kali, Durga or Parvati -- Shiva's wife, and the mother of elephant-headed Ganesha) she tends to be depicted with a tiger as mount, but leopards and lions are also seen.
- On Sri Lanka, the cult of Kataragama shows remarkable similarity to that of Dionysus in his martial connotations, including the god's riding on a feline.
- The equivalence of tiger and leopard is characteristic of the South Asian tradition.
 - In East Asia the two species play their own symbolic role, e.g. the Chinese have a moon station for either species
 - When the South Asian tradition reaches tiger-less Africa (see below), the tiger is replaced by the leopard





The South Asian material is highly interesting in a number of ways.

- The increase of leopard themes in Mesopotamia at a time (2000 BCE) of intensified Indus influence suggests the Indus to be a focus of innovation and diffusion of leopard symbolism
- This does not explain the Egyptian case directly, but it is remarkable that at the emergence of the First dynasty, also Mesopotamian themes abound, to subside within a few generations
- Astronomical elements clearly abound in the Indus corpus, even though very little of it has been deciphered so far
- The available documentation on South Asian religions casts additional light on pardivesture as a *conscious, explicit* mode of identification and dissociation
 - Not only with a symbolically charged animal,
 - but *a fortiori* with the negative connotations (death, sexuality, sin, evil) associated with that animal.
- The religious student's dressing and divesting of the animal skin is both an affirmation of man's sinful nature, and an attempt to rise above it.
- ***Like in Ancient Egypt and elsewhere in the Ancient Near East, though feline symbolism he is affirming the desire and the possibility of rebirth.***



1

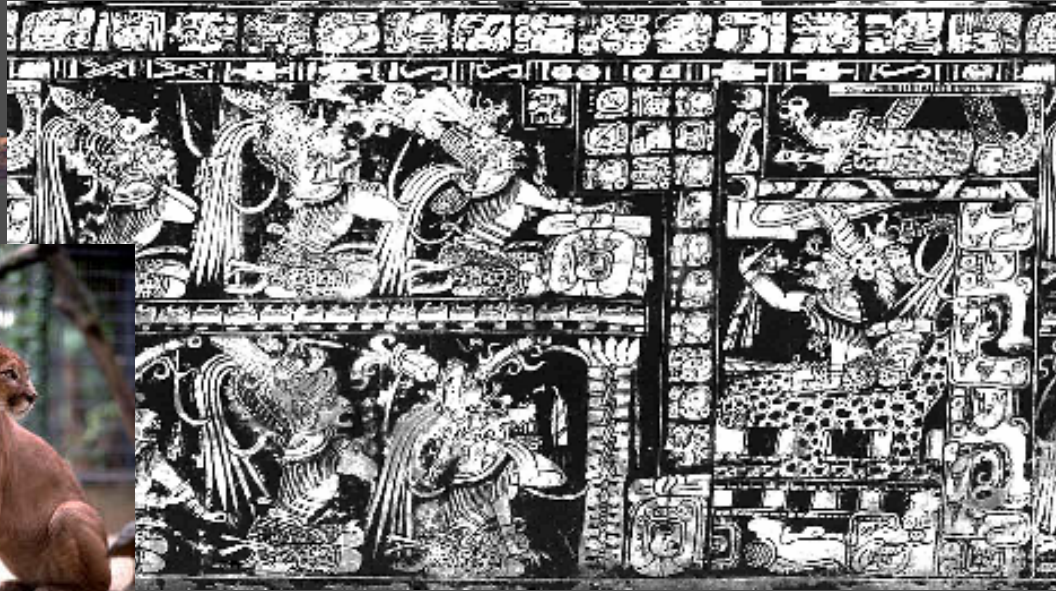


2



2.8. A glimpse of the New World

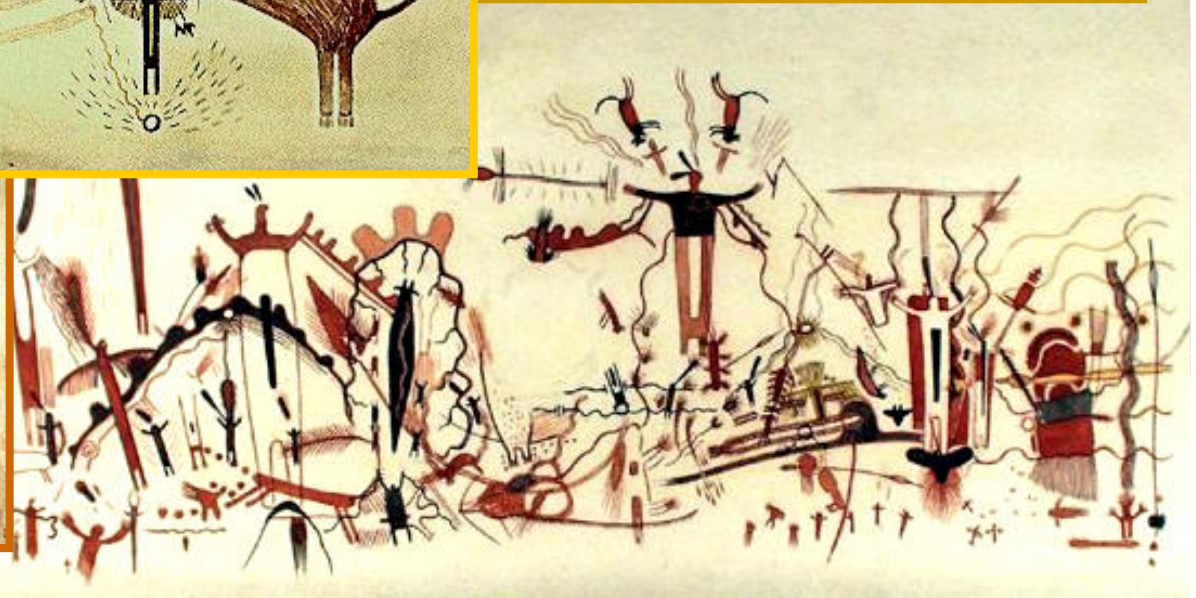
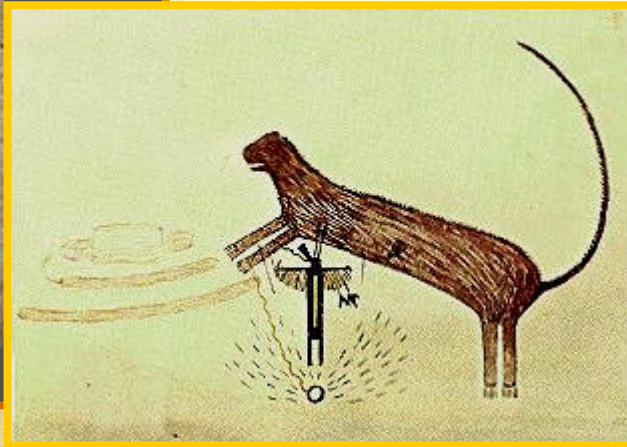
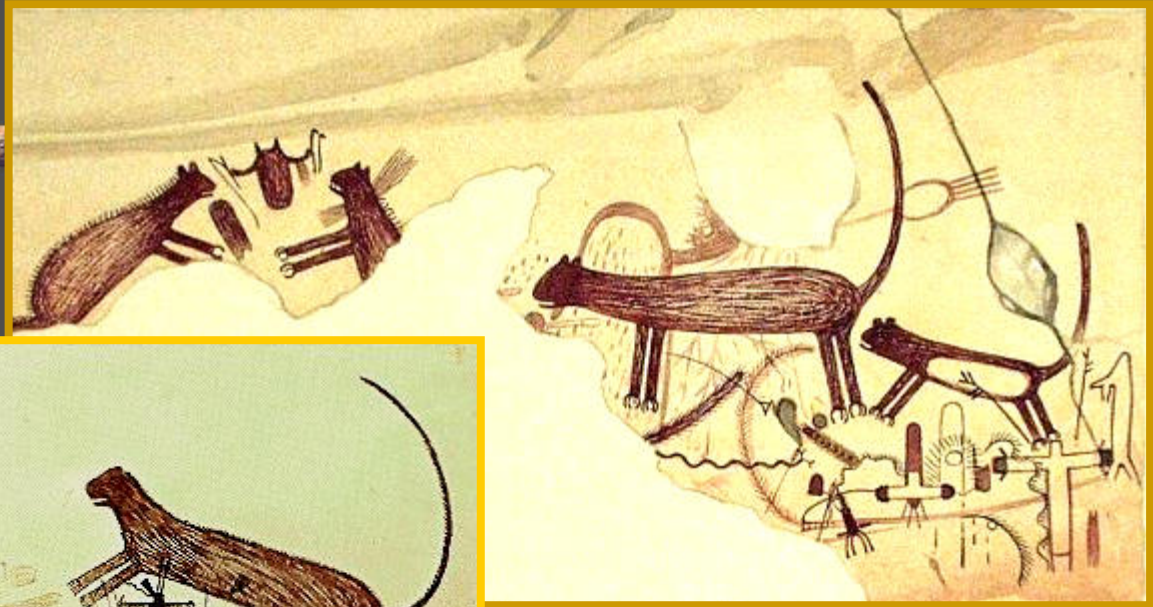
- If in the Old World the emergence of shamanism is (see below) to be situated in the Dene-Sino-Caucasian culture, then linguistic and iconographic traces of this must be found in the New World also, or the theory would collapse
- Of course, shamanism has often been identified in North and South America, as we have seen
- But more is required: we need specific feline symbolism; and we need to have clues as to how the relationship between shaman and animal species is conceived
- I cannot go into a lexical analysis of terms for felines in the hundreds of New World languages
- The leopard's closest relative in the New World is the jaguar, which features prominently in pre-conquest art and architecture of the Americas
- However, also the robust, vaguely striped mountain lion occurs, and continuity has been suggested between this feline and the symbolism surrounding the 'cave lion' in Eurasian Upper Palaeolithic art (especially that from Mal'ta, on the Baikal Lake)
- 1 shows a Maya incense burner depicting the God of the Underworld in the form of a jaguar
- 2 Next is the stele of Smoke Jaguar, 12th ruler of Copán, Honduras, 7th c. CE; a tortoise at its feet is interpreted (as in China) as a sign of longevity. Jaguar was the name of several prominent Maya kings.
 - "At the end of their lives rulers were buried in high style under pyramids, in tombs with jaguar pelts, jade and fine ceramics" (Houston, 1989, *Maya glyphs*, Cal.UP p. 57).
- 52 The lower two artefacts are Precolumbian leopard representations



- The richly attested Maya culture of precolumbian Meso-America leaves no doubt as to the transcontinental continuity and consistency of feline skin symbolism
- While, with many correspondences in detail, the speckled jaguar takes the place which in the Old World is occupied by the leopard: associated with the Moon and rain, Sun symbolism is associated with the even-coloured puma (4)

1. Vase of Seven Gods: planetary gods (with Sun God in the rear) approach 'Morning Star facing lunar Jaguar War God'; note how much the speckled feline skin theme is in evidence
2. Detail of wall-painting at Bonampak, 792 CE (presentation of captives to ruler)
3. Hero twins (left and right, representing Sun (Hun Ahau, 'daylight'), and Moon (Yax Balam, 'jaguar' – cf. *prd/*prg? – , with speckled face, right). The latter pours water on Maize God (Hun Nal), who sprouts from a turtle shell (Taube 1988, Milbrath 1999)





- Pecos River rock art, early period: depictions of mountain lion in shamanistic contexts
- Top left: recent photograph; the other images (including the central one, as of photograph) are Kirkland's
- 54 Bottom right: revolution of the celestial axis?



2.9. Another look at Africa: The record from Khoi-San culture

- Many of the world-wide leopard themes inspected so far come together in the Khoi-San material from Southern Africa

1. Namibia: a cult place for Heitsi-eibib, the culture hero or god with leopard associations: his names are

- Heitsi-eibib,
- Tsuni-Goam/ Tsui Goab ('Wounded Knee'), but also
- Gorob (Goro, Gorib, Gurub, Guruva, Dorobo), i.e. 'leopard' throughout Khoi-San languages.

2. The pile of stones is strongly reminiscent of the herms of the Mediterranean and North Africa – personalised shrines of the earth

3. Inevitably, the shape-shifting, death-defying Heitsi-eibib is a trickster, like the Ancient Greek god Hermes (3) whose oldest cult was aniconic (without anthropomorphic representations)



3

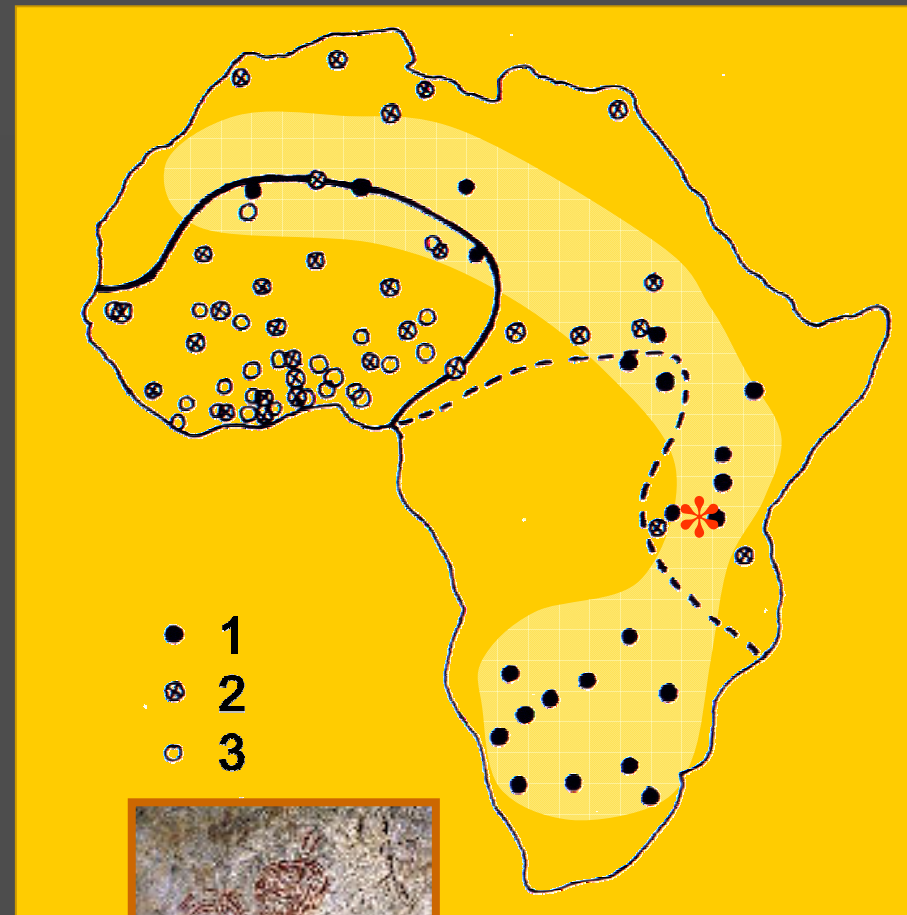


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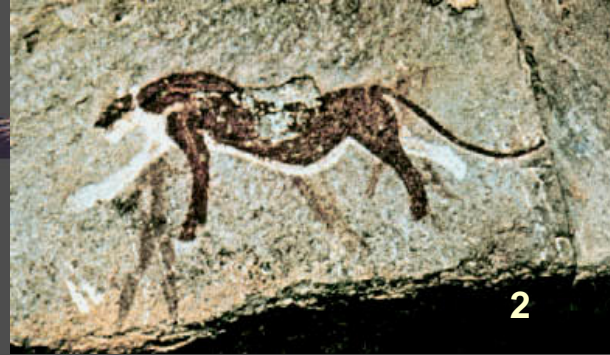


- Distribution patterns tell a tale of historical relations between contemporary Khoi-San speakers and other parts of Africa
- Distribution of types of beads in Africa
 1. ostrich shell beads
 2. beads made of natural stone (- - - southern boundary of their distribution)
 3. akoris (blue glass beads) (— inland boundary of their distribution).
- The distribution of ostrich shell beads (lighter yellow area) suggests continental patterns of Khoi-San associations
- Inset: Tanzanian rock art is among the oldest attested. Some Tanzanian rock art (like this image from Dodoma, *) is very similar to Southern African rock art, but most is not





1

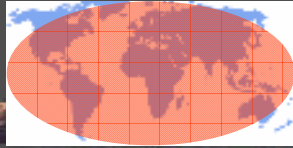
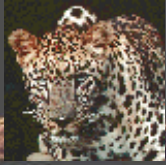


2



Local representation of a San shaman

- Khoi-San speakers (Southern Africa) have been habitually credited
 - with an extremely peripheral place in the genetic and linguistic history of mankind – a thesis increasingly contended (Cavalli-Sforza c.s.); and
 - (scarcely contentious) with the creation of the ubiquitous and highly accomplished rock art of Southern Africa
- (1) Therianthrope rock painting suggestive of shamanism, from the Drakensberg, South Africa
- (2) Leopard in South African rock art, cattle period (2000 BP)
 - Leopard representations are too rare in San rock art,
 - Than to suggest an overt, conscious veneration of the leopard as a central animal symbol or god
 - Yet implicitly there are many leopard elements in dance and myth (Cagn and his sons)
 - In Zimbabwe San-associated rock art the leopard element is more pronounced; in this context Garlake has illuminatingly identified speckledness as a mark of potency
- Dominated in the last few decades by the seminal work of Lewis-Williams, the interpretation of Southern African rock art increasingly hinges on shamanism, which makes this a very promising topic for us



Serendip: Unexpected land in Swift's (1726) *Gulliver's travels*; *serendipity*: research result one did not specifically set out to find

3. Serendipities: Leopard symbolism as a window on long-range continuities (and differences) in language and culture

3.1. The comparative study of shamanism

- Inevitably our research drifts towards a comparative study of shamanism
- This is a huge field of scholarship, where angels fear to tread: it is plagued with superficial New Age appropriations and popular misconceptions; here I can only scratch the surface and make a very minor contribution
- While shamanism has been increasingly recognised as very widely distributed among human cultures, scholarship has tended towards the assumption of a Central or Northern Asian epicentre, and this is in line with our own reconstructions here
- This means that I do not consider shamanism a near-universal of human cultures, and that I would not include it in the original package with which anatomically modern man started Out-of-Africa c. 140,000 years BP



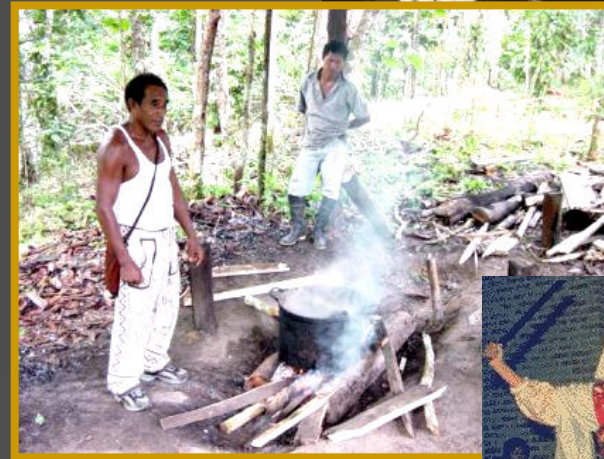
2



4



1



3



5

1. The Tsimshian shaman Bini, Northwest Coast, Canada (died c. 1870)
2. A Maya shaman today
3. Contemporary shaman in Amazonia preparing initiatory herbal concoction
4. An East Siberian shaman today
5. A shaman in Korea today












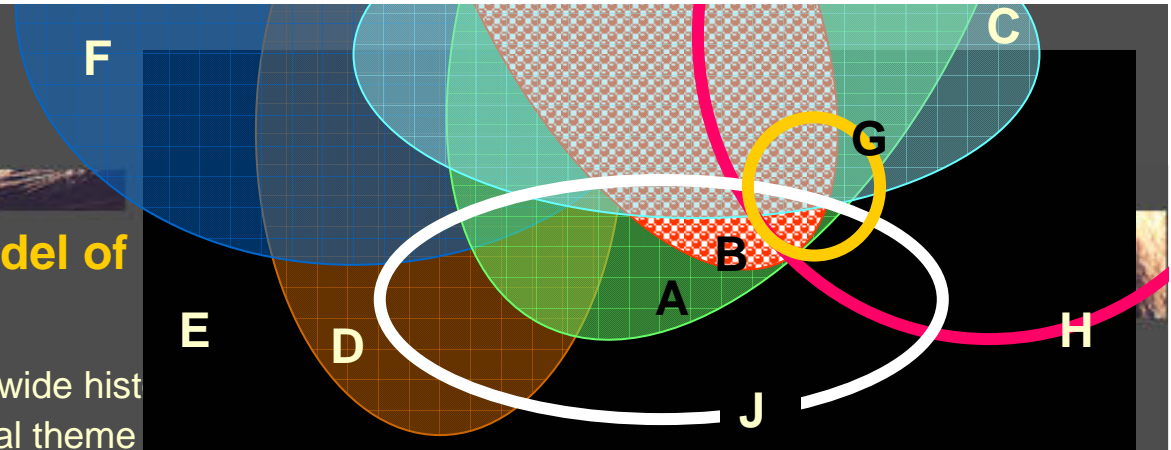
- 'Shaman's caftan. Fabric, fur, metal. 19th c., Altai. Such costumes would be first described in a dream by tutelary spirit, then made by women of the family and neighbors. Made of sheep or deerskin and covered with pendants. Depictions of helping spirits occupied an important place. For example, small dots [stars!] representing the daughters of the supreme god, Ulgen, the sky-dweller, who would aid the shaman in ascending to the upper world, were sewn to the back of the collar. A belt with a dense braided fringe representing snakes was sewn to the cloak. Obligatory appurtenances of the cloak were two plaques symbolizing the sun and moon. As shaman gathered experiences through life and new spirit helpers, he would add pendants' (From: Central Asian Images, J.A. Millward)
- Carolus Linnaeus posing in a shaman's tunic after fieldwork (!) in Lapland, northern Sweden
- A shaman's coat from the Northwest Coast, Canada





Let us draw up a theoretical model of pardivesture and shamanism

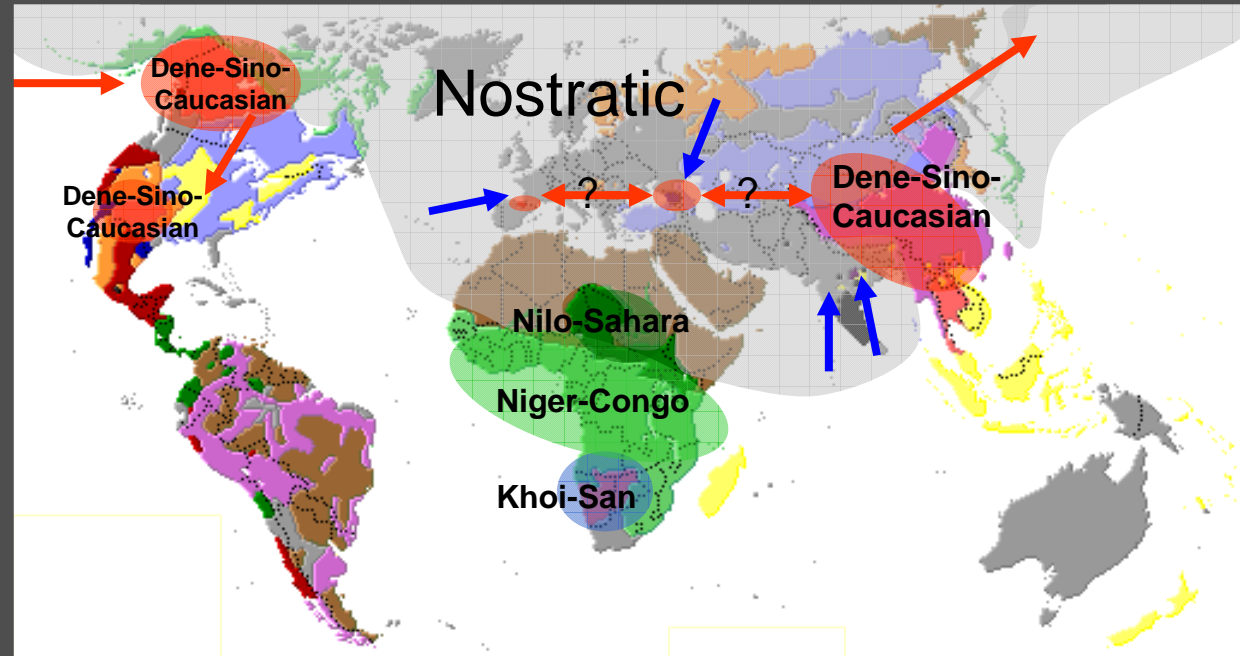
- Leopard symbolism (A)  has a world-wide history
- in which speckledness (B)  is a central theme
- Emphasis on speckledness appears to be part of very ancient cosmologies, demonstrably going back to the Upper Palaeolithic, and perhaps associated with the Dene-Sino-Caucasian linguistic macrofamily
- Leopard symbolism may or may not be associated with an ecstatic cult (C) 
- Leopard symbolism is often expressed, and iconographically detectable, through *therianthropy* (D) 
 - when a human being ritually adopts the shape and identity of an animal
- Leopard symbolism, especially in the form of therianthropy, is therefore a prominent theme in the world history of shamanism (E) 
- The fusion implied here is a form of *immanentalism* (F), 
 - in which boundaries between the person, the outside world, natural species, etc. are in principle
 - blurred and
 - negotiable, and therefore
 - no fundamental distance is constructed between the human subject and the object of conceptual/ritual attention
- Leopard *skin* symbolism, i.e. pardivesture (G)  is altogether more specific, and essentially different:
 - it implies that a person puts the leopard skin on and puts off, in a specific ritual or ceremonial situation, thus stressing both his or her close association with the leopard, and dissociation, at the same time – there is no fusion of the identities of person and animal species
- The mental movement of temporary association followed by radical dissociation defines the subject as distinct, and distant, vis-à-vis what is outside the subject, celebrates the triumph of the abstract word over concrete situations and actions, and thus foreshadows *transcendence*. Pardivesture is an early, and eminently powerful, expression of transcendentalism (H) 
- As a background variable, the veneration of a mother goddess (J)  appears as a historical given often associated with leopard symbolism (Upper Palaeolithic 'Venus' statuettes, Neolithic Çatal Huyuk, etc.)





3.2. Long-range linguistic and genetic approaches

- One enormous handicap in long-range linguistic reconstruction is the tendency to project today's **geopolitics** onto the past.
- Today, Sino-Tibetan speakers live in East Asia, Khoi-San speakers in Southern Africa, Indo-European speakers in Europe and the Americas, Afro-Asiatic speakers in West Asia and Northern Africa – *and never the twain (the foursome, in fact) shall meet...*
- We find it very difficult to imagine a world only five or six thousand years ago, when hardly any Indo-European was being spoken in Europe, and when (proto-)Dene-Sino-Caucasian may have been declining as – perhaps – one of western Eurasia's major language families at the time (another being Afroasiatic).
- We find it even more difficult to contemplate a time, less than 10,000 years ago, when (proto-)Dene-Sino-Caucasian, proto-Niger-Congo and proto-Nostratic (as common stock from which Afro-Asiatic and Indo-European have emerged) could have been (in ways I will explore below) more or less related branches being generated somehow in a West Asian seedbed in part prepared by proto-Khoi-San, whose western extension were soon to contribute to the emergence of Niger-Congo
- Meanwhile, another, *knowledge-political* handicap lies in the insistence on autochthony which arose since the 1960s in the context of anti-colonialism and anti-racism.
 - Scholars from, and/or working on Africa, India, and China, even Ancient Egypt, now tend to reject on emotional and political grounds any recourse to diffusionist (hence *allochthonous*) explanations for the rise of civilisation in those areas –
 - Ironically, this well-intended attitude is a belated echo of the discourse informing (since the early 19th c.) the European self-image of the 'Greek miracle' prior to the *Black Athena* debate. That discourse had two main sources:
 - Romanticism's insistence on the unalienable unity of the package of culture, identity, language, descent (gene pool), and habitat – it did not take the Nazis to invent '*Blut und Boden*'
 - European imperialist expansion all over the globe from the 18th century onwards



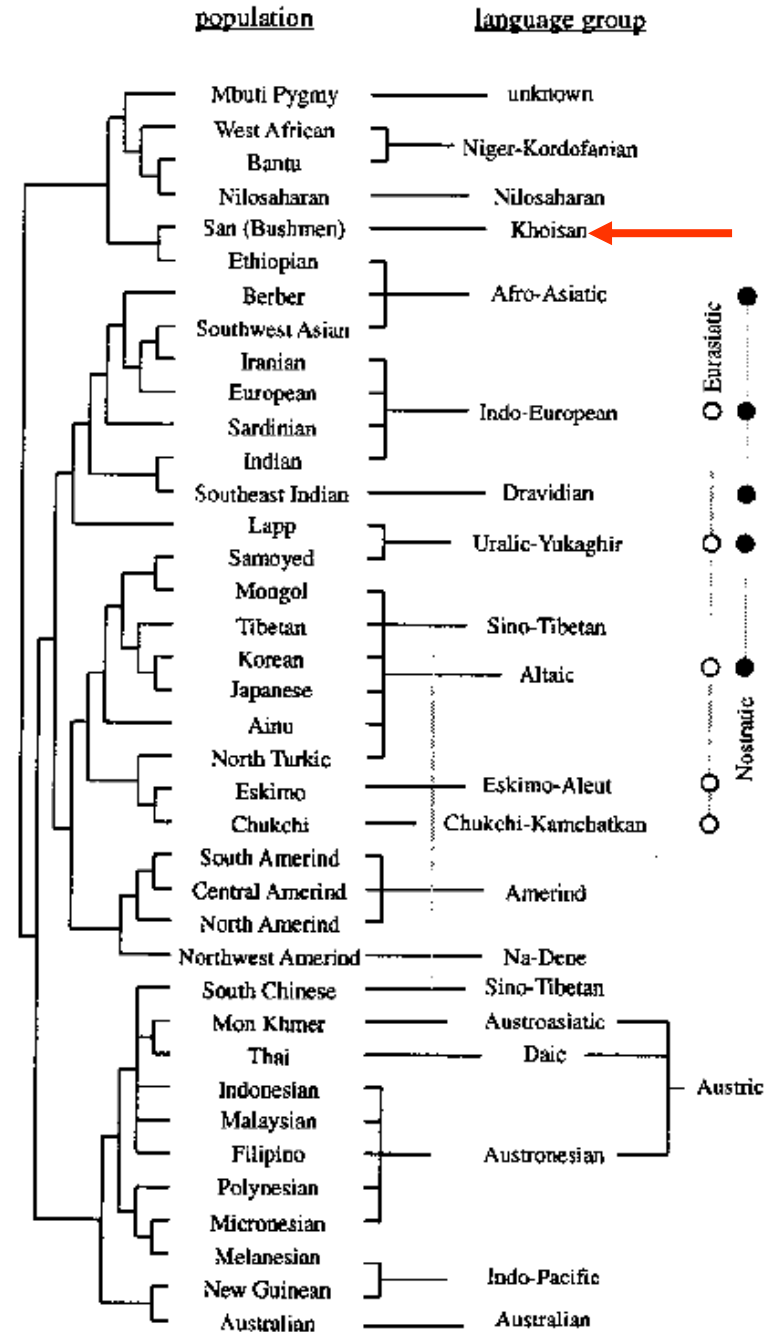
Nostratic, although its composition is subject to disagreement, comprises several language families (gray shaded area)

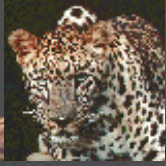
- The Moskou school which founded Nostratic studies, has tended to include Afro-Asiatic (brown on map) but other scholars tend to consider Afro-Asiatic as a sister, not daughter, to Nostratic
- The status of languages East Asia (Korean, Japanese) as Nostratic is also contested
- Note: the North American section is directly continuous with the Northeast Asian section, not with the Northwest European section)
- Dene-Sino-Caucasian in the Old World comprises, from East to West, the following families: Sino-Tibetan, Caucasian, and (contested) Basque
- The Na-Dene family in North America comprises such languages as Apache, Chipewyan, Gwich'in, Haida, Navajo, Sarsi, Slavey, and Tlingit; the southern group (Navaho etc.) only separated from the northern stock less than half a mill. ago



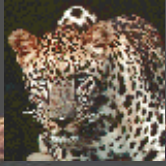
long-range genetics

- Over the post two decades, research by modern geneticists (esp. Cavallio-Sforza and his school) has sought to bring together genetic and cultural (especially linguistic) material for long-range reconstructions of human prehistory
- Suddenly African populations are no longer so incomparably remote from the rest of humankind, and the same may be true for African languages
- This is even the case for Khoi-San speakers, now of Southern Africa, whose click languages and specific somatic features have for a long time suggested extreme remoteness and antiquity as compared to the common human stock
- Shown is one of Cavallio-Sforza's earliest schemes, which has since been considerably amended





- Far from entertaining a similar myth of primordiality,
- and largely on the ground of the relatively exceptional syntactic feature of *gender* (which is absent in most of the world's other language families including Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan),
- Bleek and later Meinhof classified Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic (albeit under a different label, that of 'Hamitic') and Khoi-San as related language families.
- This classification soon gave rise to the notorious Hamitic model, according to which
 - South West Asian pastoralists
 - – allegedly with more or less 'White'/ 'Caucasian' external somatic features,
 - and speaking Afro-Asiatic –
 - would have entered the African continent in pre- or proto-history,
 - perhaps travelling south all the way to the Cape
 - in the process spreading not only animal husbandry
 - but also other achievements of civilisation
 - which Black Africans were, in those Eurocentric and racist times, considered to be incapable of, e.g. animal husbandry, kingship, iron-working, and naked-eye astronomy.
- Dominant until c. 1950, this Hamitic model was subsequently forcibly attacked for its racist implications, and soon discarded, partly because diffusionism was obsolete, partly because Africa was decolonising.
- Current thinking among Africanists largely follows the political correctness of 'Africa for the Africans', in the literal sense that intercontinental comparison involving Africa tends to be shunned unless it can show, onesidedly (cf. Afrocentrism) how the wider world is indebted to African contributions to global cultural history, rather than the other way around. Stressing the constant influx of intercontinental influences (trade goods, ideas, religions, forms of organisation, life styles) throughout the centuries risks to be resented as a sign of disrespect for African autonomy and creativity – unless, of course, it can be shown that Africans make a creative and innovative use of their foreign imports, that they subject it to 'transformative localisation'. For recent globalisation, this is a useful approach which I have often followed myself (cf. [Rethinking Africa's contribution](#), [Modernity on a shoestring](#), [Virtuality as a key concept](#), [Situating globality](#)). However, for the long range, I am beginning to appreciate that Africa is an exceptional case – hence the present study.

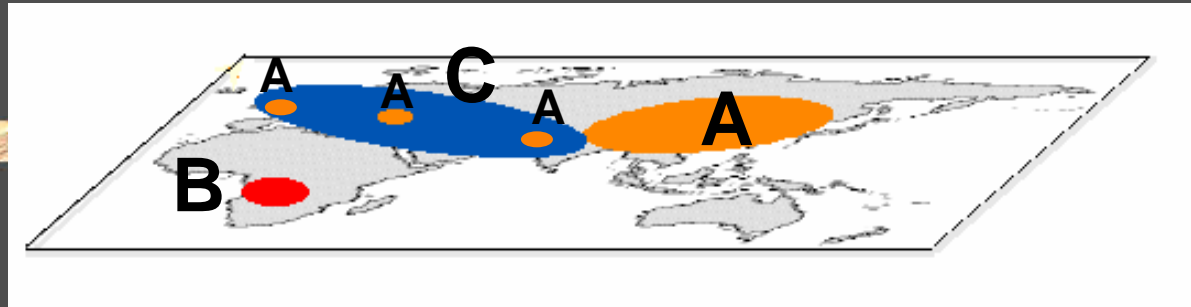


- Three sets of data:
 - John Argyle's heretical pioneering linguistic comparisons of the last decade, and
 - Recent population genetics
 - in combination with the leopard linguistic material –
- suggest that Dene-Sino-Caucasian emerged (like, half a dozen millennia later, Nostratic and Afro-Asiatic) in a region between Central Asia and Northeastern Africa, in an environment not unaffected by Khoi-San
- and that Khoi-San was subsequently pushed westward and southward, deep into Africa, by the expansion of
 - Nostratic (especially Afro-Asiatic: Cushitic, Chadic), and
 - Niger-Congo.
 - For Niger-Congo emerged c. 8,000 BCE near lake Chad, West Africa, in an environment rather close to Khoi-San and distantly influenced by both Dene-Sino-Caucasian and Nostratic
- (I am aware of superficial parallels with the Hamitic thesis, but that is the least of my sins)
- The place of Nilo-Sahara remains to be assessed; Argyle's suggests that it is to be combined with Niger-Congo to form one macro-family.



3.3. Questions of theory and method in the study of diffusion

- The principal methodological problem which then arises is:
 - *how can the symbolic contents of one culture (X) be considered relevant to the understanding of a different culture (Y) that is remote from X in time, space, or both?*
- The point is all the more pressing if (contrary to political correctness: 'Africa for the Africans' – although this goes usually at the expense of excluding African from the rest of the world...) I shall invoke Asian, European, even Native American symbolic and mythical patterns to throw light of African leopard symbolism
- The question is inspired by the paradigm (that has dominated anthropology since the demise of diffusionism):
 - A global multiplicity of essentially unrelated cultures (as if the convergence of regional cultures were not an empirical fact)
 - Total internal integration of any one culture (as if a culture were not internally diverse and contradictory; and as if formal systems do not cross cultural boundaries with only partial transformative localisation)
- Classic diffusionism did not provide a convincing answer on these points either, because it only considered the distribution of isolated 'traits', and lacked a theory of cultural integration, and of (albeit partial) transformative localisation (i.e. re-integration after borrowing)
- Structural functionalism, transactionalism, marxist, postmodernism etc. have succeeded the diffusionist paradigm since 1950
 - They contain the theoretical apparatus to remedy the fundamental shortcomings of classic diffusionism
 - The obvious advantages of a long-range perspective in space and time can then be revived without falling to the well-known pitfalls
 - And in fact a revival of neo-diffusionism has accompanied globalisation studies in recent years – my own work is considered part of that movement, and was recently slighted as such by Amselle



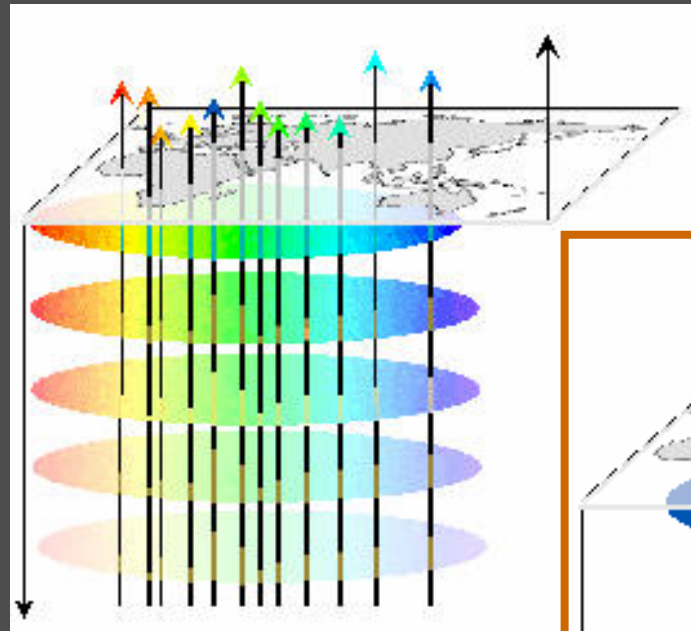
How could we do long-range reconstruction at the macro-level on the basis of a surface distribution at a given point in time?

- Inspired by the possible distribution of three linguistic macrofamilies c. 1000 CE (ie. before the global expansion of Indo-European and the near-extinction of Khoi-San) the diagram above presents an actual distribution as a modelling exercise for historical reconstruction

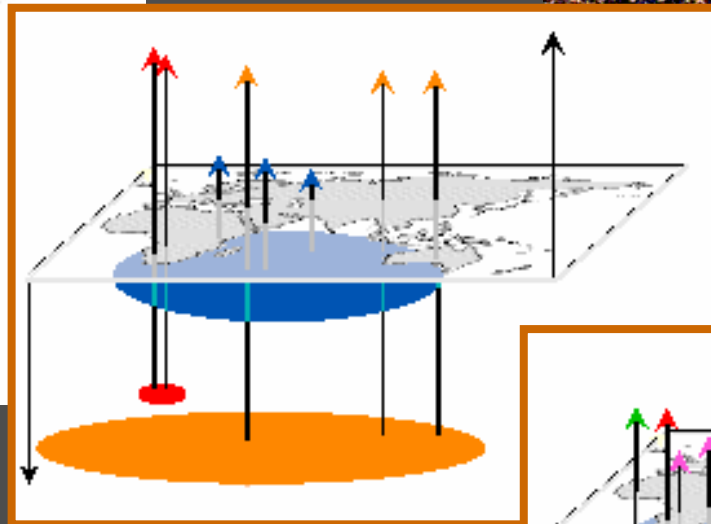
- A. (e.g. Dene-Sino-Caucasian, here shown without its New World components, but with its three westerly Old World components: Basque, certain Caucasian languages, and Burushaski),
- B. (e.g. Khoi-San), and
- C. (e.g. Indo-European)

- I present three different possible models

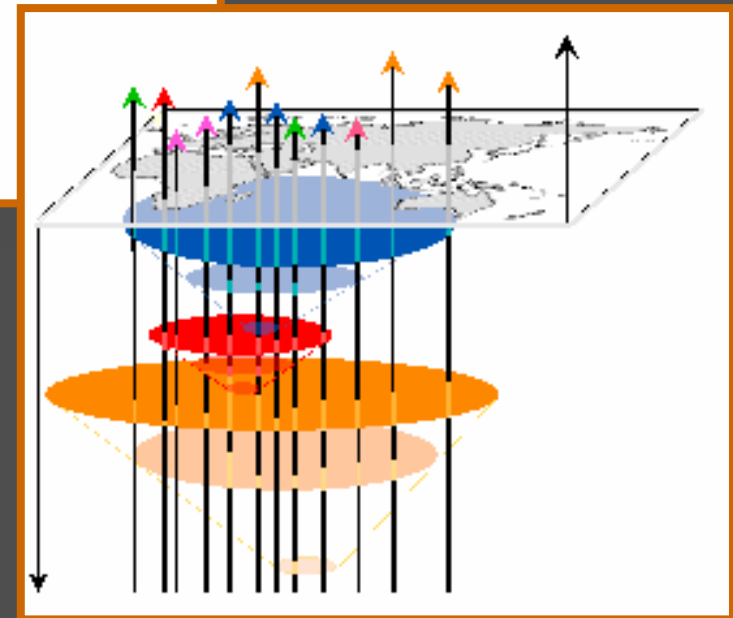
1. The '*rainbow*' model inspired by today's globalisation and multiculturalism: a continuous field encompassing the entire Old World and yielding individual surface manifestations, the transitions between which are gradients, not firm boundaries
2. The model of discrete '*demic diffusion*' of distinct, irreducible cultural complexes A, B and C
3. A hybrid '*fireworks*' model where the complexes A, B and C are mainly distinct and bounded, but B starts as a minor local development in A, C starts as a minor local development in B, so that both continuity and distinctness can be accounted for at the same time



1. 'rainbow' model
(globalisation and
multiculturality)

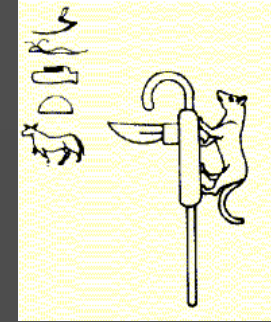


2. discrete demic
diffusion



3. Multi-tiered demic
diffusion: the
'fireworks' model

- Downward arrow ↓ : age of complex
- Upward arrow ↑ : age of individual local surface forms
- Map surface: the present

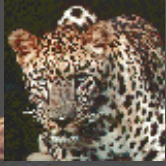


3.4. Kammerzell on feline nomenclature in Afro-Asiatic and Indo-European

- As a by-product of the etymological analysis of the Ancient Egyptian form *Mfdt* (name of a feline goddess attested from remotest times)
 - On a cup of a 1st dynasty king
 - On the 5th dynasty Palermo stone, referring to the 1st dynasty)
- The Egyptologist Kammerzell (1995) found the Ancient Egyptian language (commonly agreed to be Afro-Asiatic) to be yet strangely close to Indo-European
 - Of course, the overwhelming lexical, syntactic and phonological parallels between PIE en PAA had long been recognised, albeit seldom so systematically as by Bomhard (1983) and Bomhard and Kerns (1993)
- Rejecting a number of alternatives that have the names of splendid Egyptologists associated with them, Kammerzell arrives at an etymology in terms of
 - a root **prd/*prg*, which primarily means ‘to rip, to tear’, and
 - (since a feline rips with a claw containing four nails), ‘[to give one a taste of the] four’;
 - hence the numeral ‘four’ attaches to this root, and
 - the feline becomes the ‘four-animal’.
- Next, he found the root for leopard (**prd/*prg*) distributed throughout Afro-Asiatic and Indo-European languages; including the very ‘leopard’ themselves
- Likewise, with the same very wide distribution, the root for ‘lion’:

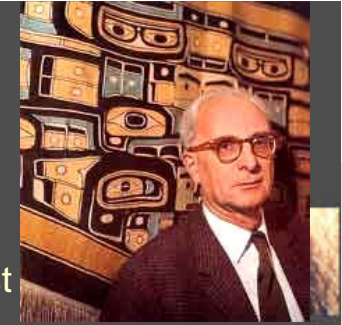


- The uniqueness of the pair **prd/*prg* and **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu* will be realised when we inspect the common zoological repertoire of Proto-Afro-Asiatic (PAA), Proto-Indo-European (PIE) . Extending from PAA and PIE into Proto-Nostratic are only the following (Bomhard & Kerns):
 - 'hawk, falcon', *hur-/*ħor-* , no. 406);
 - 'animal = any animal in general' (**?ar-/*?ər-*, no. 437);
 - 'bee' (**bay-/bəy-*, **k[h]uny-/*k[h]ony-*, nos. 27, 251);
 - 'hoofed animal' (**k[h]ab-/*k[h]əb*, no. 253);
 - 'hoofed, cud-chewing animal' (*?il-/*?el-*, no. 452);
 - 'insect, worm, maggot' (**kw[h]ur-/*kw[h]or-*, no. 332);
 - 'partridge = plump-bodied game bird', **k'ak'-*, no. 291);
 - 'wild animal, wild beast' (**Guw-ir/*Gow-ir-*, no. 236).
- With the exception of 'falcon, hawk' (cf. Hr = Horus!), none of these names refer to one specific species or cluster of closely related species.
- One might suppose that the corresponding list for only PAA and PIE, without the northern Nostratic languages, although implied in the above list, would be much longer since these language families are at least geographically closer than some of the other members of the Nostratic super-family. However, Bomhard's (1984) extensive list of cognates between the reconstructed proto-forms of these two language families yields only two more items:
 - 'to fly, bird' (PAA **cəw-/*caw-*, PIE **chəw-i*, p. 265), and
 - 'a kind of bird, eagle' (PAA **cər-/*car-*, PIE **cgər-/*cgar-*, p. 267).
- Obviously it is very rare for animal names to extend over great stretches of space and time, unless they are supported by the cultural history of domestication;
- And only in the case of **prd/*prg* and **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu* does such extension occur pairwise.

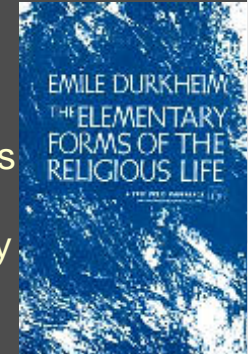


3.5. Some theoretical aspects of the study of myth and symbolism

- Closely associated with language, myth also offers clues to long-range relationships between cultures
- This is so because of myth's relatively immutability, wide spread in space and time, its being enshrined in ritual, art and texts
- Myths and folktales have formed a topic of scholarly research ever since Hellenistic times, and especially since Romanticism
- Witzel, a leading Asianist and convenor of the present Round Table, has recently claimed for myth analysis a place in its own right, next to the analysis of archaeology, language and the distributional analysis of culture
- Another recent claim: myth is such a vital device in keeping a group together and co-ordinating its activities, that in earliest human history language may have been invented to articulate myth, and not the other way around



- After laying the foundations for the structuralist anthropology of kinship (1949), the French Americanist Lévi-Strauss spent the rest of his long and brilliant career forging a structuralist method of myth analysis, and applying it so as to bring the highly diverse and fragmented mythological landscape of the Americas within one grand analysis
- With such notions as surface structure, deep structure, transformation, and binary opposition apparently unrelated myths could be argued to be systematically interrelated within a wider spatio-temporal field
- Continuities in Native American myths had already been a theme in the older Americanist studies (Kroeber, Sapir)
- Continuities between North American and East Asian (Siberian) myths have been popularised by the Jungian myth analyst Joseph Campbell; they tie in with linguistic and archaeological continuities, against the background of the geophysical demonstration of the Bering land bridge during the Upper Pleistocene (up to 11,000 BP).
- Another vital contribution of Lévi-Strauss to our project has been his exploration of pre-modern structures of thought (*La pensée sauvage*, *Le totémisme aujourd'hui*).
 - If animal symbolism is an ubiquitous and central feature of pre-modern thought,
 - it is not so much because the animals are 'good to eat',
 - but because they are 'good to think':
 - animal symbolism tends to come in pairs, and when human social groups are each associated with an animal, the distinctive features of each animal makes it possible, to think (with few abstract logical tools and with the concrete animals as constant referents) the web of contrastive distinctions that define the mutual interaction of social groups within society; in the same manner an overall cosmology (built out of a web of binary oppositions such as high-low, dark-light, male-female etc.) may be thought
- As a theory of natural symbols (such as leopard symbolism), Lévi-Strauss's approach is a felicitous departure from Durkheim's still highly influential theory (1912), according to which
 - symbols are absolutely arbitrary, and
 - merely a prop through which society forces its members to venerate itself
- Throughout the 20th c. CE, Durkheim's theory has been under fire from materialists (such as Worsley) who insist on the survival significance of the species selected as natural symbols





- Systematic, comparative study of myth in Africa is lacking
- Africa is often left out of comprehensive comparative studies (Fontenrose, Eliade, Ginzburg, Campbell) simply because the material is inaccessible, *a fortiori* so for non-Africanists
- That yet converging patterns may be discerned, may be clear from the following example, relating to the pre-modern (i.e pre-Christianity, pre-Islam) *distribution in Africa of the mythemes of*

1. Tower
2. Flood

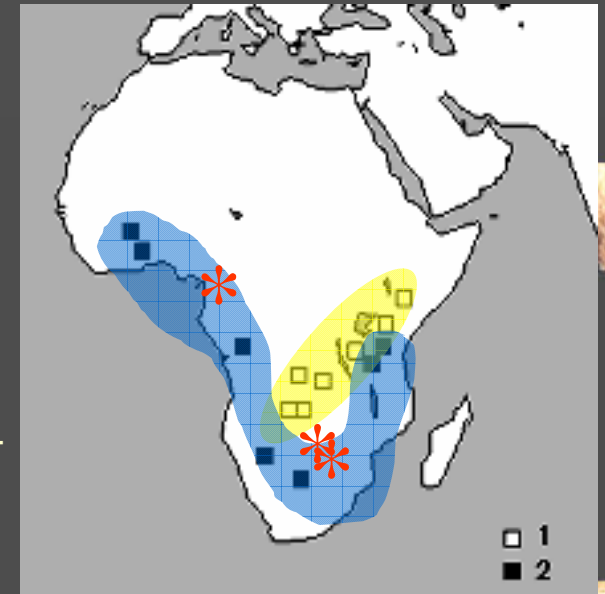
- The two themes, united in the Bible (although not in the more original Flood story of the Gilgamesh epic) appear to be independent in Africa

- The Tower theme

- Is also known from South Asia, notably among Austro-Asiatic speakers
- In Africa, largely follows the lake belt towards the interior, and the distribution of sacred kingship
- In South Central Africa, is associated with the name of Kapesh ka Mununga Mpanda: 'Kapeshe who constructs the tower/ladder out of forked sticks'.
 - although *ka-* is the usual prefix for personal singular, Kapesh seems to have no Niger-Congo etymology;
 - there is a possible Afro-Asiatic etymology in terms of the hopping movement like of a fleeing/flying deer (Isa. 35: 6?)
 - or, perhaps, the hopping movement of a being who has but one side to his/her body (Luwe)?
 - Graves taught us to see hopping as a sign of sacred kingship
 - we are reminded of the fact that one of the most famous kings of sub-Saharan Africa, Sundjata, was crippled
 - The name of another famous king, Monomotapa, has a controversial etymology, one of the options being 'King Soaring High' – cf Mwendanjangula.

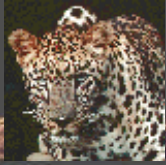
- The Flood theme

- Has a very wide distribution globally and probably refers to the historical dramatic rising (by 200 m) of the ocean level in the beginning of the Holocene (10,000 BP)
- In Africa, follows the coast rather than the lakes
- In Africa, brings out a pattern of continuity similar to that apparent in the distribution of geomantic divination, divination bowls, and perhaps even in the name of Mbedzi (*) as a mythical ancestor/divine saviour





- This information on the spread of the Flood and Tower mythemes is all the more interesting, because older sources do acknowledge the global spread of these mythemes but leave Africa out. A typical example is the authoritative Hastings Encyclopaedia of religion and Ethics (1912-1920), which under 'Deluge' lists many societies with this mytheme in Asia, North America, Oceania and Europe, but not Africa. [**for details, see my own copy of Hastings, Index volume, s.v. Deluge**]



3.6. Von Sicard on the Luwe complex: A divine trickster figure

- In addition to the linguistic material proffered by Kammerzell,
- The second set of evidence throwing light on world-wide patterns of leopard symbolism and pardivesture consists of the mythical complex centring on a divine figure called 'Luwe'.
- The name *Luwe* is widely attested, throughout Africa south of the Sahara, as the designation of a primordial hunting/ herding/ atmospheric/ blacksmithing god with very specific characteristics and attributes (a dwarfish shape, often only a left side or a right side to his body, an axe or club as weapon, Master of Animals of the wilds, herder also of immense herds of cattle, etc.), and with extensive ramifications into the rest of the Old World (von Sicard 1968-1969).
 - Besides Luwe, other name variants attach to the character of this old god (and/or his companion), for example Runda, Kube, Sumba, Gurub, Karumbi, Mutanga, Dara, Gale, Nape/Nyambe, etc.



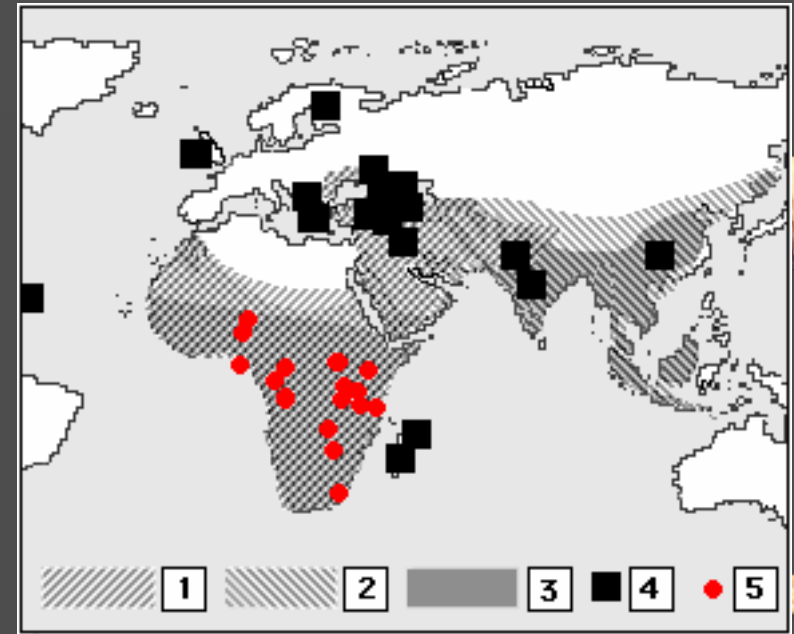
- Luwe (with only one side to his or her body) is a mythical figure attested (von Sicard 1967-68) throughout Africa and beyond, as a very ancient
 - hunting/
 - herding/
 - black-smithing and
 - weather god.
- Its distribution and history offers us, indirectly, one of the major clues towards the world history of leopard symbolism.
- Shown is one of the very rare actual representations of Luwe, bought in Angola in the 1980s. Underneath the cloth, the body has no primary sexual features but the one breast is female.
- Luwe appears here (like among the Zambian Nkoya) as Mwendanjangula, 'Treetop-Walker'— the typical trickster god who starts upon you and, if you are the first to greet him/her, will bestow great magical powers and wealth upon you, but in the opposite case will destroy you
- Although prominent in myth and everyday popular experiences of villagers, Mwendanjangula does not seem to have a cult
 - Neither does the traditionally recognised High God, except in the context of Christianity





1

1. Mapping of the world distribution (black squares) and of the African distribution (red dots) of the Luwe theme, against the distribution of lion and leopard in the background
2. Perhaps the most familiar manifestation of Luwe is Herakles, with lion skin and club, so closely associated with the sun it bore his name (shown is Herakles snatching the sun god Apollo's oracular tripod at Delphi; note that his animal skin is speckled! Athenian red-figure vase, 480 BCE)



1. Distribution of lion, 5,000 BP
2. Distribution of leopard, 5000 BP
3. Distribution of leopard today
4. Von Sicard's attestations of the Luwe complex outside Africa
5. Von Sicard's attestations of his Group VI: 'Mwari' as companion to 'Luwe'

In all, von Sicard lists 65 attestations of the Luwe complex in sub-Saharan Africa alone; however, this number must be treated with caution given his intuitive methodology

2





- In his identification of occurrences of the Luwe complex, von Sicard allowed himself to be guided by typological considerations concerning beliefs, attributes, iconography, and not primarily by lexical criteria. As a result, in a continent with such enormous linguistic diversity as Africa, the Luwe character and his companion turn out to occur under a large number of different names, which, on the basis of *largely unspecified* linguistic criteria, von Sicard classified in seven groups. Group 6 is the most interesting for our purpose. It contains the names:
 - *Gale, Ngali; Yangare; Mungala; Mungalo; Mwari, Mwale, Munyari; Njala-Gobe; Nyalic; Amala; Agar; Gara; Geli, Angeli; Eri; Ari; Gayere; Wa-Mwelu; Kyamweru; Umveli Ngqangi; Mwili; Mvidi; Mrile.*
 - The occurrences of these names are scattered over the entire African continent, from Northern Nigeria to Zululand, with a certain degree of clustering on East Central Africa, specifically Tanzania.
 - Mwali (or in its Shona form Mwari), the name of the High God venerated at the Nata shrine of my final confirmation as fully-fledged initiate, turns out to be part of the Luwe complex. Mwali may display all of Luwe's traits, but more important is that Mwali frequently occurs as Luwe's companion, although the nature of the mythical partnership may vary from that of lover, priest, mountain supporting the partner's holy fire, or opponent in a magical contest.



- We should be careful not to put ourselves completely at the mercy of von Sicard's approach, however persuasive his ideas are, and however much they appear to be corroborated from a recent and unsuspected direction – the work of the Egyptologist and linguist Kammerzell.
- In circles of modern Zimbabwe specialists, von Sicard has long been discarded as a hopeless arch-diffusionist whose disbelief in any linguistic, cultural and ethnic boundaries made him claim (1952) the most fantastic intercontinental continuities, such as the suggestion that a localising transformation of the Old Testament's Arch of the Covenant underlies the drum symbolism of East and South Central African kings.
- However, it is difficult to determine
 - to what extent modern scholars dismissal of von Sicard has been merely paradigmatic, in other words, merely inspired by the general rejection of diffusionism in the anthropology of the second half of the twentieth century, and
 - how much of it really addressed genuine factual errors on von Sicard's part.
 - The same anthropologists who reject von Sicard's linguistic and mythological arguments may be suspected of fighting a somewhat spurious battle of rival disciplines with him (von Sicard was a comparative religionist and theologian by training).
 - Moreover, these anthropologists probably wear localising (even essentialising) blinkers because of their own fieldwork-based anthropological habitus, and (like most social anthropologists in the second half of the twentieth century) tend to lack comparative and theoretical linguistic knowledge – they would seldom be competent to prove von Sicard wrong through a detailed scholarly argument.



- But even so, we must admit that von Sicard's comparative religious and mythological knowledge and method are generally of better quality than his linguistics (Schadeberg). The latter frequently adduces far-fetched etymologies without stopping to spell out the correspondence rules (of *systematic*, and both empirically and theoretically underpinned, phonetic and morphological change over time) on which any scholarly etymologies are supposed to be based; and without considering alternative and often more established etymologies.
- Thus, from von Sicard's perspective the Hebrew *ari*, 'lion', would appear to be a cognate of the divine name Luwe, and if Ari turns out to be one of the names under which the Northern European god Odin was known, that (among other indications) would implicate the latter in the transcontinental Luwe mythical complex. Implicitly there is an appeal here to Kammerzell's root **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu* but there are far more established etymologies for the Hebrew word *ari*
 - E.g. in terms of a proto-Semitic protoform **?arway-* 'wild beast, lion' (Tower of Babel project, s.v. 'Semitic etymology')
 - Or as an application of the root **?ar-/*?ər-*, which in Afro-Asiatic and in fact throughout the Nostratic realm stands for 'animal'. (Bomhard 1984: 253; Bomhard & Kerns 1994: no. 437.)
- This one example may serve to indicate that von Sicard's work is methodologically suspect and essentially obsolete. It can only serve to be quarried for inspiring hypotheses, which must then subsequently be substantiated by more recent and more methodological scholarship. The following discussion must be seen in the light of these severe reservations.
- Yet, while in these established etymologies emphasis is on the semantics of '(wild) beast', beyond Afro-Asiatic (to which Semitic belongs), our comparison of language families including Dene-Sino-Caucasian, Nostratic and Khoi-San suggests the fertility of a different semantic complex in this case, that juxtaposing brightness/evenness (lion) with speckledness/darkness (leopard).

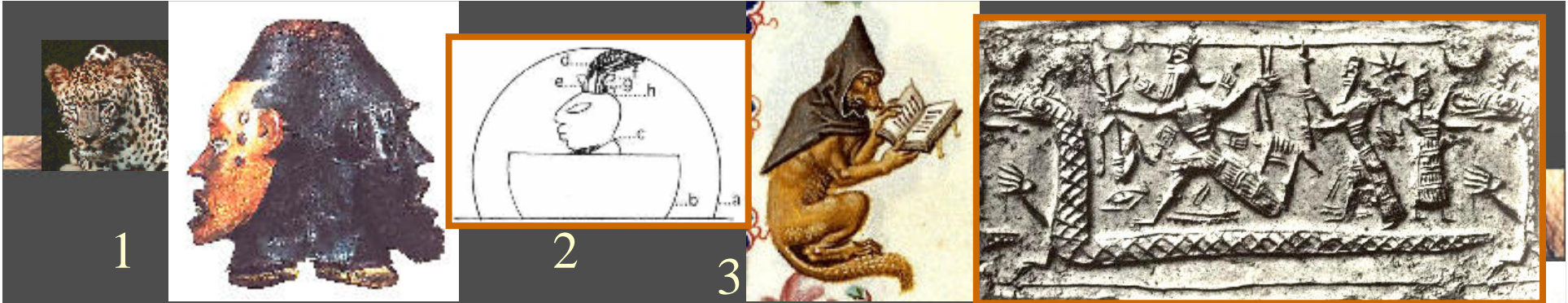


- The inherent historical complexity and internal contradiction of the Luwe figure is already clear from his designation as a divinity in charge of

- 'hunting/
- herding/
- weather/
- blacksmithing'

Of course people may be fascinated and intimidated by the weather regardless of their immediate productive interest; yet since the other qualifications relate to specific modes of production, we could make the same assumption for Luwe as weather god. 'Weather' is only greatly important in a mode of production based on *agriculture*. So in Luwe's characteristics we face four different modes of production, each with their own technology, specific relation with nature, and specific time and place of historical emergence:

- Lower Palaeolithic and South and Central Africa for hunting;
 - the Early Neolithic and the Extended Fertile Crescent (ranging from the Sahara to the Indus) for agriculture
 - the Early Neolithic and the Extended Fertile Crescent (ranging from the Sahara to the Indus) for pastoralism; and
 - the Late Neolithic and some still hotly contested origin between Anatolia and Central Africa for metallurgy.
- In his final four-fold package of connotations Luwe can only be Late Neolithic or even more recent than that.
 - His metallurgical and meteorological connotations may well have the Northern, West Asian or Caucasian connotations so stressed by von Sicard.
 - The pastoral connotations of Luwe/Mwari would well fit a context of early pastoralists spreading throughout Africa and facilitating the spread of specifically Khoi-San (in Africa) and Cushitic elements (outside Africa – cf. Hercules' pastoral journey along the Mediterranean...); we are particularly reminded of the pastoralists of the fertile Sahara – who have greatly contributed both to the Pre-Dynastic peopling of the Nile valley, and to Southern African pastoralism by Khoi-San speakers.
 - Luwe's hunting connotations, however, are likely to be very much older, and to be remnants, in fact, of an earlier (Palaeolithic) cult (which may have been based in Africa or Asia, primarily) *of the leopard in its own right*,
 - which only a handful of millennia BP was wedded to the Luwe complex, so as to constitute the Lévi-Straussian binary opposition captured and elaborated in our table (see below) setting forth the cosmology of the lion and the leopard

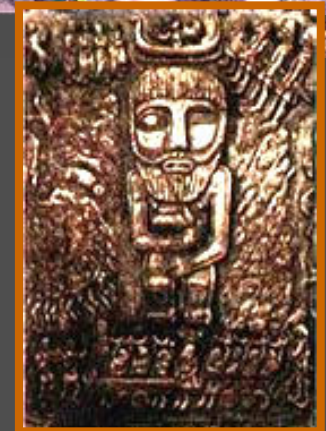


- In his African manifestations, Luwe often has the connotations of a trickster god. He thus belongs to an old and widespread variety of divinities
- In West Africa, Legba (Cuba: Elegua) (2, 5) is a well-known manifestation of the trickster god, closely associated (Maupoil) with the lfa oracle
- The same theme informs the mythical complexes around the hare, the fox (3), the praying mantis, the spider, and the fly (Beel-Zebub, later identified with the devil as the great adversary and trickster)
- As it does, in Northern America, those of Raven and Coyote
- In the Ancient Near East, the desert and chaos god Suteh (Seth, the adversary of Osiris); and Yam (Leviathan) and Tiamat (4)– evocations of the wide sea as untamed chaos
- And in the Ancient Greek context Hermes/ Mercurius, Proteus, other sea gods, cf. Janus (one-sided like Luwe – here in West African form (1)); cf. one-eyed Odinn (6)
- Interestingly, in South Central Africa the trickster category is intimately connected with that of the Khoi-San speakers, who are nicknamed ‘Now 83 you see them now you don’t’

4



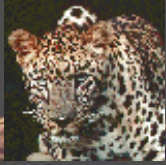
5



6



- 'The trickster qualities (shape-shifting, unpredictable, bestowing good or bad) may be explained in a number of complementary and far from mutually incompatible ways:
 - As universal aspects of the human personality, especially of the unconscious breaking through the surface of the conscious
 - As reflecting the chance aspect of hunting and collecting -- the face of nature manifest in the mode of production (the oldest one!) in which they seem to have first emerged
 - The former especially so from the perspective of agriculturalists and pastoralists pursuing (post-) Neolithic modes of production, cf. above, 'Now you see them now you don't'
 - Trickster traits may also be attributed – in part -- to the fact that they are found in old and only partially subdued or replaced gods – which in other words may surface unexpectedly; their trickster quality would then be an aspect of the common process of the demonification of earlier, eclipsed gods
 - Trickster traits and shamanistic traits, and the gods associated with them, obviously merge
 - I have since given further thought to the idea of transcendentalism versus immanentism, and I am now inclined to stress transcendentalism as, on the one hand, a universal capability of human language use, which however, on the other hand, because routinised into a power instrument with the creation of writing, the state, organised religion, and science ([see my 2004 paper on spirituality and transcendence, unfortunately only in Dutch](#)). In this connection I am beginning to associate the trickster figure especially with the immanentist condition of human thought: here the transcendent, which totally surpasses the here and the now, is not unknown, but it has not yet been routinised, in other words has not yet been built (by the familiar institutions of writing, the state, organised religion, and science) into a well-defined realm of its own, 'out there'. In immanentism, the transcendent flight of the mind or of the soul does not freeze in the idea of a separate transcendent existence up in the sky, but has no option but to return down to earth, to the here and the now. This movement, involving the puzzling but momentary shimmering through of the suggestion of superhuman powers, is very much reminiscent of the trickster figure, which therefore could be argued to be humankind's pre-transcendentalist version of a deity

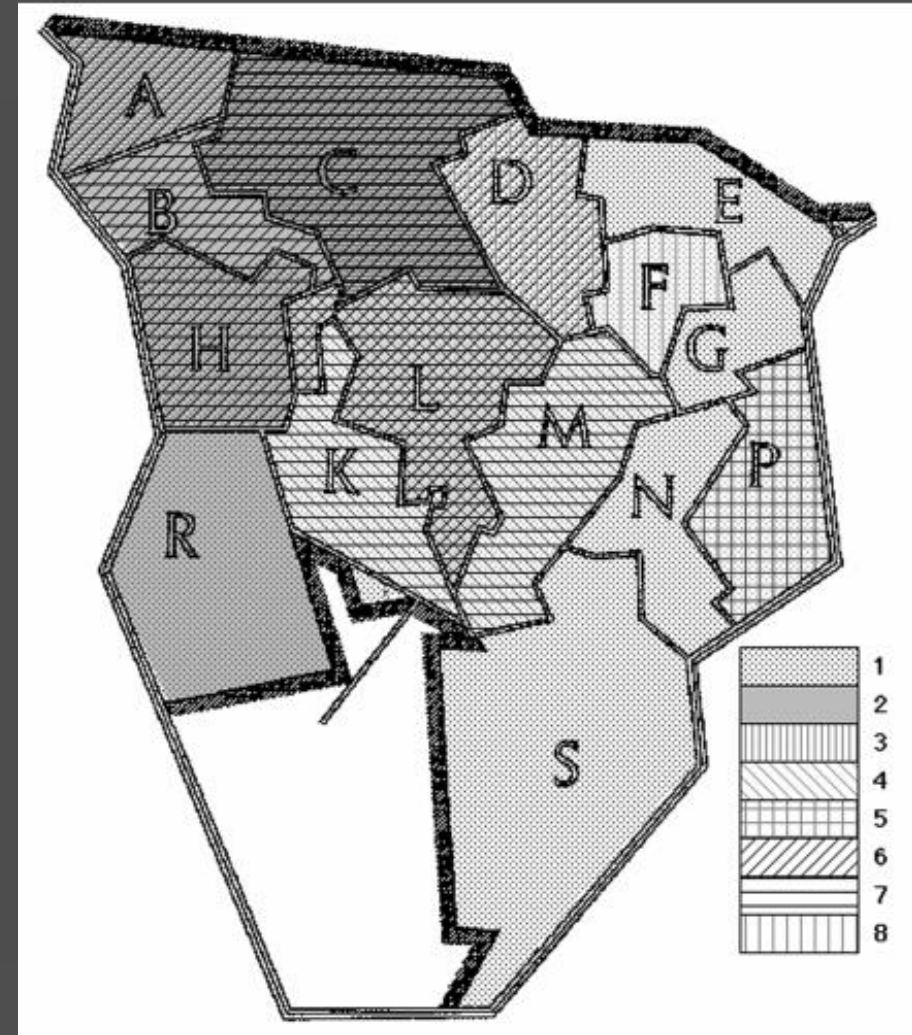


3.7. A linguistic excursion: felines in Niger-Congo ('Bantu') languages

- Luwe unexpectedly fits Kammerzell's analysis, since its name corresponds with **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu*, whereas its companion Mwali corresponds with **prd/*prg*.
- It seemed worthwhile to assess whether these roots have also any occurrence in the area where Luwe is most attested, that of Niger-Congo (mainly Bantu) languages
- Most of sub-Saharan Africa is covered by the Niger-Congo linguistic family, whose best known subgroup is 'Bantu'
- Would not Bantu linguistics throw new light upon African patterns of leopard symbolism and pardivesture?
- The Niger-Congo language family extends immediately south of the Afro-Asiatic-speaking belt, although the latter's interface with Niger-Congo is interspersed with large Nilo-Saharan-speaking regions of the Niger valley, Chad, Sudan, and Kenya. Niger-Congo is the obvious place to look for Kammerzell's roots. The most widely spread and best studied cluster within this family is that of the Bantu languages, reaching all the way from the Sudanic savannah to Eastern Cape, South Africa. An examination of Bantu lexical patterns could be a profitable approach to identifying the earlier history of our roots.



- Linguistic reconstructions of the nomenclature of felines in proto-Bantu show a considerable variety for the c. 15 different regional varieties of Bantu
- with only few forms having more than regional application
 - 1 cimba (universal Bantu)
 - 2 koci
 - 3 gida
 - 4 cUmpa
 - 5 podogoma
 - 6 kopi
 - 7 tamboi
 - 8 tade

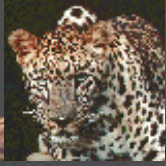




- *In the hundreds of Bantu languages, can lexical traces of our two roots be found as alien intrusions or as remnants of an older substratum, which do not belong to Proto-Bantu and have not achieved systematic widespread incorporation into the Bantu lexicon?*
- I scrutinised the lexicons of over two hundred Bantu languages, identifying the words for lion and leopard and if possible for other felines there, and trying to ascertain if these words could be considered manifestations of the roots **prd/*prg* and **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu*. As a non-linguist, I could not draw up explicit correspondence tables between our two roots and such altered forms under which they might manifest themselves in specific Bantu languages. Instead my approach has been largely intuitive, and as such extremely provisional; the entire analysis will have to be repeated under much stricter conditions and with professional methods and expertise. Methodologically, my rule of thumb is to consider a word a *possible* – and certainly no more than that – manifestation of Kammerzell's two roots, if
 - it semantically refers to a feline without clearly corresponding with the Common Bantu and Proto-Bantu forms listed in the above tables;
 - it resembled the proper names featuring in von Sicard's mythical analysis;
 - its consonantal structure is reminiscent of our roots:
 1. l(r, d, ...)+u/w for **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu*;
 2. p(mp, mb, m, n, ny, ng, ...)+r(l, d, ...) [+ d(l, r, ...)] for **prd/*prg*.



- I realise that, in my analysis of these data, tonal and vocal structures should also have been taken into account, and that my identification rules remain far too implicit, unsystematic and unsupported by the etymological possibilities and impossibilities of Bantu historical linguistics to yield anything coming near to definitive and convincing results.
- With all these reservations, the results are presented in the following Table
- Although I tried to refrain from wishful thinking, the number of possible manifestations of the **prd/*prg* root is suspiciously high. Considering that I worked with a sample (the recognised number of Bantu languages is several times larger than the number of languages in my corpus), the number of *possible* manifestations might even be higher if the entire population (i.e. 'all the different' Bantu languages) had been taken into account – with all the notorious taxonomical and political problems of demarcation that that would have entailed.
- The number of possible hits for **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu* is much smaller, and may depend more on similarity with the mythical names cited by von Sicard, than on real linguistic criteria.



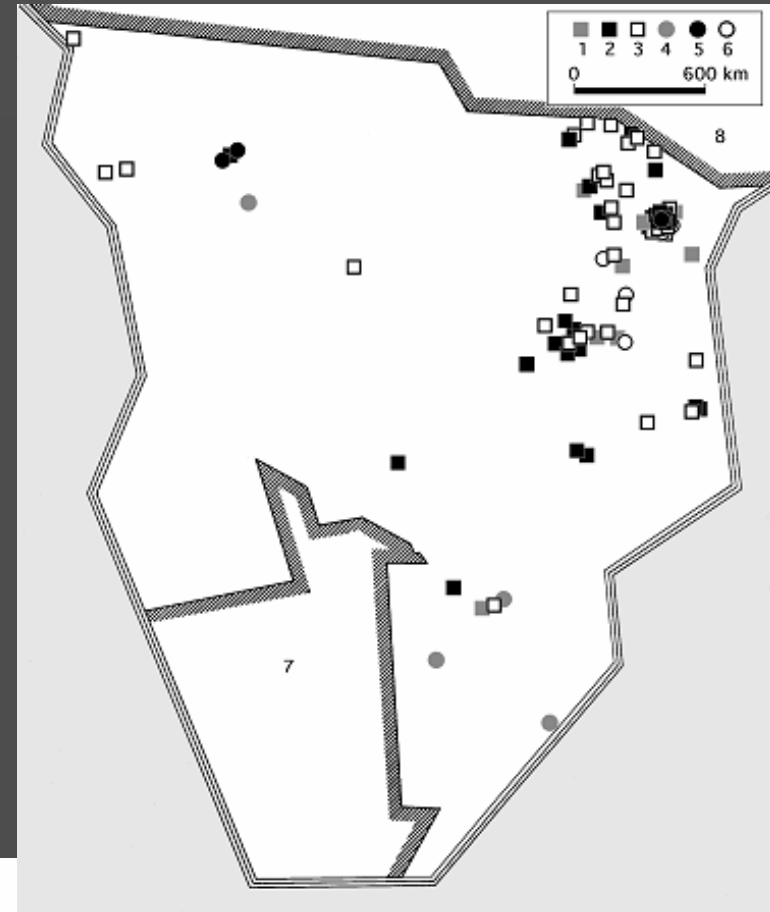
Between parentheses: names of Bantu languages for which positive attestations were made. In total, I have analysed the lexicons of 89 languages from all over the Bantu-speaking region, and in addition the languages included in the Tanzania Language Survey (TLS), which again comprises 122 Bantu languages. [1] The TLS languages are marked thus: °. The orthographic rendering of the words is unsatisfactory: the more than 200 languages in the corpus have been described, usually by professional linguists, following a great variety of orthographic conventions for phonemes and tones, which was impossible to unify in the present scheme.

| | | possible manifestations of the root: | |
|---|---------------------|--|---|
| | | *pr/*prd | *lw |
| meaning 'lion' | | <i>indare</i> (Kilegi°); <i>ngare</i> (Kiseri°, Mkuu°); <i>inyaruli</i> (Masaba); <i>i-nyahupala</i> (Wanji°, Bena°); <i>thiburi</i> , 'honorific title for lion' (Venda) | <i>ikul ongana</i> (Ngoli = N.W. Bantu); <i>se-lau</i> , 'like a lion' (Tswana); <i>tshiluvhelo</i> , 'chief's lion cloth' (Venda); <i>isilwane</i> (Ndebele) |
| meaning 'leopard' | | <i>suwi endala</i> (Kerebe°); <i>ngarI</i> (Kikuyu°); <i>waru</i> (Kibosho°); <i>ohuwaru</i> (Kibosho.unn°); <i>indara</i> (Kilegi°); <i>irumu</i> (Kimochi.unn°); <i>a-havara</i> (Makhua); <i>nrupici</i> (mi-), 'male leopard' (Makhua); <i>nkari</i> (Merutig°); <i>nyalugwe</i> (Chewa); <i>ngulamu</i> (Kiseri°, Kiseri.unn°); <i>ngulam</i> (Mkuu°); <i>inkampu</i> (Namwanga°); <i>kambuku</i> (Chewa); <i>(i)nkampu</i> (Wanda°); <i>kampulu</i> (Nkoya); ¹ <i>enzumula</i> (Zinza°); <i>nyamanru</i> (Siha°); <i>nyamandru</i> (Siha.unn°); <i>imbwili</i> (Bemba); <i>tambola</i> (Bobangi); <i>ibole</i> (Nyakyusa°); <i>-bado</i> , 'spot, e.g. of leopard' (Sukuma); ² <i>mbada</i> (Shona); <i>empala</i> (Lusoga°) | <i>zolongoi</i> , <i>loowa</i> (Bobangi); <i>rungu</i> (Vunjo°) |
| meaning any other feline or similar mammal | '(wild) cat' | <i>ulembe</i> (Malila°); <i>kembhore?</i> (Ikizu°); <i>kembulu</i> (Shashi.siz°); <i>kimbuhu</i> , <i>kimbulu</i> (Sukuma°); <i>ci-iwulu</i> , 'spotted wild cat' (Yao); ³ <i>imaro</i> (Kinga°); <i>mwambala</i> (Bakweri); <i>ibarananda</i> (Mkuu°); <i>iraami</i> (Siha°); <i>ukharamula</i> , 'scratch, esp. Wild cat family' (Makhua); <i>ndeke</i> (Nyaturuwil°); <i>ebala</i> (Sonjo°) | |
| | 'cheetah' | <i>mpala</i> (Gwero°, Lusoga°); <i>rigendamweri</i> (Ikizu°); <i>ivalavala</i> (Kimbu°); <i>dibalabiila</i> (Tshiluba); <i>ngare</i> (Machame°); <i>narocho</i> (Merutig°); <i>nyalubwe</i> (Mwera°); <i>iruthi</i> (Tharaka°) | <i>inuluva</i> , <i>ilituluva</i> (Hehe°); <i>ilituluva</i> (Bena°); <i>mhula</i> (Gweno°); <i>rungwi</i> (yangoe) (Vunjo°) |
| | 'civet cat' | <i>-mbala</i> (Ipinu, Sangu); <i>kemboro</i> (Ikizu°); <i>umbulu</i> [ombo:lo] (Wungu°); <i>chiwulu</i> (Yao°); <i>ulembe</i> (Nyiha°); <i>dzambarananga</i> (Venda) | <i>rongi</i> (Nyaturuwil°) |
| | 'serval' | <i>mbale</i> (Mambwe) | |
| | 'cane-rat' | <i>eliisyabale</i> (Bukusu, Masaba) | |

Table 8.4. Possible manifestations of the roots *pr/*prd and *lw in a corpus comprising more than 200 languages of the Bantu family



- The distribution, in Bantu languages today, of designations of feline species reminiscent of the non-Bantu roots **prd/*prg* and **rw/*lw-/*LB'/*leu*



1-6. Possible contemporary manifestation, in the Bantu-speaking region, of the root

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>*pr/*prd</i> with the meaning of 'lion' | 2. <i>*pr/*prd</i> , with the meaning of 'leopard' |
| 3. <i>*pr/*prd</i> , with the meaning of 'any other feline' (see table 8.4 for details) | 4. <i>*lw</i> , with the meaning of 'lion' |
| 5. <i>*lw</i> , with the meaning of 'leopard' | 6. <i>*lw</i> , with the meaning of 'any other feline' (see table 8.4 for details) |

7. Khoi-San speaking region (as in the eighteenth century CE)

8. The linguistic belt north of the contemporary Bantu-speaking region. Here in the west the Niger-Congo super-family is continued to which also Bantu belongs. In the east Nilo-Saharan is spoken. The Afro-Asiatic-speaking region forms a belt north of the Niger-Congo region, interspersed with large Nilo-Saharan-speaking regions of the Niger valley, Chad, Sudan, and Kenya.

Geographical location of language areas according to Guthrie numbers as on a map provided by T. Schadeberg.¹



| Guthrie ¹ | | | Meeuwesen ² | |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| word | Guthrie number | semantic | word | semantics |
| -cob- | 398 | to skin | -cubi | hyena, leopard, tiger cat |
| -gobO- | 873 | skin, garment | -koba | skin, piece of skin |
| -bad- | 18 | spot, speckle | | |
| -bada- | 18 | to speckle | -bada | spot, speck |

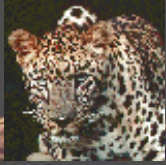
Table 8.5. The semantics underlying most of the leopard's names in Proto-Bantu and Common Bantu

Note that the *-bad-*, *-bada-* form rather closely approaches, both semantically and phonetically, Kammerzell's **prd/*prg*

- Our painstaking Bantu analysis has not yielded much beyond the suspicion that Kammerzell's roots may underly part of Bantu feline nomenclature, without having been effectively incorporated in the earliest (proto-) lexical structure of the Bantu family
- However, we see a remarkable semantic convergence, again going in the direction of *speckledness*
- In the light of possible Khoi-San background to the presumed presence of Kammerzell's roots in the Tanzanian Bantu area, it seems worthwhile to assess feline nomenclature in Khoi-San languages



- Not having noticed that the juxtaposition between lion and leopard is the backbone of the mythical system he described under the name of Luwe, von Sicard lists Gorob (*unmistakably the Khoi-San word for leopard*) as a variant of Luwe.
- In Nama, one of the first Khoi-San languages to be studied linguistically, the word for 'leopard' is */garub*, 'the variegated one', (Rust 1969) in reference to his fur pattern.
- The name is merely a specific form of the adjective */garu*, 'variegated', for example */garu gūs*, 'the herd of variegated cattle'.
 - That in Khoi-San the final *-b* of */garub* appears as a morphological feature, whereas in other language families (Nostratic and Sino-Tibetan i.e. Old Chinese) it features as part of the root, might imply a Khoi-San origin for this root and borrowing from, or a genetic relationship between, Khoi-San on the one hand, Nostratic and Sino-Tibetan on the other hand
- Another Nama name for the leopard is *‡hûiseb*, 'distributor of food', for it tends to leave part of its kill for others to eat; it helps to complete the semantic picture but plays no part in the etymological process between macrofamilies
- In a manner found among hunters all over the world, the animal species is not directly mentioned by a unique proper name (which tends to be taboo), but alluded to by reference to the species' material or behavioural characteristics. Nama nomenclature for the leopard has the ring of a hunting culture, and brings out a central theme in the genesis of humankind which we will discuss below: the latter's early dependence on the great predators.
- The **prd/*prg* root, with its ramifications all over the huge Nostratic realm and its insistent apparent manifestations in Bantu languages, does not necessarily derive directly from Khoi-San, although the Neolithic herdsman of the fertile Sahara may well have spoken languages close to Khoi-San.
- However, the identity of the Khoi-San and the Nostratic semantics involved in the naming of the leopard is striking: throughout, **the leopard appears as 'the spotted one' or as 'the skin animal'**.
- **While the lexical forms in our Bantu (Niger-Congo) tables differ greatly from the Nostratic and Khoi-San ones, and from each other, most of them still have the same underlying semantics in terms of 'the spotted one' or 'the skin animal'**



| semantics | lexical form | |
|-----------|--|---|
| | Khoi-San | Niger-Congo |
| 'leopard' | <i>loe</i> ¹ <i>lgoe, loe</i> ² <i>hui</i> ³ <i>//ui</i> ⁴ <i>//ui</i> ⁵ <i>//oi</i> ⁶ <i>giri-d wa</i> 'leopard' ⁷ cf. <i>!gwuni</i> , 'a greedy person' ⁸ | <i>gwil</i> (Proto-Western-Nigrific) ⁹ <i>gui</i> (Proto-Western-Sudanic) ¹⁰ <i>k li</i> 'leopard; greed, meanness' (Mende) ¹¹ <i>kwi, gwi</i> ¹² <i>giè</i> (Common Bantu) ¹³ <i>gii</i> (Shi) ¹⁴ <i>gwe</i> (Kwangari) ¹⁵ <i>gb n</i> 'lion, leopard' (proto-Gurunsi-Oti-Volta) ¹⁶ |

Leopard names in Khoi-San and Niger-Congo (after Argyle 1994).¹⁷

Argyle (1994) provides extensive material to argue considerable continuity of Khoi-San and Niger-Congo, *inter alia* on the point of leopard nomenclature

However, his suggestion of possible spatial relationships (diagram) is somewhat absurd and falls into the trap of projecting present-day distribution onto the distant past

¹ Common Khoe, cf. Baucom 1974.

² Common Khoe (Central Khoi-San).

³ Southern Khoi-San 1, Northern Khoi-San 2b (numbering of Khoi-San groups largely as in Bleek 1927, 1956).

⁴ Southern Khoi-San 5 and 6.

⁵ Southern Khoi-San 6 as recorded by Traill (1986a, 1986b).

⁶ Southern Khoi-San 7.

⁷ The G//abe language, cf. Westphal 1965.

⁸ Southern Khoi-San 1.

⁹ Cf. Mukarovsky 1976-1977: 150.

¹⁰ Cf. Westermann 1927; Armstrong 1964.

¹¹ No specific reference given by Argyle, but cf. Eaton 1987; Innes 1969.

¹² I am interpreting Argyle's unexplained coding (*BCCWL) at this point as: 'reconstructed proto-form, cf. Ruhlen 1991'.

¹³ Guthrie, Common Bantu, no. 866.

¹⁴ With Tembo, Shi makes up the Bembe group of Bantu in Central Africa, Guthrie number D.54; not to be confused with 'Mashi', Guthrie number K34, in Zambia. For Shi, cf. Polak-Bynon 1978.

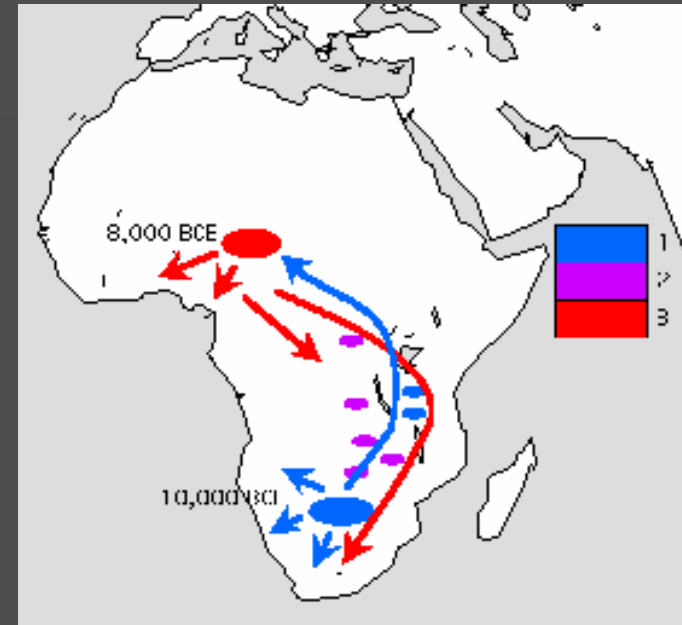
¹⁵ Guthrie number K33; cf. Westphal 1958.

¹⁶ Cf. Boadi 1972, 1975.

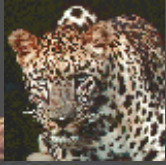
¹⁷ Table adapted after Argyle 1994: 'Table 6. CV1V2 Forms with click initials'. I have mainly expanded the references and added clarifying details.



- The historical relation between the Bantu (Niger-Congo) and Khoi-San language families according to Argyle.
- However:
 - It is hard to imagine the newly emerged Khoi-San speakers rushing up north in order to keep their rendez-vous near Lake Chad for the emergence of Niger-Congo.
 - Recent genetic research (Cavalli-Sforza c.s.) has established extensive continuities between Khoi-San speakers, Ethiopia, and West Asia, but no such continuity between Khoi-San speakers and West Africa
 - Assuming a constant mutation rate, the genetic data suggest the emergence of the population that today speaks Khoi-San to have taken place c. 10,000 BC
 - However, this does not mean that Khoi-San as a language cannot be much older



1. Khoi-San
2. Intermediate Batwa pockets
3. Niger-Congo



3.8. The world-wide obsession with speckledness

- As we have seen, a major implication of Lévi-Strauss' approach is that leopard-skin symbolism cannot stand on its own, but implies the contrastive symbolism of another species or natural object
- The main complement is the lion
- Sometimes however the leopard is contrasted
 - not with another feline predator,
 - but with a ungulate
- The association between predator and ungulate (its natural prey) is a natural given, that between leopard and lion can only be constructed by human thought
 - although lion and leopard can in principle breed, they have only done so very rarely, in captivity
 - in ordinary life they shun each other, and are rivals for the same prey
- This perhaps suggests the pairing of leopard and ungulate belongs to an older symbolic layer in history than the elaborate cosmology of the lion and the leopard
 - In that older layer, it is the predatory function which is central, and there lion and leopard may be interchangeable,
 - In the lion and leopard cosmology however, everything hinges on these two feline species being clearly distinguished
- The iconographic and linguistic elaboration of the lion and the leopard juxtaposition may be traced, with some difficulty, from the Upper Palaeolithic to the present; I suggest that this elaboration is so consistent and persistent that it is no exaggeration to speak of the 'Ancient Cosmology of the Lion and the Leopard' – whose specific binary oppositions we will explore below



- Paired with the lion, the leopard is certainly *good for thinking*, as our detailed table of the 'cosmology of the lion and the leopard' demonstrates: it invites a play on such binary oppositions as
 - homogeneous surface / speckled
 - light/dark
 - day/night
 - zenith, summer / dawn, dusk, night, winter
 - vertical/horizontal
 - smooth and even-coloured/variegated and speckled
 - good/evil
 - primary/secondary
 - male/female, etc.
- Of course we realise by now, half a century after the heyday of structuralism, that binary oppositions, however fertile for abstract thought, in practical thought and action get blurred, dissolve into ternary logic, into inconsistencies, and that each term of the opposition implies and contains the other (cf. Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida)
- The symbolic pair of leopard and lion as a binary opposition is incredibly old; its spread in the Old and New World suggests an age of c. 15,000 years



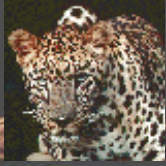
- Most unexpectedly, given the enormous variety of human languages, that juxtaposition also turns out to be a remarkable semantic and even phonological constant across language families and even macrofamilies
- Also, ancient astronomies present considerable indications of the wide spread and persistence of the cosmology of the lion and the leopard
- Africa, the Palaeolithic, and Native America, appear to share in the older variety where it is the feline against the ungulate;
- Pardivesture seems to be predicated on the cosmology of the lion and the leopard, and therefore is not originally African, but had to penetrate the African continent more recently



- If I am here suggesting something like the ‘Ancient Cosmology of the Lion and the Leopard’,
 - which is supposed to have manifested itself across thousands of kilometers and thousands of years since the Upper Paleolithic,
- this is of course anathema for those who perceive the history of mankind as an unfolding of cultural and linguistic, cosmological and symbolic specificity and diversity – as an irreversible process of divergence (*pace* (proto-)globalisation)
- The very idea plays havoc with
 - Accepted notions of cultural boundaries (between local and regional cultures, and between such major linguistic (macro-) families as tend to be associated with cultures and
 - Accepted notions of specific cultural integration within such boundaries
- We all know (and I certainly do; see my [Tears of Rain](#), 1992) how much painstaking localising scholarship goes into the state-of-the-art understanding of even a minor body of textual, symbolic or iconographic data, and we do not wish to throw that overboard for the sake of a long-range comparative adventure
- On the other hand, there is no denying that *all* our scholarship (also the most localising and particularising sort) is already implicitly comparative: when we translate an Asian or African text, one of today or one that came down to us across millennia, we do so on the basis of an assumption of some translatability (albeit partial, never complete; cf. Quine) between the historical actors’ conscious life world and conceptualisations and our present-day scholarly ones
- We therefore inevitably situate our scholarship within the very tension between unicity and generalisability (see my [Intercultural Encounters](#), 2003; these questions have been central to [my work as a professor of intercultural philosophy](#), from 1998 onwards)
- This general scholarly position implies that we assume considerable ontological continuity between our life world and that of the historical actors we are dealing with – only by recognising their humanity, their perceptions and motivations, can we begin to (claim to) understand them



- Meanwhile the 'Ancient Cosmology etc.' may seem to give the impression of containing another claim: that of *a universal ontology linking*
 - Not so much us as scholars to the historical actors we study, but
 - *All historical actors we make pronouncements about: in Africa, Asia and the New World, from the Upper Palaeolithic onwards.*
- This impression is absolutely wrong if it means an *a priori* assumption as point of departure.
- The 'Ancient Cosmology etc.' is merely a tentative generalisation based on painstaking empirical research, and it may be readily discarded in favour of a different hypothesis that explains the accumulated data better.
- Proposing the 'Ancient Cosmology etc.' does not involve the '*belief*' in a universal ontology,
- but on the contrary the *serendipitous empirical finding* that
- totally unexpectedly, given the localising tendency that have captivated area studies since the late 19th century CE)
- the accumulated cultural and linguistic findings may yet seem to indicate very limited suggestions of such a convergent ontology among the actors,
- notably in the ubiquitous notion of speckledness (darkness, night, sin, pollution) versus homogeneity (lightness, daylight, sun, righteousness, cleanliness)

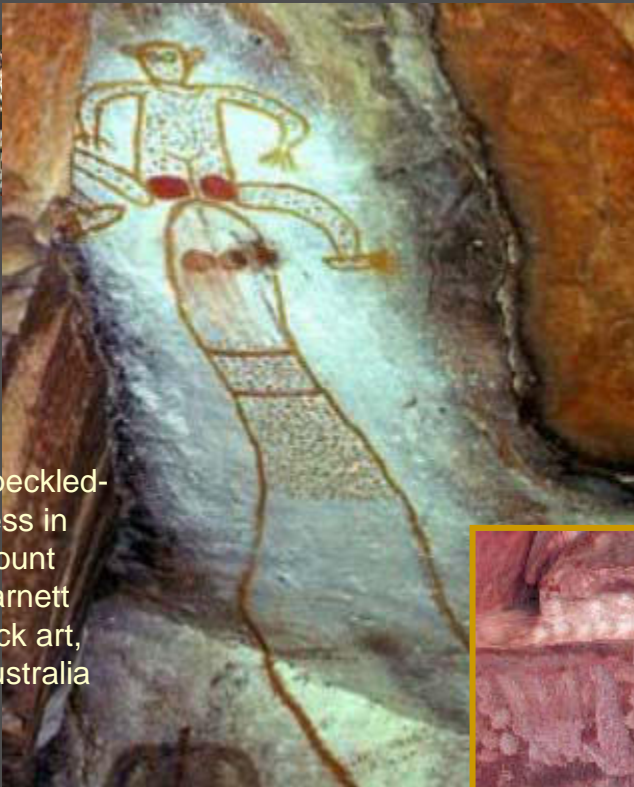


Black dots (sufifi) accentuate the triadic colour pattern in this barkcloth sheet (wan) from Papua; young women's facial tattoos follow the same pattern



Australian Aboriginal girl with cat's cradle

- But of course the notion of speckledness and its opposite is not the only notion of such puzzling ubiquity, cf.
 - the four directions
 - the notion of the polluting effect of the adult female human body and its physiology
 - the trifold scheme of red-white-black colour symbolism
 - the recognition of certain asterisms, such as Orion's Belt and Ursa Major, often with similar symbolic ascriptions
 - cat's cradles
 - Less ubiquitous but intriguing: the prominence of fish in rock art and puberty initiation taboos
 - the incest taboo and of some form of marriage
 - ceremonial care for the dead (although this is a feature anatomically modern man shares with Neanderthals)
 - moreover there is the standard Laurasian (= Eurasia + Australia and the New World) pattern of myths of origins as reconstructed by Witzel, involving *i.a.* cosmogony from an egg, father heaven/mother earth, a mythical sequence of history ending in a cosmic disaster, etc.
- It would be almost impossible to explain the near-ubiquity of all these traits by simple models of parallel local invention or more recent diffusion
- Perhaps these widespread patterns do date from before either of the two postulated Out-of-Africa migrations after c. 140,000 BP, and thus form a common symbolic repertoire of all of anatomically modern humankind
- One could accept the 'automatic' survival of these traits across millennia if they could be argued to add greater survival value. This is arguably the case for the incest taboo and marriage, and perhaps for astronomical lore that helps the wandering hunter to orientate himself far away from the home base.
- For the other traits this argument of evolutionary advantage does not seem to apply. Any explanation of these traits in terms of pre-Out-of-Africa constants *would have to be phrased in the context of a cultural theory of retention and transmission*:
 - how come that precisely these themes are so faithfully transmitted in space and time without being discarded or superseded (contrary to so many other traits, from taking refuge under rock shelters to the use of coarse biface stone tools)



Speckledness in Mount Barnett rock art, Australia

Speckledness in a dreamtime-serpent representation, Australia



Ceremonial speckledness in North Eastern Queensland, Australia, 1910-1915; like many early ethnographic photographs, this one is evidently posed



Speckledness in Gibb River rock art, Australia

- Moreover one would have to ascertain which near-ubiquitous traits belong to either Out-of-Africa migration:
 - Clearly there are cat's cradles in Australia and New Guinea, and perhaps also the colour triad,
 - But is there a symbolic system of speckledness? (see images!) and if so, is it continuous with the rest of mankind?
 - Does the Laurasian mythical scheme encompass both migration waves or does it belong (as I suspect) to a later development occurring only in the East Asian wave, but not in Australia and New Guinea, and therefore not originally in Africa?



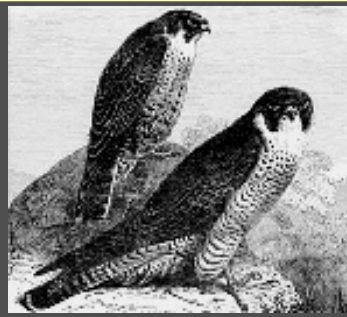
- Finally, has Africa retained any pre-Out-of-Africa traits, and have they perhaps undergone some traceable, independent trajectory there, which may put parts or layers of (a selection of) African cultures today in a different bracket from the rest of humankind?
 - Which could these traits be?
 - How do such traits relate to such more general traits as have developed outside Africa on the basis of the Out-of-Africa package, and have been fed back into Africa as a result of subsequent re-migration into Africa?
- If geneticists today find the greatest genetic variation inside Africa, and if only a minority of the clades found in Africa are suggestive of return migration from other continents, then inevitably there has been considerable population continuity in Africa since the emergence of anatomically modern man, and this suggests that also in the cultural field there may have been some continuity across more than 100,000 years
 - However, such cultural continuity would be very difficult to identify:
 - The only mode of production older than 10,000 years in Africa is hunting and collecting, which has become very marginal
 - Probably, no language families now spoken in Africa (including Khoi-San) are older than 10,000 years
 - Could the leopard symbolism of the Exalted Insider be such a perennial African trait? Could it reflect man/leopard interaction in the early phases of humanisation, when presumably the leopard was both a 'distributor of food' and a lethal danger?



- It is not impossible to explore the background of some of these traits:
 1. Some appear to relate to inescapable givens of the human physiology
 - The colour triad has been interpreted in terms of blood, milk/semen, and excrement
 - The four directions can be relegated to the left/right symmetry of the human body coupled to its front/back asymmetry
 - Given the recent interpretation of rock art in terms of the optical inducement of altered states of consciousness, one might be tempted to also interpret the distinction between brightness and speckledness (which for more than a dozen millennia has been at the heart of leopard symbolism) in terms of visual illusions produced in the context of shamanism
 2. Other traits are simply too conspicuous in the outside world to escape human attention, and tend to trigger human tendency to patterned perception in a converging way
 - This may be the case with some major asterisms
 3. Other traits may in a similar manner be based on an arbitrary symbolic association springing from humans' fascination with certain natural givens
 - Cat's cradles seem to imitate the spider's art, and link humankind to that phylum
 - By the same token, speckledness creates an association with the leopard, the snake, and certain types of birds
 - Also the idea of cosmogony from an egg implies an association with birds or reptiles
 4. For some of these animal species one might think of humans' accumulated historic experience with that species as enshrined in persisting symbolism (e.g. the leopard as 'giver of food' (unvoluntarily sharing his kill), but also as taker of human life
 5. Finally, some traits may have evolved as a result of mankind's accumulated experience with the burdens and the dangers of reproduction and social life (incest taboo, marriage)
 - The putative Out-of-Africa package, in other words, appears to spring from heterogeneous sources, some of them directly suggested by nature (1, 2, 4), others (3) springing rather from the creative mind's symbolic structuring projected onto nature, or from mankind's accumulated historic experience (4)
 - We have virtually no direct records going back to this remote period (150K years BP): the oldest representations attested to far are three to ten times younger; so all we can do is reconstruct traits on the basis of latter-day distribution patterns of cultural (including linguistic) traits



hawk



peregrine



quail



partridge



cuckoo



Barbary falcon



lanner falcon



kestrel

- Comparative linguistic and mythological research suggests that the distinction between 'bright/even-coloured' and 'variegated/speckled' has a pivotal cosmological significance of astounding antiquity.
- Bird symbolism in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean (e.g. the Horus falcon, the partridge) appears to be inspired by the same principle: **'the bird is speckled is a leopard...'**
- Ornithologists have suggested that Barbary falcon, kestrel, or lanner are the most likely identifications of the Horus falcon. As we remember, this (hr) is one of the few animal species to boast a pan-Nostratic nomenclature. The pictures show that Barbary falcon, kestrel, or lanner are all to be considered 'honorary leopards', or at any rate: **epitomes of speckledness**
- By the same token, eagle (another pan-Nostratic bird), fish eagle, crow, because their homogeneous pattern, are honorary lions, hence solar birds, throughout the Old and the New World

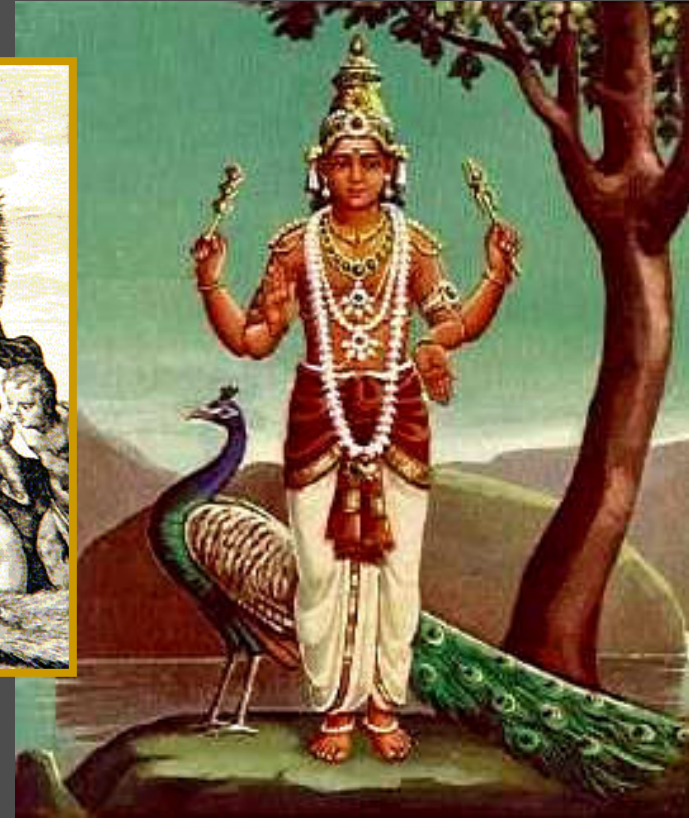


- If there is a world-wide and perennial obsession with speckledness, it must start with dots
 - Red dots are part of the iconographic convention for rendering leopards in Egypt
 - The fact that also trefoil ornaments in the Indus valley civilisation were found to contain red paint, was (beside the trefoil shape, which reoccurs in the Ancient Near East and Neolithic in a number of leopard-associated context) an additional reason to consider these trefoil ornaments leopard-related, even though that connection is not manifest.
 - Red ochre also occur in Khoi-San ritual and iconography, in deviation from general African custom, where white kaolin is the corresponding sacred substance.
 - Now red dots are also present in European Upper Palaeolithic cave art,
 - but not (as in the much later, leopard-associated cases) in combination with lighter and darker elements.
 - In Lascaux such red dots are, perhaps significantly, found in the 'diverticule des félins', i.e. a narrow extension of the cave marked by its feline (in this case: leonine) representations.
 - Since Leroi Gourhan, prehistorians have interpreted the colour 'red' as a symbol of life. The occurrence of red dots in Upper Palaeolithic cave art is far from limited to this one case, although figurative representations of the leopard in full body are rare. There is a remote possibility that the red dots in Lascaux do have specific leopard connotations.
 - There is a remarkable continuity here with Neolithic Çatal Huyuk (Anatolia)

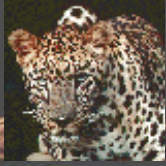


- In Southern Asian mythology, the bird Garuda is the mount of the god Vishnu.
- Having seen the gallery of speckled shamanistic birds we expect Garuda
 - to be speckled (as in this picture) and
 - his name to be etymologically related to **garub* (Khoisan) and (as a metathesis) to **prd/*prg* (Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan), 'leopard'
- Once one has started on this game one cannot help seeing meaningful instances of speckledness all over the place: in *giraffe* ('speckled beast'); *galop* (no convincing IE etymology, but evocative of the uneven, hobbling gait of Luwe and of that monster of the steppe, the horse, whose equivalence with the **prd/*prg* feline come out of the material time and again); etc. etc.: a whole new *World according to Garp* (Irving)





- One of the most conspicuous speckled birds is the peacock, mount of the Ancient Greek goddess Hera ('the powerful one – another manifestation of the all-powerful mother goddess)
- and of the South Asian counterpart of Dionysos, notably Kataragama/Skanda, trickster and warrior god whose other attributes also suggest traces of Luwe in recent, hinduised trappings
- The peacock is a formidable deity in its own right in pre-islamic pockets (e.g. Mandaean) in the Middle East
- It is a principal iconographic and symbolic theme throughout Asia



(Witzel 1999)

Through the comparative work of the Sanskritist Witzel (1999, 2002) also the South and Central Asian feline nomenclature can be drawn within the orbit of our analysis

| | Ancient India | pre-Dravidian substrate in Nilgiri languages (Dravidian family, South India) | (Ancient) Iranian |
|--|--|--|--|
| lion | Vedic <i>simha</i> < * <i>sengha/singha</i> < * <i>sinjha</i> < * <i>siṅgha</i> ¹ | | <i>šer</i> , ² * <i>sarg</i> , Khorasmian <i>sary</i> , Parthian <i>šarg</i> , Khotanese Saka <i>sarau</i> ³ |
| tiger | <i>vyāghra</i> , ⁴ <i>ṛḍāku</i> , ⁵ <i>śārdūla</i> , ⁶ <i>puṇḍarīka</i> ; ⁷ Sanskrit <i>ṛḍāku</i> ⁸ | | <i>bebr</i> ⁹ |
| panther/ leopard ; spotted animal (cf. snake) | <i>pard/pandh</i> ; ¹⁰ <i>palang</i> (New Persian) < Old Iranian * <i>pard-</i> ; ¹¹ Sanskrit <i>ṛḍāku</i> ; ¹² | <i>ḍōkene</i> , <i>dekene</i> , <i>ḍekena</i> , <i>ḍekkada</i> ¹³ | |
| snake , adder | <i>ṛḍāku</i> (Rgveda Saṃhitā 1, Greater Panjab); <i>ṛḍāk</i> (Atharvaveda Saṃhitā 2 C); <i>ṛḍākhu</i> (Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra 4-5 C); ¹⁴ ¹⁵ Khowar (Pakistan) <i>ṛḍūm</i> < * <i>ṛḍhūma</i> ?; ¹⁶ Burushaski (a Yasin language isolate) <i>phūrdum</i> | | |

■ Further material has been adduced, on the lion's side, by Vaclav Blažek; against the background of his truly phenomenal comparative linguistic knowledge he is, for excellent reasons (cf. *Etymological dictionary of Egyptian*, 1999-2001), dismissive of Kammerzell's Ancient Egyptian, and by extension Afro-Asiatic, feline etymologies.

■ Yet the South and Central Asian material largely confirms the relevance of Kammerzell's paired roots for South and Central Asian linguistic realm. The same is true, as we shall see, for the Sino-Tibetan realm. Therefore, I admit that much further attention to the AA side of feline nomenclature is needed, but I yet contend (*pace* Blažek) that there is insufficient reason to throw overboard the idea of paired lion-leopard names to which Kammerzell has drawn our attention for both IE and AA, albeit for the wrong reasons, and by the wrong etymologies.

The leopard, a common Central Asian animal (often found in early C. Asian art, Dani 1992), later used for sport (see elsewhere in this volume), again has designations that differ considerably in the various language concerned. It is already seen as a prominent motif on the oldest pottery from the area, in W. Turkmenistan.

• ***pard/pandh* 'spotted animal, panther': Ved. *ṛḍāku* 'snake' RV, *ṛḍakā* AV 'panther snake' AV, *ṛḍākhu* BSS, W.Panj. *parṛā*, O.Iran. **pard-*, cf. Khowar *ṛḍūm* < **ṛḍhūma*?, Bur. (Yasin) *phūrdum* 'adder, snake', see EWA II 163, KEWA II 335, CDIAL 8362.

The overlap between 'panther' and '(spotted) snake' is due to the fact that snakes are frequently named after a number of characteristics of other animals and plants, in case, the spots of the panther (differently EWA II 163). Lubotsky (2nd Intl. Vedic Workshop, Kyoto 1999, in press) has pointed out that the AV snake *ṛḍāku* is called after the leopard.¹³⁶

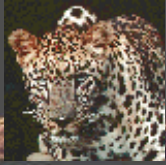
The Iranian forms differ considerably: N.P. *palang* 'leopard, *felis pardus*' < O.Iran. **pard-*,¹³⁷ Kurd. *pilink*, Pashto *ṛrang*, Parachi *parō:n*, Lahnda *parṛā*; cf. Gr. *párdalis*, *párdos*, *léo-pardos* 'leopard', all < **pard* 'spotted, wild animal?' (cf. EWA II 133), or following Henning, from an older ***parḍ*. However, the alternate Greek word, *pánthēr*, must be taken into consideration as well. The original C. Asia word seems to have had the dialect variants ***pard/pand*.¹³⁸



- This table brings out the unexpected great relevance of Chinese (a branch of Sino-Tibetan) for our topic (source: Tower of Babel project, Moscow/Leiden)

| character | modern (Beijing) reading | Middle Chinese reading | Old Chinese reading | Sino-Tibetan protoform | semantics | remarks |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| 豹 | bao 4 | pa.ɿw | pre:ʝk w s | | leopard, panther | this is unmistakably Kammerzell's *prd/*prg |
| 龍 | long 2 | | ron | | dragon | difficult to see (von Sicard) how this could be related to *rw*/w-/*LB'/*leu; but see next entry |
| 朗 | lang 3 | | r(h)a:n ? | *ra:>n H | bright | this may be close to *rw*/w-/*LB'/*leu |
| 昱 | yu 4 | ju ^u k | luk (~L ^u) | | bright [Han] | see previous entry |
| 馬 | ma 3 | ma/. | mra:? | | horse | GSR ¹ : 0040 a-e; nothing to do with *prd/*prg |
| 煥 | huan 4 | xwa ^u n | swa:n-s | | light, bright [L. Zhou] | GSR: 0167 c |
| 瞭 | liao 3 | li/ew | r(h)e:w? | | bright (in part., of eyes) [L.Zhou] | Also read *r(h)e:w, MC liew; this seems to be *rw*/w-/*LB'/*leu |
| 炯 | jiong 3 | kw en | kw e:n ? | | bright [L.Zhou] | Also read *gw e:n ?, MC g wi/en |
| 斑 | ban 1 | pa.n | pra:n | | spot, variegated [LZ, = vs Late Zhou] | GSR: 0190 c; cf. *prd/*prg |
| 霏 | ling 2 | lien | r(h)e:n (*r l:n) | *re:n | rain (!) dropping, to fall in drops | GSR: 0836 a-d; spot = speckle |
| 蜂 | feng 1 | pho ^u n | phon | *[ph]u>n | bee, wasp | Also read *bho:n , MC bun ; GSR: 1197 s-t |
| 蜜 | mi 4 | mjit | mit | | honey [L.Zhou] | GSR: 0405 r |
| 隼 | sun 3 | | | | hawk, falcon | GSR: 0467 a-b; nothing to do with hr |
| 鳶 | yuan 1 | jwen | lon (~-r) | | hawk, kite | GSR: 0230 a; cf. horse dragon (Fu Xi myth) |
| 龜 | gui 1 | kw i | kw r@ | | turtle, tortoise; bone oracle in general | |

¹ Karlgren 1957 *Grammata Serica Recensa*.



| linguistic macro-families | linguistic families | 'leopard' = *prd/*prg | 'spotted' = *prd/*prg or related | semantics of leopard's name dominated by 'spotted'/'variegated' | 'lion' = *rw/*hw-/*LB'/*leu | 'bright' = *rw/*hw-/*LB'/*leu or related | semantics of lion's name dominated by 'bright'/'smooth/plain'/'evenly coloured' |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Dene-Sino-Caucasian ¹ | | + | + | + | +/? | + | +/? |
| Nostratic (including Afro-Asiatic) | proto-Nostratic ² | +/? | + | + | +/? | + | ? |
| | other members of the Nostratic family ³ | +/? ⁴ | + | +/? | - ⁵ | + | +/? ⁶ |
| | Indo-European ⁷ | + | +/? | ? | +/? | +/? | ? |
| | Afro-Asiatic ⁸ | +/? | +/? | ? | +/? | +/? | ? |
| | Khoi-San | +/? ⁹ | +/? | + ¹⁰ | +/? ¹¹ | ? ¹² | ? ¹³ |
| | Niger-Congo (incl. Bantu) ¹⁴ | ? | ? | + | ? | -/? | -/? |
| | Nilo-Sahara ¹⁵ | ? | ? | ? | ? | -/? | -/? |

Compiling the evidence on feline nomenclature across linguistic (macro)families yields the above table.

¹ See the table on Chinese.

² Cf. Dolgopolsky 1998; Bomhard 1983; Bomhard & Kems 1993..

³ Dravidian and Sumerian examples available.

⁴ E.g. Sumerian (whose status as a branch of Nostratic is not uncontested yet widely accepted) *piriŋ*, 'leopard', more properly 'lion', from roots *bar*, 'to shine', and *nin*, 'thing'; however, also *nib*, 'cheetah, leopard', exists, from a combination of roots meaning 'strength' and 'to be angry'; also *nimur* (from Akkadian *numru(m)*); see Halloran Georgian (Kartvelian) *leopardi*, 'leopard', but also *ხოეოფიო* (*hoeoφio*), 'leopard'

⁵ Georgian (Kartvelian) *lomi*, 'lion'.

⁶ Sumerian *piriŋ*, 'leopard', more properly 'lion', from roots *bar*, 'to shine', and *nin*, 'thing'; however, also *nib*, 'cheetah, leopard', exists, from a combination of roots meaning 'strength' and 'to be angry'; however, also exists: *ur-maš*, 'lion' (= 'carnivorous beast' + 'mighty'); Halloran n.d.

⁷ Extensive details in Kammerzell 1994.

⁸ As previous note. However, Kammerzell was convincingly contested by Blažek 2002. Full etymologies for Semitic 'lion' and 'leopard' are given in the Tower of Babel database (at: <http://starling.nmet.ru>).

⁹ Cf. **garub*, etc. See my table after Argyle.

¹⁰ As previous note.

¹¹ Cf. Argyle materials.

¹² Cf. Argyle 1994: 10 item 3, *lali*, 'shiny, reflective' (S6.AT), but there are several other words, very different, with the same meaning, p. 35 item 13: *kuru*, 'be dry, be hot, be in the sun, midday', which has both a semantic and phonological correspondence, cf. lion symbolism discussed in text as 'medium coeli, mid-summer', etc.

¹³ Argyle materials.

¹⁴ My Bantu analysis: **prd*/**prg* and **rw*/**hw*-/**LB*/**leu* are detectable but probably as intrusions, because not in Proto-Bantu; the speckled semantics however is unmistakable for the leopard, already in Proto-Bantu.

¹⁵ Hardly any data available to me so far.



- How does one fit the tabulated data of the preceding table into a scheme that shows degrees of similarity, and that also more or less suggests a time scale?

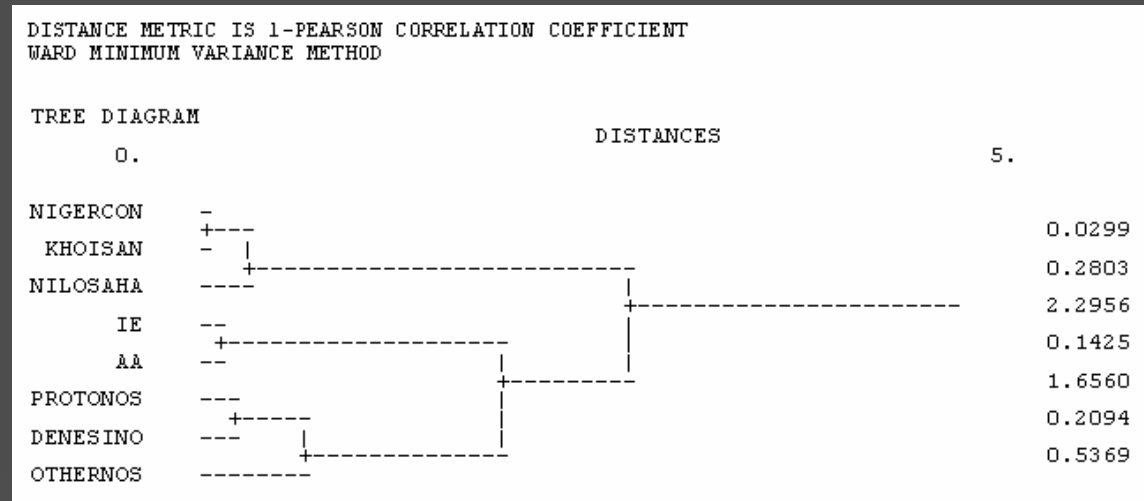
- By converting the qualitative entries into a numerical data set using a conversion table (A), and subsequently
- Performing a cluster analysis (B) on this data set (Pearson correlation as association measure, and Ward's method of clustering, yield the most valid and reliable results; but of course the number of cases is critically small)

- Exclusively on the basis of the feline nomenclature*, the data in the preceding table yield a possible model for the formal relations between the linguistic families, as displayed

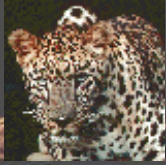
- Needless to say, feline nomenclature is far too limited a topic than that we could base any conclusions upon it concerning overall relationships between linguistic families
- Meanwhile, however, the dendrogram suggests a structure that makes considerable sense in the context of recent long-range linguistics (Shevoroshkin, Dolgopolsky, Bomhard & Kerns, Argyle) – which lends some credibility to our analysis

| sign | meaning | numerical value |
|------|--|-----------------|
| + | yes, this is the case | +1.0 |
| +/? | the available data suggest this to be likely | +0.5 |
| ? | data inconclusive, contradictory or lacking | 0 |
| -/? | the available data suggest this to be unlikely | -0.5 |
| - | no, this is not the case | -1.0 |

A



B



| | | | (*proto-) Dene-Sino-Caucasian | *pre-/ *proto-Khoi-San? speakers in west Asia/northeast Africa | present-day Khoi-San in Southern Africa | *proto-Niger-Congo and present-day derivatives | *proto-Nostratic | *proto-Afro-Asiatic and *proto-Indo-European | other members of the Nostratic macro-family | (*proto-) Nilo-Saharan |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|--|------------------|--|---|------------------------|
| 'speckled' nomenclature ¹ | for leopard | | + | + | + | + | + | ? | +/? | ? |
| | for other species | | ? | + | + | ? | + ² | + | + | ? |
| shamanism | ecstatic cult | | +/? | +/? | + | ?/- | + | + | + | ? |
| | theri-anthropy | attested? | + ³ | ?/+ ⁴ | + | + | + | + | + | ? |
| | | involving leopard | + ⁵ | ? | ?/+ ⁶ | + ⁷ | ? | ? | ? | ? |
| | leopard-skin symbolism | attested? | - | ?/+ ⁸ | + | + ⁹ | ? | + | ?/+ | + |
| | | Exalted Insider | - | ? | + ¹⁰ | + ¹¹ | ? | - | ?/- | ? |
| Sacred Outsider | | - | ? | - | + ¹² | ? | + ¹³ | ?/+ | + | |
| mother goddess | | | + ¹⁴ | ?/- | - | -/? ¹⁵ | + ¹⁶ | + ¹⁷ | ? | ?/- |

■ We may now proceed to map the antecedents of leopard-skin symbolism (pardivesture) on the basis of

- Linguistic material (cf. table and analysis on preceding slides)
- Distribution of symbolic and religious traits

¹ See table and diagram of linguistic origins *pre/*proto.

² Cf. my discussion of the pan-Nostratic emphasis on speckled bird species.

³ Several attestations Eurasian Upper Palaeolithic.

⁴ By analogy with Khoi-San speakers today.

⁵ Iatutz, Hohenstein-Stadel.

⁶ Leopard impersonations probably implied in later-day San dances.

⁷ Dances, and 'leopard men' as collective representations.

⁸ Leopard skin bears in Tassili-n-Ajjar rock art considered to be proto-Khoi-San speakers.

⁹ Both as Exalted Insiders (kings, notables) and (at the African/Asian interface) as Sacred Outsiders, see present study.

¹⁰ Notables may wear leopard karosses, although rarely because of scarcity and expenditure.

¹¹ Both as Exalted Insiders (kings, notables) and (at the African/Asian interface) as Sacred Outsiders, see present study.

¹² Both as Exalted Insiders (kings, notables) and (at the African/Asian interface) as Sacred Outsiders, see present study.

¹³ The material from the Ancient Near East and South Asia.

¹⁴ Numerous attestations Eurasian Palaeolithic.

¹⁵ Ancestress veneration in sub-Saharan Africa represents a borderline case.

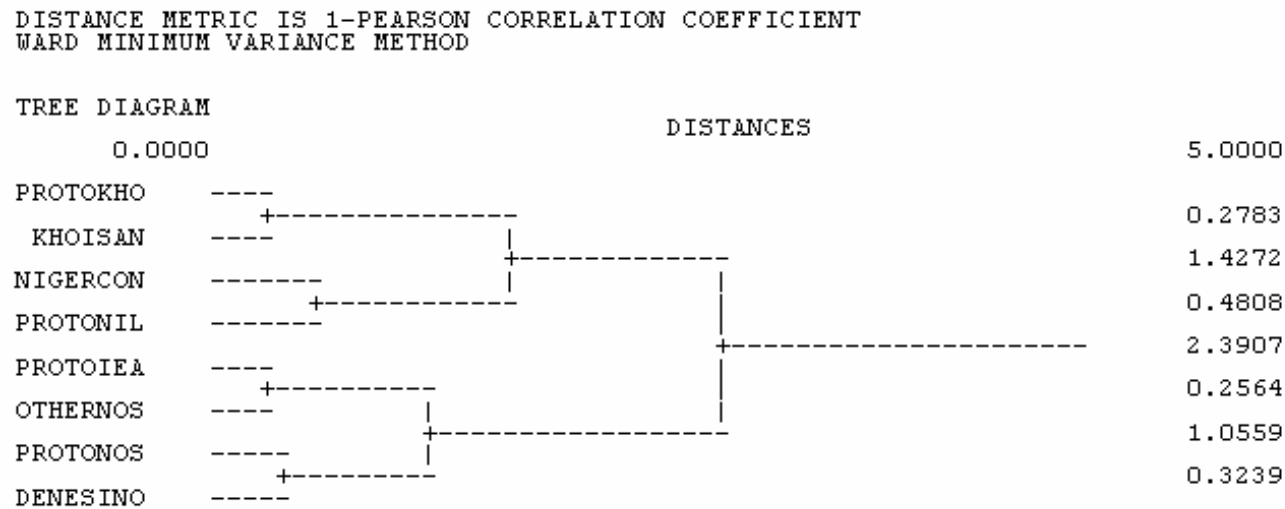
¹⁶ Numerous attestations Eurasian Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and after.

¹⁷ Numerous attestations Eurasian Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and after.

¹⁸ In a later state as many entries as possible need to be referenced.



- Again, the underlying linguistic clustering (see dendrogram) makes sense and lends an element of plausibility to our analysis

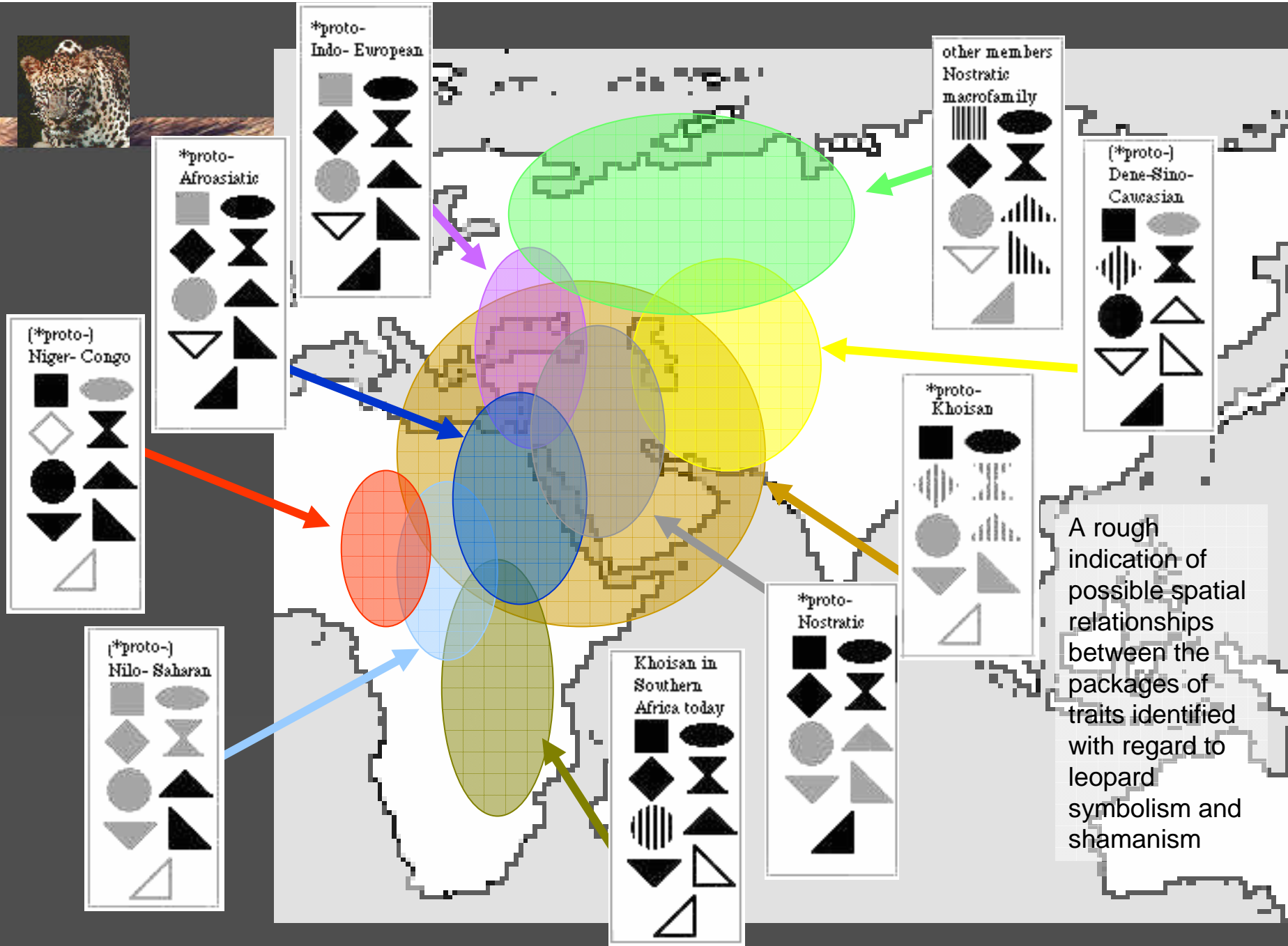




- Probing into the origins of shamanism and pardivesture by a formal analysis of traits across major linguistic-cultural clusters
 - In particular, our tentative analysis may put us in a position to advance between Argyle's timely and courageous attempts to draw within the orbit of global long-range linguistic analyses: Khoi-San, Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan (which together with Afro-Asiatic comprise all languages spoken in Africa until recently)
 - The preceding table has allowed us to associate specific traits packages with specific language (macro-) families. To represent this graphically, we use the key to the right.

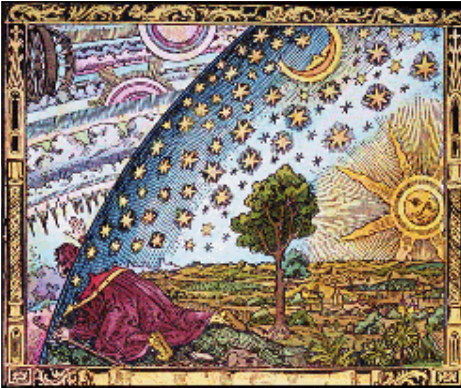
| | yes | probably yes | ? | probably no | no |
|--|-----|-----------------|---|----------------|----|
| speckled nomenclature for leopard | | | | | |
| speckled nomenclature for other species | | | | | |
| ecstatic cult | | | | | |
| therianthropy attested | | | | | |
| leopard therianthropy | | | | | |
| leopard-skin symbolism attested | | | | | |
| Exalted Insider | | | | | |
| Sacred Outsider | | | | | |
| Mother goddess | | | | | |

- The world map on the next slide gives a very rough indication of possible spatial relationships between these packages of traits





- The linguistic fantasy on the previous slide could be taken as an illustration of the 'fireworks' model suggested earlier on.
- The explosive success of newer (I suggest: in part, filial) language families, and their associated cultures and modes of production (notably food production and more complex social organisation) at the eve of the Neolithic, may well have caused the increasing social and spatial marginalisation of Khoi-San speakers, who as a result ended up in a remote corner of the Old World –that language was brought there by a population whose clades reveal it to have a West Asian origin c. 10,000 BP
- Whatever the more extended linguistic merits or shortcomings of this model, it is the only one I can think of so far, to explain the linguistic, genetic and symbolic data on leopard symbolism with any degree of precision and



Man as dwelling at the bottom of the sky (thought to represent Empedokles, in a pseudo-Renaissance print first published by Flammarion, late 19th c.)

Ludicrous, unscholarly, crazy as the preceding example may seem, it does not stand on their own.

- Another example of a perennial, pan-Old World lexical and semantic complex is that of *nt[a]w, 'bottom, bottom-dweller, human' (see table below)
- The links this and similar material suggest to exist across the Old World, do deserve serious scholarly attention.
- Perhaps it takes an outsider, Africanist, amateur, to spot such connections which, for people centrally identifying with Asian studies, philology, linguistics, may be suicidal
- Incidentally, such long-range connections force us to realise that culture and language, even under conditions wholly relying on oral tradition, may have far greater inertia than we usually assume – how else could lexical and semantics be retained and transmitted between language families, even macro-families, intercontinentally and across dozens of millennia?

| Khoi-San | Dene-Sino-Caucasian | Austro-nesian | Nostratic | | | Niger-Congo |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 'person' in the following Proto-languages -Central Khoi-San: *khóé -Khoikhoi: *khoe -West Central Khoi-San: *khóé -East Central Khoisan: *khóé -South Khoi-San (Taa): *ta^, *tu^ -North Khoi-San: *žù (Central *kh- might be transformation of South *t-, North *z-; these are not loans from Bantu) | proto-Sino-Tibetan | Proto-Austro-nesian | Afro-Asiatic: Semitic: biblical Hebrew | Afro-Asiatic: Ancient Egyptian | proto-Indo-European | Proto-Bantu |
| | *dālH, Chinese: 底 *tāj? 'bottom', 柢 *tāj? 'root, base'; Tibetan: <i>mthil</i> bottom, floor; the connection with 'human' is hypothetical | *- <i>taw</i> , 'human' (Adelaar 1994) | In Gen. 4:15, God 'set a sign' for Cain, the first fratricide; my reading (cf. Nuer leopard-skin chief and North African saints, both of them offering sanctuary through their association with the earth) is that Cain was offered immunity from blood feud through extending to him a special relationship <i>with the earth</i> | t3, 'land, ground';  t3wy (dualis),  'the two Lands, Upper and Lower Egypt' | *- <i>nt-</i> , 'under', 'underling', proposed (Ode 1928) as etymology of Ancient Greek <i>anthrōpos</i> (human being) and <i>Athēna</i> (as underworld goddess) | the eponymical proto-Bantu root - <i>ntò</i> (Guthrie no. 1798; Meeussen: - <i>ntu</i>) 'human, person' |

a tau- shaped (ancient form: +) sign is widespread (e.g. as a potter's mark) throughout the Old World (also in Niger-Congo and Khoi-San speaking Africa) as a sign of the earth, almost everywhere conceived as having four corners in reflection of the combined symmetry/asymmetry of the human body



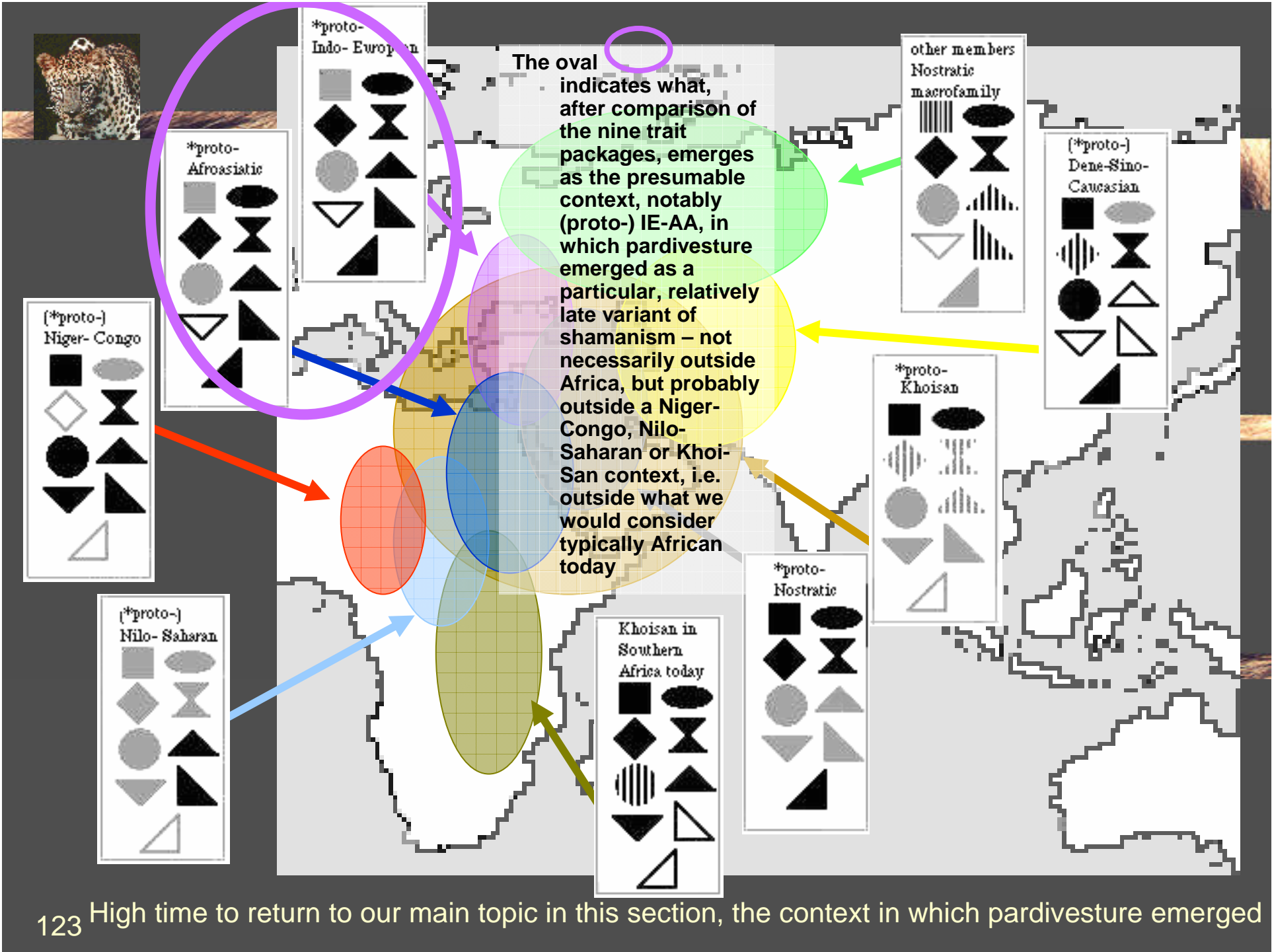
- Once we find ourselves happily on this path of insanity, let us try another even more daring lumping suggestion, this time linking one extreme end of the Old World (Khoi-San speaking Southern Africa), with the New World.
- In terms of our linguistic fantasy, such lumping makes sense because of the close association, spatial and historical, we have sought to establish between Khoi-San and Dene-Sino-Caucasian: branches of the latter constitute major linguistic families in North America
- The Preying Mantis Heitsi-eibib ('Wounded Knee'; cf. Luwe's hopping movement for having only one leg) is the central divinity among the Khoi-San.
- Like the spider, the theme is present in West African folklore, where it was picked up by Chinua Achebe.
- Asian elaborations seem rare. The praying mantis is however a variety in martial arts in East Asia (cf. basic *tai chi* stance).
- The locust and the coyote are a Zuni mythical pair. And of course, the locality of Cankpe Opi ('Wounded Knee') was where Native American independence came to a bloody end in 1890.
 - Pictures: the body of the shaman Yellow Bird, who fell in battle;
 - and the 1990 Centennial Memorial Ride
- I am inclined to think there is no coincidence here and that the placename celebrates the same concept as the Khoi-San theonym.



- An important reason to assume a common source for very similar Southern African and Northern American cultural traits is that already a decade ago I found close parallels to the Southern African four-tablet oracle (1) in the games and divination sets of North American Indians (2).
- Only diffusion from a common source (most probably situated somewhat centrally in the Old World: West Asia) could explain these parallels.
- In these cases we see a well-known 'law' of linguistic and cultural diffusion illustrated: *original ('primitive') forms are best retained at the periphery.*



- Another major reason to contemplate long-range continuities between North America and Southern Africa is the institution of the nubile girl's training and coming-out dance.
- The intercontinental similarity extends to many details (e.g. strictly for one girl at a time; the training by non-kin who become fictive kin; the association with sunrise; with a special costume; rain associations, e.g. rustling metal chips on costume, and rain – usually a sign of good omen – is taken as a sign of supernatural rejection of this particular ceremony)
- (1) sunrise dance of a Apache girl, Arizona, USA, late 1970s; (2) coming out dance of a Nkoya girl, western central Zambia, late 1970s and (3) mid-1990s (colour).
- Africanists (Rasing, Ahmed) believe the Bantu-speakers' girl's initiation to go back at least a few thousand years. For Frobenius this institution was part of the South-Erythraean complex extending all the way to Ancient Mesopotamia, where its traces may be recognised, as they can in the Indus civilisation. Via the spinning-cum-warrior goddesses of the Ancient Near East, Ancient Greece, Persia, the moon houses named after 'girl' or her occupations, the 'girl'/gal' complex (von Sicard; no convincing IE etymology!) extends over much of the Old World and part of the New World; it may be an original part of the Dene-Sino-Caucasian heritage (of course, the above Apache are Dene-speaking), perhaps even Khoi-San
- In the Bantu languages of eastern Southern Africa, the common designation for the girl at her festival is *Ngwali*, *Mwali*: the very name featuring in the Luwe complex for Luwe's ('lion's') companion, the leopard
- The spattered skin pattern identifies the leopard as the rain animal; *ng/mw-ali* is most probably a variant of the widespread **pr-* root for leopard, the junior feline. In Nkoya, *mvula* ('rain') links up with *kampulu* ('leopard') by popular etymology and semantically; perhaps a real cognate is involved. In other Bantu language similar patterns exist.





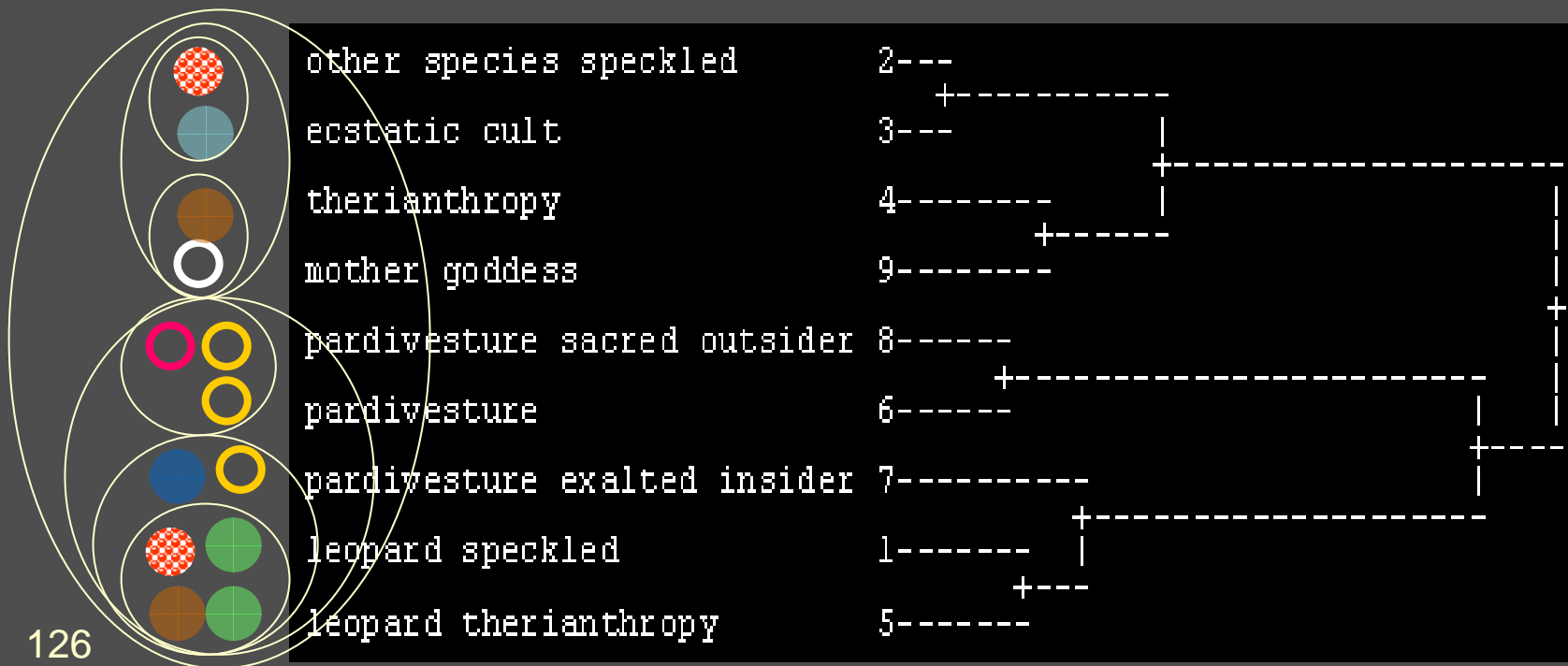
- The above suggests that pardivesture emerged about the same time as the emergence of Indo-European and Afro-Asiatic from among proto-Nostratic, some 10,000 years ago – which accords with the archaeological data from the 7th-6th millennium BCE (Çatal Huyuk – where PIE may have been spoken – and Tassili n-Ajjar – the latter probably PAA, also considering the Saharan influence on the emergence of Ancient Egypt, although proto forms of Khoisan, Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo cannot be ruled out for the Saharan Neolithic)
- The appearance of pardivesture at that moment of time in the Fertile Crescent can hardly be a coincidence: here we witness the emergence of complex social organisation with such institutions as writing, the state, organised religion, and science – the domains of *transcendence* in which leopard-skin wearers were to excel
- On the following slide, for whatever it is worth, a cluster analysis (Pearson correlation, Ward's cluster method, but very small number of cases) enables us to somewhat reconsider our original typology of shamanism in terms of such traits as therianthropy, pardivesture, mother goddess etc.

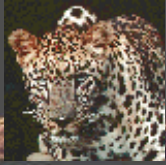
| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| other species speckled | 2--- | | 0.1727 |
| ecstatic cult | 3--- | +----- | 1.0263 |
| therianthropy | 4----- | ----- | 0.6054 |
| mother goddess | 9----- | ----- | 2.5504 |
| pardivesture sacred outsider | 8----- | ----- | 0.4005 |
| pardivesture | 6----- | +----- | 2.2104 |
| pardivesture exalted insider | 7----- | ----- | 0.7086 |
| leopard speckled | 1----- | +----- | 0.4681 |
| leopard therianthropy | 5----- | +----- | |

The variables and colour codes in our above theoretical model:

- leopard symbolism (A) 
- speckledness (B) 
- ecstatic cult (C) 
- therianthropy (D) 
- shamanism (E) 
- immanentalism (F) 
- pardivesture (G) 
- transcendentalism (H) 
- mother goddess (J) 

- Cluster analysis gives some idea as to which traits relate more closely to one another, but further reflection and a larger sample is required before any conclusions can be drawn
- Meanwhile it looks as if the leopard symbolic complex, comprising both immanentalist and transcendentalist aspects, stands rather on its own, and is not closely related to such traits as speckledness in general, ecstatic cult, therianthropy, and mother goddess
- Does this make it a relatively recent innovation, or a near-universal of culture?





3.9. The ancient 'Cosmology of the lion and the leopard'

- After leopard symbolism had become binary and had subsequently shifted from a ungulate complement to the lion as complement, the lion/leopard pair was symbolically elaborated into a fully-fledged cosmology encompassing most aspects of the human experience, as tabulated here.
- The point is merely to render plausible the claim that, together, this pair constitutes a world view whose structure has enabled Neolithic and Bronze Age communities in Asia, Africa and Europe to articulate fundamental concepts of production, power and identity in the form of a dialogue of natural symbols. If the ancient cosmology looked more or less like this, it constituted a coherent pattern of meaning and action that could capture human minds and offer them enduring symbols.

| | | species | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| | features | lion | leopard |
| empirical details: | (skin) pattern | homogenous | patterned, variegated |
| | (skin) colour | sandy | black, red, white |
| | social life | social | solitary |
| | hunting technique | group attacks by females for the benefit of ruling male | solitary |
| | hierarchy | marked within lion's pride | individual freedom |
| | mating pattern | polygynous | single-partner or polyandrous |
| symbolic connotations | lexical designation | <i>*lw</i> | <i>*pr/*prd</i> |
| | gender | female/male | male/female |
| | anatomy | right? side of the body | left? side of the body |
| | ecological aspect | Master of Animals, herder | |
| | paraphernalia (cf. utensils, weapons) | lion skin | leopard skin |
| | specific animal associations | cattle; goat; boar; ram; antelope, deer; bull | |
| | overall symbolic connotations | Sacred Outsider/Exalted Insider | Exalted Insider/Sacred Outsider |
| | religious manifestation | Luwe, Lund, etc. | Mwali, etc. |
| | spirituality | transcendentalist | immanentalist |
| | number | five | four |
| | power | senior | junior |
| | utensils, weapons | club, spear, axe, double axe, boat, suspending bridge, rope ladder, black-smithing utensils (thongs, hammer, bellows, furnace) | |
| | social strategies | overt force | covert cunning, stealth |
| | hemerology | day | night |
| | rhythm of life | continuous, everyday | concentrated moments of trance, divination, ecstasy |
| | cosmology | heaven, the atmosphere, the weather | earth, underworld |
| | astronomical manifestation (1) | meridian, zenith, and noon celestial axis and pole | N. circumpolar region, the revolving sky, nadir, |
| | astronomical manifestations (2) | daylight, sky at noon, sun | midnight, night-sky, stars |
| astronomical manifestations (3) | sun | moon | |



- The oldest attestations of pardivesture come from the Neolithic, 7th-6th mill. BCE:

- Çatal Huyuk (see above) and
- The fertile Sahara

Implicitly, the latter seem to reflect aspects of the 'Ancient cosmology of the lion and the leopard', in terms of gender complementarity, and the pairing of Luwe and Mwali

Although these regions seem rather distant from one another, recent research has brought out unmistakable continuity between Çatal Huyuk decorative motifs and those used by present-day Berber women

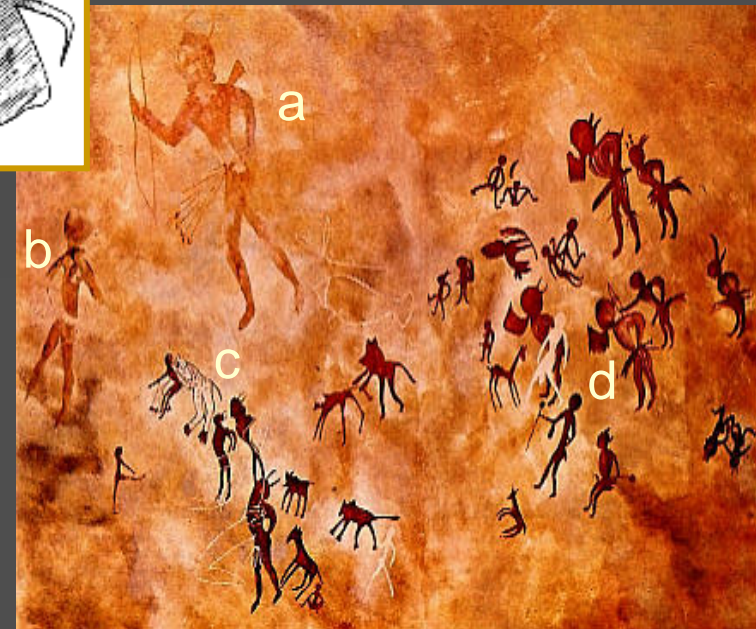
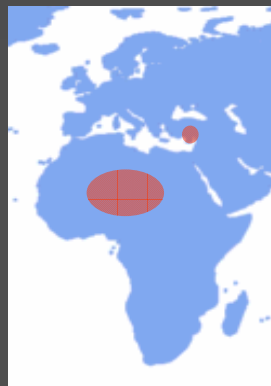
1. Leopard-skin bearers in Saharan rock art, Tassili-n-Ajjer, 6th millennium BCE
2. A moving evocation of gender equality in Saharan rock art, Tassili-n-Ajjer, 4th-3rd mill. BCE. Note the flowers in the man's hair
3. Probable evocation of Luwe (a1) and the leopard/Mwali (b, c), in this rock painting from Tassili-n-Ajjer, Sahara 4th-3rd mill. BCE. Note that the leopard looks back to the white slender figure to the right (d). The other figures are older and not part of the presumably Luwe-related composition

1



2

3

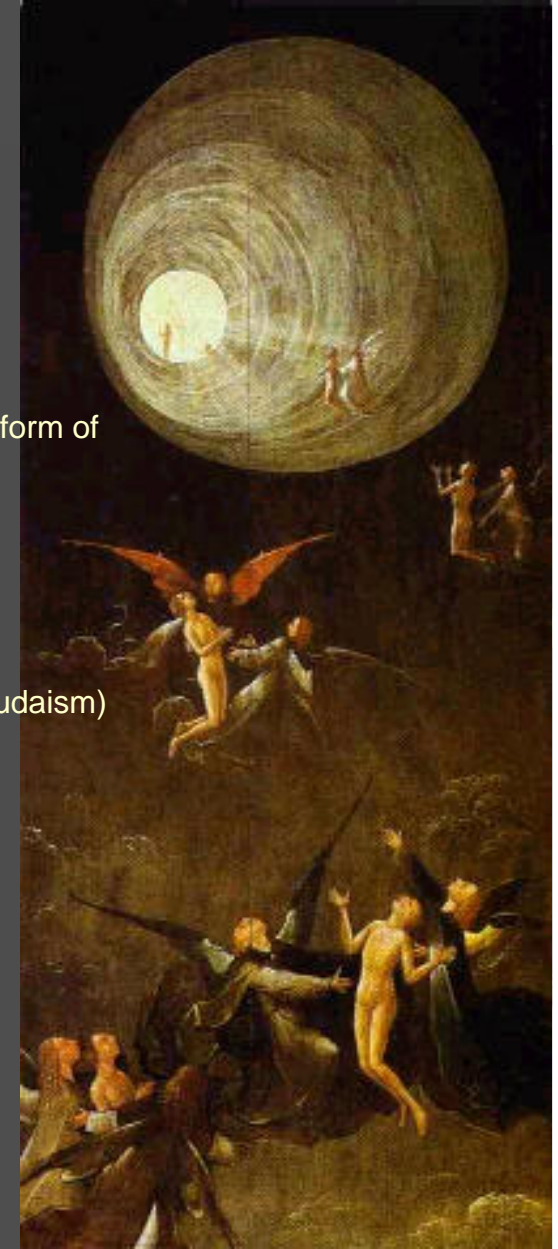




- Of course, the preceding table of the 'Cosmology of the lion and the leopard' is merely an etic model, which will only very partially correspond with concrete historical and ethnographic settings
- Yet it describes grosso modo not only the Luwe/Mwali structure, but also its detailed elaboration in concrete sub-Saharan African settings (cf. my *Tears of Rain*, 1992), elsewhere in the Old World (Baumann, *Das doppelte Geschlecht*), and ancient cosmologies/ astronomies from Ancient Northern Europe via Egypt and Mesopotamia, to China
- At the general level, the accumulation, in the table of the 'Ancient Cosmology of the lion and the leopard', of a large number of binary oppositions has merely heuristic purposes: it helps us to recognise, in specific local ephemeral cultural domains, traits that might be interpreted in terms of the cosmology of the lion and the leopard; but of course such an interpretation has always to be made on the basis of a number of interrelated traits, not just one.
- The binary oppositions remind us of tendencies within the overall cosmology, fields of tension which, in various local ephemeral domains, may have found actual realisations that one-sidedly only emphasise one aspect of the contrasting poles.
- If the table associates
 - the lion with transcendence (the sky, the sun, the sacred as a category absolutely set apart from the profane) and
 - the leopard with immanence (the earth, the moon, the sacred as only diffusely and situationally distinguished from everyday life, and fusing with the latter for instance in trance),this has two rather contradictory effects at the same time:
 - on the one hand, it draws our attention to ubiquitous tendencies in this cosmology wherever it manifests itself (in other words, even the African world view would never be totally immanentalist), but, on the other hand,
 - it prepares us for recognising that in certain local ephemeral domains (for example those in Asia) the transcendental element may be far more marked than in others (for example those in Africa).
- The scheme is an attempt to reconstruct (etically) an implied deep structure at a high level of abstraction, and should not be mistaken as a faithful rendering of any actual emic system in time and space.
- Confusion on this point is one of the reasons why many social anthropologists have been dismissive of Lévi-Strauss' structuralism. And then again, while borrowing elements from the latter, my approach seeks to avoid the ahistorical tendency inherent in structuralism.



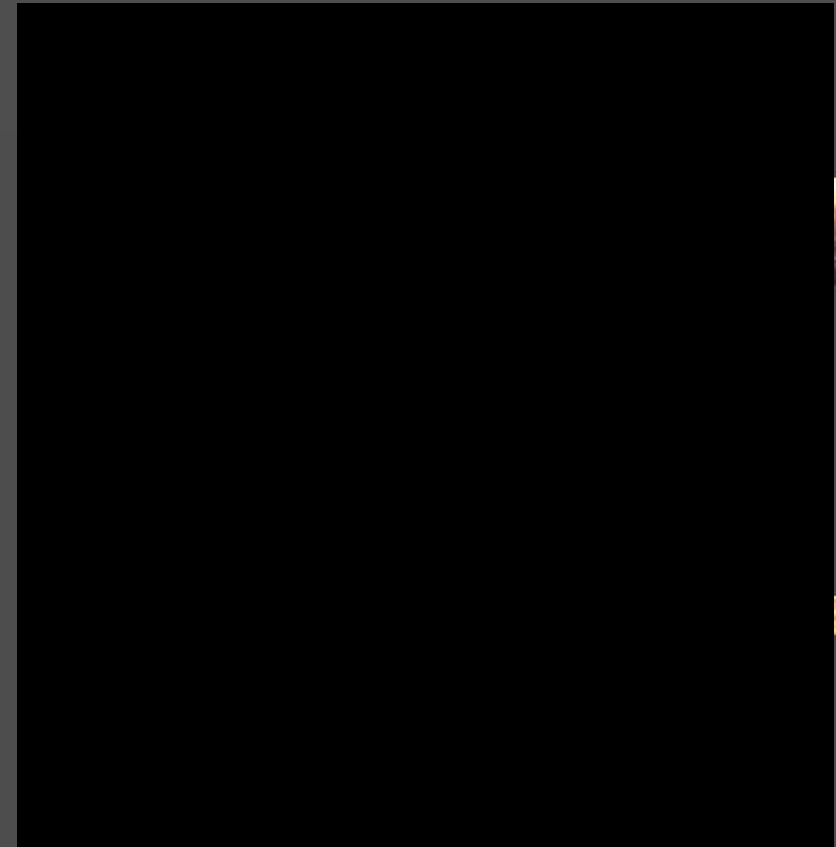
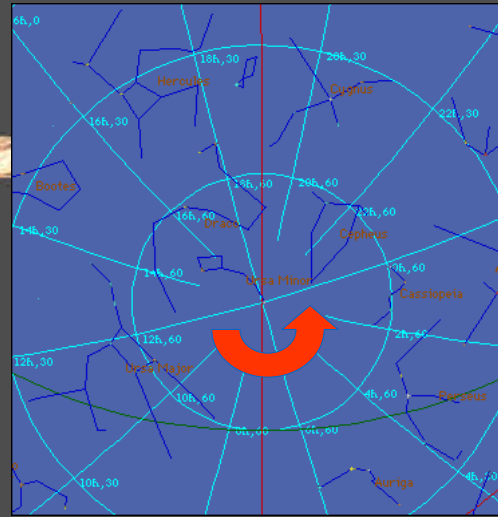
- One of the most exciting analyses of world mythology I know is Fontenrose's *Python: A study of Delphic myth and its origins*.
- There he traces the global ramifications of mythical accounts of the eternal struggle between
 - the powers of light (in the first place the sun god Apollo) and
 - the powers of darkness (Python, the dragon, Tiamat, Leviathan, etc.).
- Inevitably limiting himself to the period of cultural history for which written evidence is available (the last five millennia), Fontenrose's study is relevant in the present context because its theme can be seen as a later elaboration of the lion/leopard juxtaposition, with the diurnal solar symbolism of the lion juxtaposed to the nocturnal/lunar symbolism of the leopard.
- Contrary to the lion, the leopard or panther does not feature in Fontenrose's carefully constructed list of animal demons, which encompasses the entire Old World and much of the New World.
- Many of these demons also appear as the names of asterisms or constellations.
 - In a fashion well documented for decan gods attending to the thirty-six 10°-segments of the solar zodiac, and to a lesser extent for the gods or *genii* of lunar mansions, we may surmise that Fontenrose's animal demons also derive their demonic nature and identity, at least in part, from their association with asterisms. Fontenrose lists seventeen of such animal demons, only a handful of which coincide with the well-known zodiacal animals of the Babylonian–Egyptian–Hellenistic–European tradition.
- Also in astronomical symbolism (one of the most systematic, best documented and best studied expressions of ancient systems of knowledge), the leopard turns out to occupy a peculiar position. It rules a lunar mansion in China, but outside China we scarcely find this species, despite its ubiquity and centrality as a symbol, lastingly associated with any one asterism.
- Probably this is not because the leopard is too lowly, but because it is too exalted to rule merely one asterism: its skin is widely considered to represent the star-spangled night sky as a whole – of the sacred cosmological pair heaven and earth, the leopard rules one half
- The Ancient Egyptian and Babylonian material contains the suggestion that, if the leopard is to be associated with any asterism at all, it is to be the constellation of Ursa Minor, in or near which (depending on the precise historical period) the celestial pole finds itself.
- I submit that, within the cosmology of the lion and the leopard, the leopard stood for the northern circumpolar region, the nadir, and midnight – the lion for the ecliptic, the medium coeli, meridian, zenith, noon.



- The cosmology of the lion and the leopard hinges on its fundamental dualism
 - Its essence is the conceptual discrimination made possible by verbal binary opposition
 - Dualist cosmologies have been recorded for many societies. Such dualism may take the form of
 1. an indispensable complementarity without moral qualities being associated with either of the two components
 - Classical China (yin/yang) (1)
 2. Other systems have privileged one such force, and have relegated its confrontation with the antagonistic force *to the beginning or the end of time*
 - Ancient Mesopotamia (Marduk vs. Tiamat (2); with echoes in Ugarit and ancient Judaism)
 - Ancient Egypt (Osiris and Horus vs. Seth)
 - Christianity (God vs Satan)
 - This is largely the cosmology explored by Fontenrose's *Python* (1959/1980)
 3. Many great religious or philosophical systems have entertained a particularly emphatic, 'absolute', dualism (3):
 - Zoroastrianism,
 - Manicheism,
 - Gnosis,
 - Hermeticism,
 - Mithraism,
 - the movement of the Ikhwan al-Safa^{ca},
 - Catharism,
- here, good and evil have constitute separate and balanced cosmological forces, each in its own right
- Each of these systems is compatible with the cosmology of the lion and the leopard, but it is least at home in the

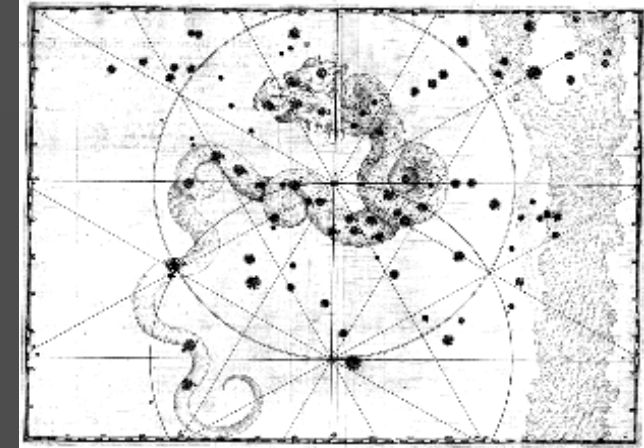


- Most unexpectedly, given the enormous variety of human languages, the juxtaposition between leopard and lion, between speckledness and smoothness, turns out to be a remarkable semantic (and in part even lexical) constant across language families and even macrofamilies
- Also, ancient astronomies present (see below) considerable indications of the wide spread and persistence of the cosmology of the lion and the leopard
- Africa, the Palaeolithic, and Native America mainly (but cf. the juxtaposition spotted jaguar/ even-coloured puma in the Maya material!), appear to share in the older variety where it is the feline against the ungulate;
- Pardivesture seems to be predicated on the cosmology of the lion and the leopard, and therefore would not be originally African, but had to penetrate the African continent more recently



3.10. Ancient astronomies and astral symbolism as principal attestations of the cosmology of the lion and the leopard

- Ancient astronomies remain a major source for our knowledge of cosmologies, even though ancient science is bound to a world picture that is now considered obsolete in the light of North Atlantic modern science.
- Relatively well documented, these ancient forms of science offer valuable insights in the nature and distribution of the 'Ancient cosmology of the lion and the leopard'
- The northern celestial pole is a place where the effect of the earth's rotation was most noticeable to ancient man, as is it still (but usually without registering) to modern man. The circumpolar constellations turn around but never set below the horizon.
- The bleu image shows the turning of heavens around the celestial pole (as observed from Cairo, 8 October 2003, from sunset, at 1 hr intervals (= 15°); the green line is the horizon, below which of course nothing is visible to a local observer. The black animation shows the effect for the celestial region closest to the celestial pole, for the next six hours



From Bayer, Uranometria, 1603

- The circumpolar stars, which never set, play an important role in leopard symbolism
- In Egypt
 - Among the Ancient Egyptians, they are symbols of rebirth: according to the Pyramid Texts (Old Kingdom, mid-3rd mill. BCE) the dead king becomes one of the circumpolar stars, thus living forever
 - In the same time the first elaboration of the Osirian complex takes place, which especially under the New Kingdom (late 2nd mill. BCE) will be dominant; under this eschatology, the dead king will be Osiris, king not so much of heaven but of the underworld
 - The leopard is associated both with Osiris and with the circumpolar stars, although in specific cases a predator in this sky region is identified as the jackal, rather than leopard, of Seth
 - Yet probably a leopard was meant: the determinative hieroglyphic sign for 'skin' looks exactly like the outline of the brightest stars in Ursa Minor, and like iconographic conventions of the representation of the Sm priest's leopard skin, including the exceptionally long tail cf. the 'leopard' hieroglyphic sign
- For Babylonia, P. Jensen (late 19th c CE) identified a constellation 'leopard' as Ursa Minor
- Draco is the name of the constellation in which, in the third millennium BCE, the then polar star Thuban (Arab. 'snake'?) was found (for that reason named α Draconis although not the brightest star in that constellation)
- Wherever the cosmology of the lion and the leopard reigns, the celestial pole = lion; the northern region of the sky revolving around the celestial pole = leopard
- Any such associations, however, cannot have remained constant because of *precession*: the position of the celestial pole vis-à-vis the stars is constantly changing. Therefore the nomenclature and leopard association of the northern celestial region is not constant, but shifting and confusing; and the same applies to snake and dragon associations of the same celestial region
- In ancient China the blue/green dragon *qing long* 青龙, considered the bringer of rain, was associated, not with the circumpolar, but with the (constantly variable) eastern, auspicious section of the sky – thus contrasting with the White Tiger (*bo hu* 白虎) which rules the ominous west (remotely reminiscent of the lion/leopard pair but essentially different; yet von Sicard lists *long* as



- An extremely widespread Upper Palaeolithic substratum of naked-eye astronomy is suggested by
 - The recurrent recognition, and naming, of such constellations as the Pleiades and Ursa Major
 - The recurrent symbolism of diurnal celestial rotation
- If the leopard is associated with the Northern end of the revolving celestial axis, an obvious expression of this symbolism would be the firebore, one of man's oldest and most cherished implements
- Throughout the Old World, the firebore appears as the swastika, whose ubiquitous distribution fascinated early diffusionists (Wilson 1896) long before a perverted variant was appropriated by German nazis
 - Shown is a bowl from 7th c. BCE Greece, depicting Artemis amidst swastikas
- Another major implement evoking the celestial axis is the spindle-whorl, found everywhere (from Central Africa to Northern America) where spinning and weaving is or was practiced, and a central attribute of such spinning goddesses as Athena, Neith, Anahita, Nyambe, etc.
 - Shown is a 2nd mill BCE Mesopotamian spindle whorl decorated with a feline, herbivore, and ostrich
- There is reason to identify Luwe's pole, club or spear as the celestial axis, which brings Luwe closer to the leopard and the northern celestial pole than would be in agreement with his linguistic identification as 'lion'; but such are the contradictions of the history of symbolism

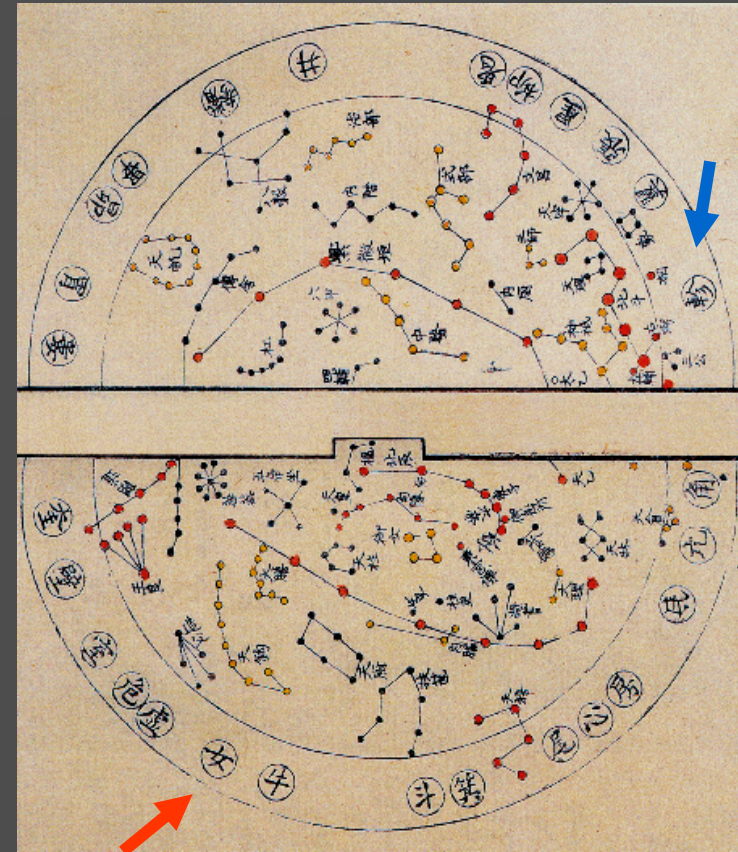


- Apart from the distribution of Luwe related myths, there are indications that the cosmology of the lion and the leopard did have some impact on the African continent
- Divine or royal figure with snake-like feet, whirling two leopards as in evocation of the celestial revolution around the earth axis; Benin bronze, Nigeria, 17th-19th c. CE.

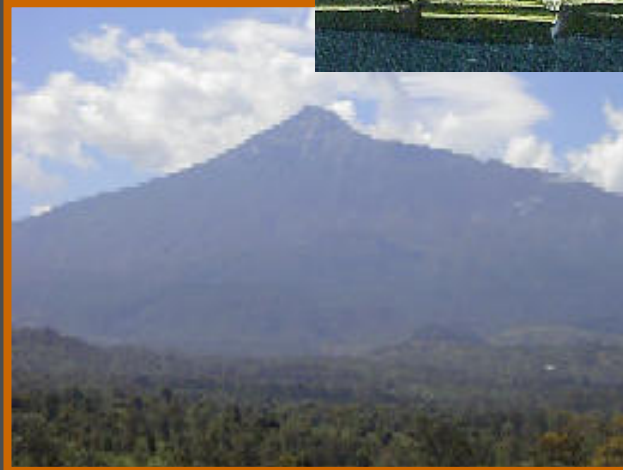
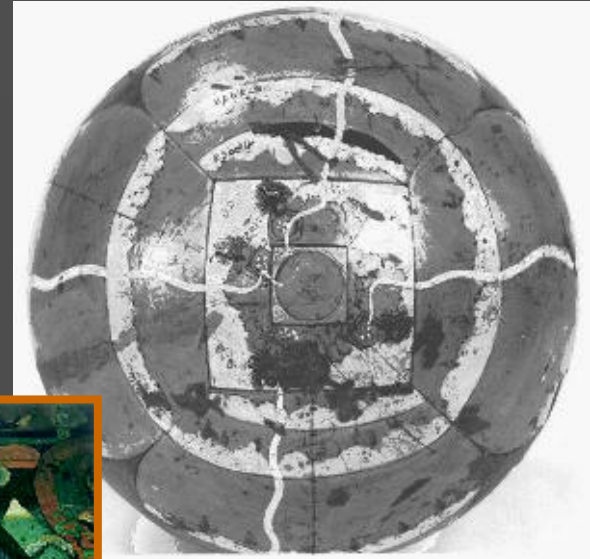




- Another symbolic theme reminiscent of the revolving earth axis is the ancient Indian myth of the churning of the ocean



- A Chinese star chart, and the people who made it
- The outer fringe shows the names of lunar mansions. The red arrow indicates the mansion *niu*, 'maiden'. The blue arrow indicates the mansion 豹 *bao*, 'leopard'.



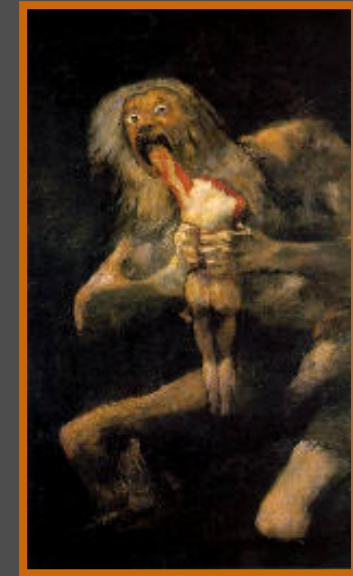
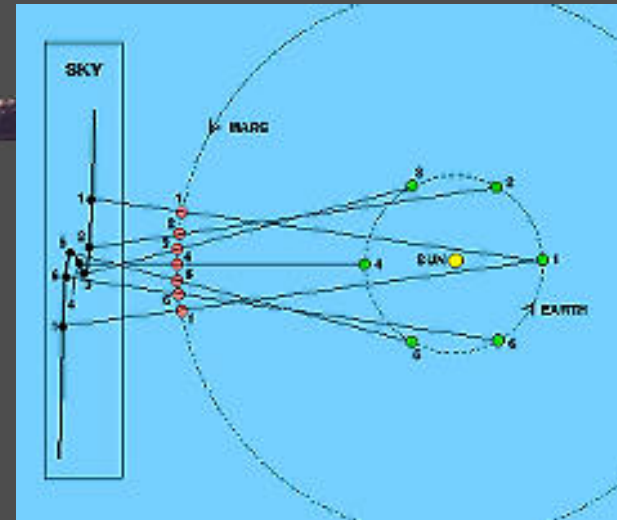
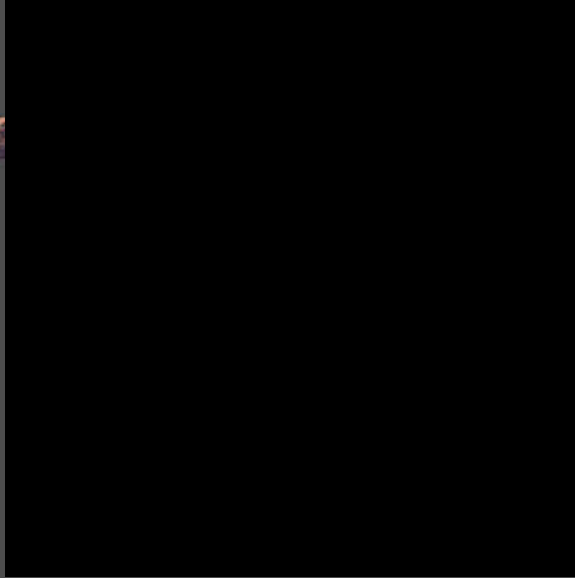
- Mr Meru is a major mountain in Tanzania (inset), but also (and probably there is a connection)
- the mythical centre of the South Asian world, frequently represented especially as mandala.
- On a wooden globe (above right) now at the Victoria and Albert Museum (London) it is identified with the North Pole



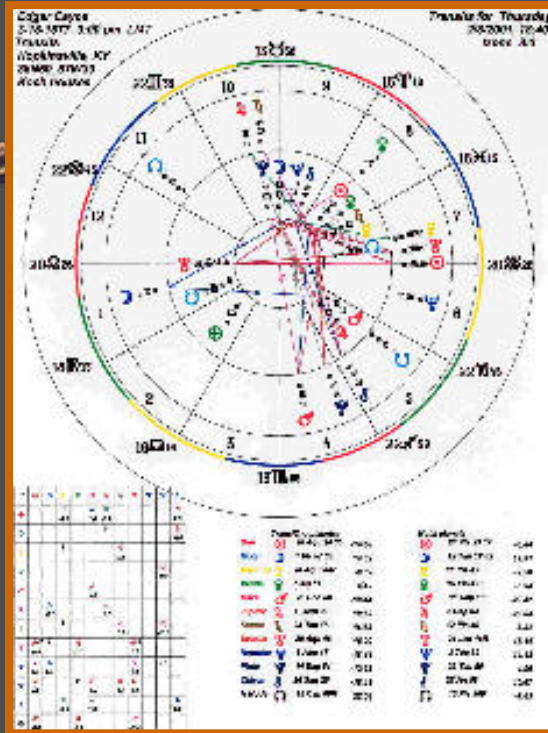
- The South Asian material is marked by the symbolic parallels and even equivalence between leopard and tiger.
- Therefore it is also possible to see leopard connotations in the inconspicuous constellation that – at least since Aratus' times (third century BCE) – has been called Lynx, next to Ursa Major; the constellation Lynx was alternatively called Tiger
 - 'from the fancied resemblance of the many little stars to spots on the tiger',
- which of course would have characterised a leopard not a tiger (whose skin is striped).
- Tiger (hū) 虍 is the name of a constellation in classical China (= Sagittarius \times^7), and possibly also in Ancient Iran and Armenia.
- In the Chinese case, probably not Sagittarius as a whole is meant, but the lunar mansion *Chi* or *Jī* 'the winnowing basket'), composed of the stars γ , δ , ϵ , and η Sagittarii).
- In connection with lunar mansions, we are reminded that the symbolic equivalence of tiger and leopard is not universal in Asia, for in China it does not apply. There the two species rule two adjacent but distinct moon houses, and while the tiger tends to have human characteristics attributed to it, the leopard signifies unpredictable, ferocious nature.
- When in classical China the leopard appears as a specific lunar mansion (by definition situated on the ecliptic) rather than referring to the circumpolar northern sky, or when in ancient Egypt and Babylonia the leopard appears as a specific constellation, this suggests
 - by that time the cosmology of the lion and the leopard was no longer completely understood,
 - inconsistency is a central feature of long-range mythical structures
 - our analysis is essentially flawed on essential points.
- 'Sitting winnowing-basket fashion' 𪚩, i.e. with legs stretched out before one, is a Chinese expression which exactly conveys the client's posture in SC/S African divination...



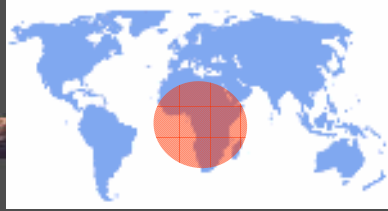
- Has the symbolic emphasis on speckledness roots in perceptible reality?
- Sharing the leopard's connotations of stealth, evil and femininity, the moon (here shown as seen from Southern Africa) is certainly 'speckled' –
- as a result, the Judaeo-Christian tradition believes to discern a face in the full moon:
 - that of Cain, the first murderer.
- Similar connotations attend the mythical complex of Cagn and his sons in the Khoi-San context



- Luwe can only hop or wobble along, having only one side to her/his body.
- In the animal kingdom, there is reason to associate this movement with the partridge – a notoriously speckled bird, and one of the few to feature in the proto-Nostratic vocabulary
- Robert Graves, who has explored much animal symbolism of Greek myths, has also stressed that hooping or wobbling is a widespread sign of sacred kingship
- Could Luwe's wobbling gait also have an astronomical background?
- Repeated, careful naked-eye observation would already have made prehistoric man familiar with the phenomenon of (apparent) retrograde movement of the planets – the main reason why these celestial bodies are called 'vagrants' (*planetes*); retrograde motion also plays an important part in astrology
- Of all celestial bodies observable to the naked eye, the moon has certainly the most irregular motion, notoriously difficult to predict precisely even with today's sophisticated observational and mathematical tools; variations of speed and four major (and hundreds of minor) kinds of distortive movements ('librations') are known, some of them so since Antiquity, and possibly much longer. However, the moon, like the sun, is never retrograde in the sense planets are – yet, for two thousand years astrology has tended to treat the two moon nodes (the northern and southern end of the intersection line between the moon's orbital plane and the ecliptic) as planets in their own right, and they are invariably retrograde
- Therefore, if Luwe has an astronomical connotation, it would probably be the moon. Yet of the Luwe/Mwali pair, it is Luwe who is associated with the sun, Mwali with the moon.
- Does this suggest an even older symbolic system lurking underneath? (cf. Saturn, 'night sun', often depicted as a limping old man, as in Goya's picture); cf. the above juxtaposition Sun/Saturn=olive/carob



- Since early historical times, astrology has associated the zodiacal sign of Leo ($\delta\Omega$), the Lion, with the sun, the month of the sun's highest position in the diurnal sky, and noontime; the Sun's power as an astrological 'planet' has been considered strongest when the Sun finds itself in Leo, 'the house of its rulership' ('rejoicing')
- Complementary to the leopard theme, the sun as lion is therefore a recurrent motif throughout the Ancient Near East and the later Middle East
 - E.g. the lion goddess Sekhmet with the sun disk over her head, from Karnak, Ancient Egypt
 - Tefnut, wife of Shu and mother of Geb and Nut, as lioness, with solar disk
 - On an Armenian coin from the 7th c. H/13th c. CE
 - The imperial order of the lion and the sun, a 20th c. CE Persian decoration



4. Implications for Africa

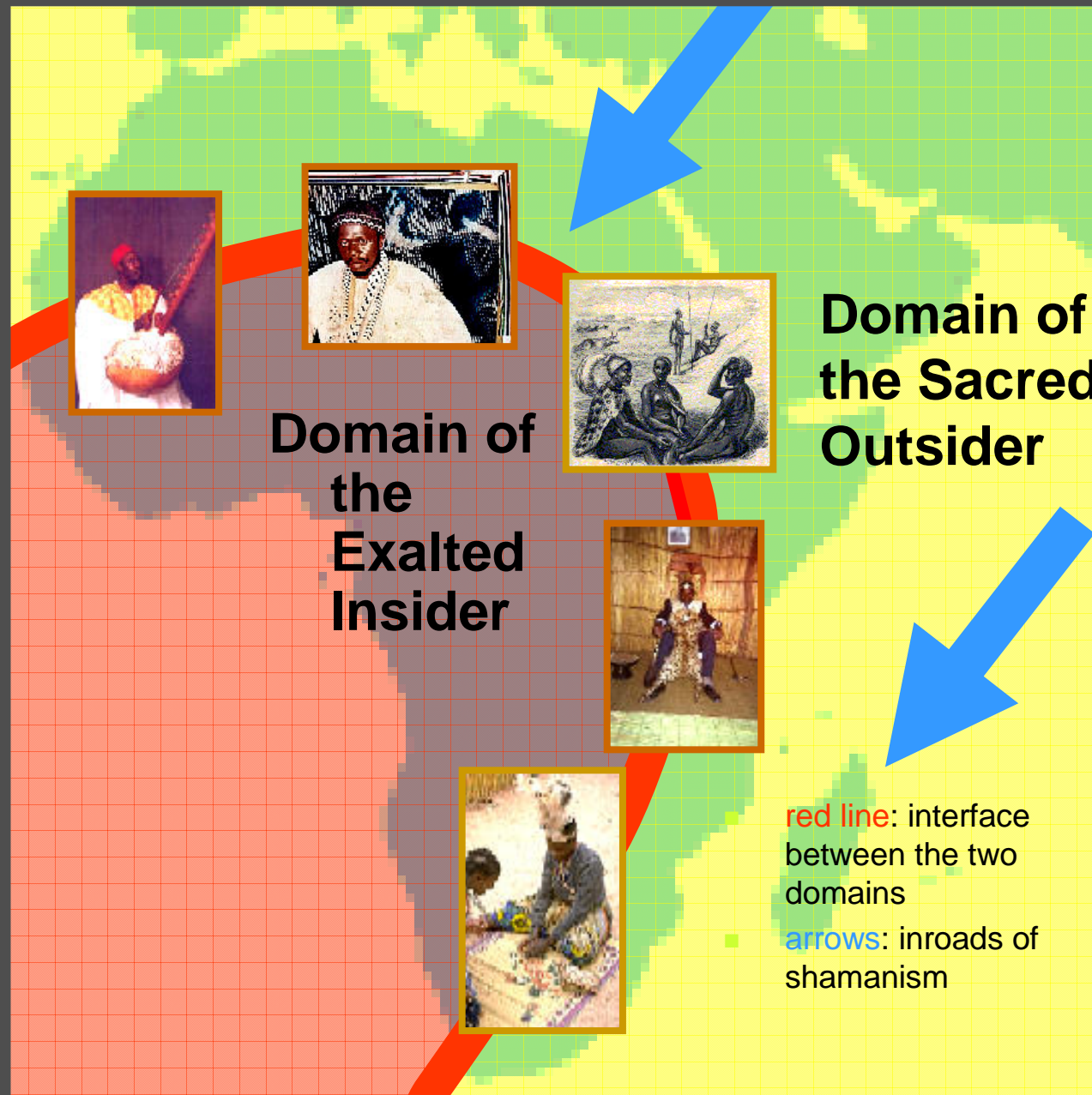
as 'the immanentist realm of the Exalted Insider as leopard'...

4.1. How the comparative study of shamanism helps us to appreciate the nature of various African symbolic specialists

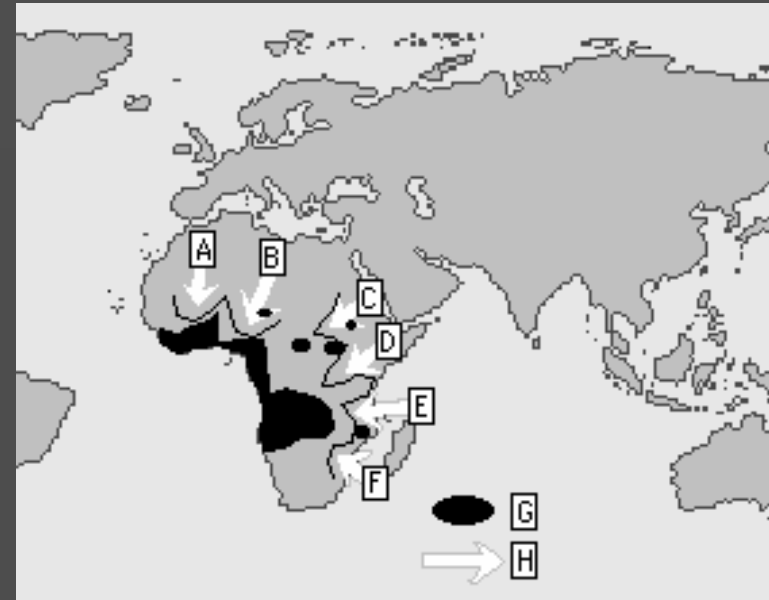
- In a process that is historically attested (albeit patchily) for the second millennium CE but that started probably considerably earlier, Sacred Outsiders installed themselves
 - as bards,
 - saints,
 - leopard-skin chiefs,
 - *sangomas*, and
 - kings
- around the northern, eastern and southern periphery of sub-Saharan Africa, *carrying their leopard skins as a sign that they represent the transcendentalist version of what had once been the dominant cosmology of the leopard and the lion*
- In Northern Africa and elsewhere in Eurasia, the emergence of writing, the state, organised religion and science had led to conditions under which the 'Cosmology of the lion and the leopard' could be elaborated, formalised, and perpetuated, and could form a prop in its own right for these transcendent institutions
- 144 a way that greatly facilitated male dominance over women



- In Africa, however, the relative paucity of these crucial four institutions meant that the 'Cosmology of the lion and the leopard' had insufficient support to spread or survive intact (although it was an element in early Sahara and Berber cultures).
- In such a context, the Sacred Outsider came to implicitly represent a transcendent order that reinforced their own outsidership and sacrality. But that order (however prevailing in much of the rest of the Old World) remained largely unattainable in Africa.
- Therefore, as agents of conflict resolution and order within their local African contexts, these leopard-skin bearing newcomers helped to keep an African, transcendent world view intact that, in itself, showed greater continuity with that cosmology than anything that was to be found in the shamanistic transformations of the cosmology such as they were re-importing from outside Africa.
- In this surviving world view
 - profoundly immanentist,
 - speaking of a balance between production and reproduction,
 - male and female,
 - mind and body,
 - the divine and the lewdlies perhaps, to this day, the hallmark of African life, and the source of Africa's great charm to Northerners.
- The order which these Sacred Outsiders helped to manage is today no longer viable above the local level of the village, the kin group, the urban ward – if even there.
- Projected onto the map, these five categories of leopard-bearing Sacred Outsiders straddle a borderzone between immanentist Africa (reverted back to a cosmology of the leopard without the lion) and transcendentalist other parts of the Old World; this explains their function and their spatial distribution

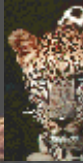


- Projected onto the map, these five categories of leopard-bearing Sacred Outsiders straddle a borderzone between
 - immanentist Africa (reverted back to a cosmology of the leopard without the lion) and
 - transcendentist other parts of the Old World; this explains their function and their spatial distribution
- For at least two out of these five cases, this postulated process is beginning to be documented

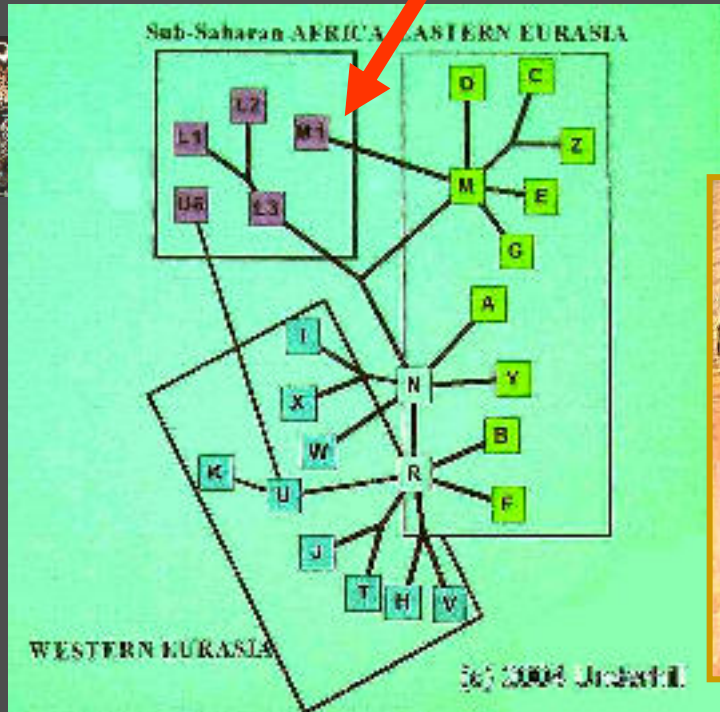


- A. Jegu
- B. Bori
- C. Zar
- D. Mandva
- E. Pepo
- F. Shave
- G. Main areas of figurative and plastic arts in Africa
- H. Inroads of shamanism according to Frobenius

- More than sixty years ago, the idea of such an intercontinental influx of shamanistic elements from Asia was already launched by Frobenius
- Map rendering Frobenius' ideas concerning
 - the inroads of named shamanistic cults (H, white arrows) and
 - the main regions of representative art in (later second millennium CE) Africa (G, black areas)



4

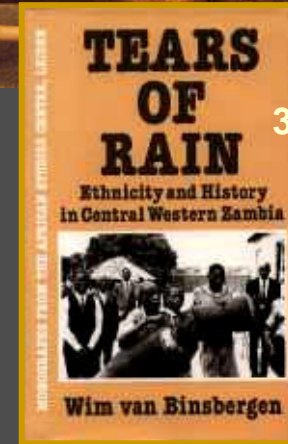
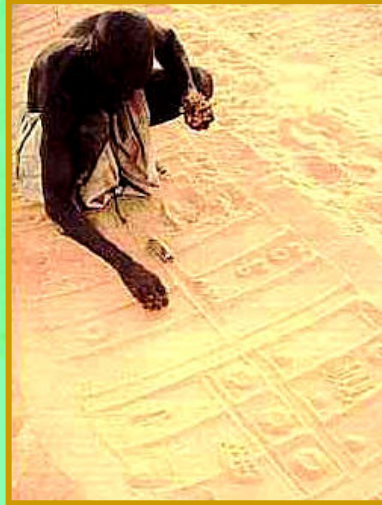


5 (Sikidy diviner, Madagascar)



1

2 (Kuba, Congo, 18-19th c. CE)



3

The influx from South Asia of the fourth type of Exalted Outsiders, i.e. royals with pardivesture, is not yet generally accepted by specialists on precolonial African history, yet this process has left many traces in East and Central Africa (and beyond):

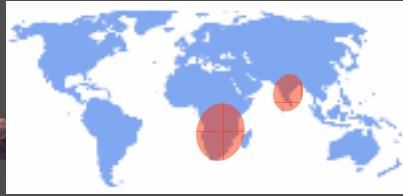
1. The wide distribution in Africa of musical instruments (xylophones, hour-glass drums) with South and South East Asian connotations; the xylophones have even retained their original tuning (Jones; Nketia)
2. Other items of material culture, e.g. styles of sculpture and ornamentation
3. The abundance of South Asian themes in royal court institutions, myths, names, clan names, astronomical concepts, games, in the kingship-associated corridor from the intralacustrine region to Zimbabwe and Transvaal
4. The attestation of East Asian clades (genetically specific descent lines), notably M1 (Underhill 2004) as a sign of return migration into Africa
5. The growing body of data on Indonesian/South Asian/Madagascar/East African connections, especially in the fields of linguistics, state formation, kingship, cosmology, myth, divination
 - E.g. there is a close similarity between Greek Dionysos and South Asian Kataragama or Skanda, god of war, whose name returns as Shikanda in the royal family of Kahara, Zambia; also other names familiar from the Mahabharata circulate in that milieu; all wear leopard skins but scarcely as a specifically *African* trait



- We may be tempted to see East and Southern African kingship as mainly the result of a pan-African transmission of the sacred kingship around which Ancient Egypt's pharaonic state was built
 - cf. dominant lion symbolism of their office as compared to which the leopard symbolism is mainly submerged
 - in general the reconstruction of the symbolic dynamics underlying Early Dynastic state formation in Egypt.
- However, the prominence of leopard-skin ritual in the earliest Egyptian rites of kingship does allow us to recognise this institution also as (*inter alia*, of course) a localising transformation of shamanism
- However, for an explanation of East and Southern African kingship the Egyptian connection is not enough to do justice to the ethnographic facts.
 - kingship is the basis of a highly developed political structure – the state – and shamanism is not, although the latter was perhaps at the basis of kingship (as Helck suggests for Ancient Egypt)
 - More important: how could Ancient Egyptian sacred kingship survive in more or less an original form across the two millennia since its extinction in Egypt itself (with Cleopatra's death), whereas throughout northern, eastern and southern Africa we observe, in the meantime, the unmistakable effects (in the form of bards, saints, leopard-skin chiefs, and *sangomas*) of an ongoing transformation of local institutions under the continued influx of shamanistic themes?
- In the last thirteen centuries shamanistic traits were spread primarily under the cloak of the expansion of Islam in Africa, but also as a result of the South Asian influence due to the Indian Ocean trade and by the Indonesian migration to Madagascar (which probably went partly, if not largely, via Sri Lanka).



- If these same processes produced very characteristic Sacred Outsiders in West, East and Southern Africa, how could they leave sacred kingship untouched in the same general region of East and Southern Africa?
- But they did not. There is a considerable undercurrent of implicitly shamanistic themes in East and Southern African kingship, e.g.
 - the widespread belief – underpinned by extensive royal rights in game and fish actionable in court – that the king is the Master of Animals, turns into a lion upon death, can work miracles, is the greatest sorcerer of his people, and the source of fertility of the land
 - while the forms of ceremonial institutions at royal courts, and indeed the myths surrounding them, have at least in one South Central African context I know well (that of the Zambia Nkoya) strong South and South-east Asian elements.
- East and Southern African kings are greatly ambivalent in that they combine in their symbolic connotations both continuity with the overall, immanentist African tradition – which makes them ‘Exalted Insiders’ – and violent, blatant discontinuity with that tradition, by virtue of which they are at the same time ‘Sacred Outsiders’ in an implicitly transcendentalist perspective. Their very sacrality (by virtue of which they cannot socially interact, eat, drink, dance, with other people, cannot attend funerals, cannot be saluted at night – after all, the king is equivalent to the sun – etc.) implies the latter connotation. Central and Southern African kingship, too, irrespective of a considerable and undeniable input from Ancient Egypt, must be considered a product at the interface between the African and Asian complex.



- Also we are getting more and more insight in the South Asian connections of the fifth type of African leopard-skin wearing Sacred Outsiders

- My inquiry into leopard symbolism started when the high priest of a Southern African High God cult told a new adept to come back to the shrine with a leopard skin, 'for that is the traditional uniform of your kind of people'. No explanation could be found for this in Southern African culture. However, From the *Institutes of Vishnu* (dating from the early first mill. CE), XXVII:

- 15. The initiation of Brâhmanas (should take place) in the eighth year after conception^[1];
- 16. Of Kshatriyas, in the eleventh year after conception^[1];
- 17. Of Vaisyas,, in the twelfth year after conception^[1];
- 18. Their girdles should be made of Muñga grass, a bow-string, and Balbaga (coarse grass) respectively.
- 19. Their sacrificial strings and their garments should be made of cotton, hemp, and wool respectively.
- **20. The skins (which they wear) should be those of a black antelope, of a tiger, and of a he-goat respectively.**
- 21. Their staves should be made of Palâsa, Khadira, and Udumbara wood respectively.(...)
- 25. In begging alms, they should put in the word 'Lady' at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of their request (according to their caste).(...)
- 28. That skin, that cord, that girdle, that staff, and that garment which has been given to any one (on his initiation), that he must for ever wear when performing any religious observance.

Considering that most of my immediate male ancestors, including those considered in *sangoma* circles to be my possession and guiding spirits, were military men, the high priest was absolutely right to classify me in terms of the above – although, at the time, I did not realise that I was being classified, in Southern Africa, as a member of the Kshatriya caste...



- The striking parallel with caste-based ritual prescriptions in the *Institutions of Vishnu* by no means exhausts the South Asian parallels in *sangomahood*:
 - the name Mwali (cf. Kali) for a formidable mother goddess whose sacred colour is black,
 - the use of scapulars crossed over the breast as a sign of studentship (*utwaza*),
 - the beaded string as a marker of earlier sacrifices,
 - the format of the lodges as cultic centres (cf. *ashrams*),
 - the collective chanting of hymns,
 - the performance of menial tasks during studentship (cf. *seva*),
 - the use of black cloaks and of rods as signs of religious office (although the black cloaks are in fact even more reminiscent of Taoism!),
 - prostration as a ritual gesture,
 - processions of lodge members as a public appropriation of space,
 - the imposed celibacy during the training period,
 - the belief in personal reincarnation,
 - the use of fly-whisks as paraphernalia, etc.
- The *sangoma* hymn '*Sala- Salani*' has a close parallel in the well-known Heart Sutra of South Asian Buddhism; although the wording of the *sangoma* hymn is sufficiently unspecific to allow for apparent parallels without actual historical connections. A further study along these lines could be most rewarding.



Conclusion

- For now, we have completed our fool's errand into the global significance of leopard symbolism and pardivesture.
- However contentious the original occasion for our quest may have been, the quest itself has been most rewarding. It has drawn our attention to specific mythical, symbolic and lexical continuities of the most unexpected scope and time depth.
- On the spur of speckledness as the central theme in leopard symbolism, we are beginning to discern
 - fundamental structures of human thought;
 - the shape of the package with which anatomically modern man left Africa c. 140,000 years ago;
 - the possible background for the apparent (and perhaps not totally illusory) convergence between Southern African, East Asian and North American cultural expressions;
 - mythical and ritual structures linking Asia and Africa;
 - the range and limitations of transcendentalism, the abstraction from the here and now:
 - in principle given with language,
 - but only routinised and institutionalised in a very specific, very recent context of writing, the state, organised religion and science),
 - and thus we found ways to articulate that which seems to have made Africa special, not just since colonialism, but for millennia
 - and most of all, we have formulated a large number of exciting new hypotheses to guide our research in the next decades.



- During the second millennium CE, Sacred Outsiders installed themselves
 - as bards,
 - saints,
 - leopard-skin chiefs,
 - *sangomas*, and
 - kings
 - around the northern, eastern and southern periphery of sub-Saharan Africa, *carrying their leopard skins as a sign that they represented the utterly transformed, Eurasia-processed, transcendentalist version of what had once been the dominant cosmology (also in part of Africa) of the leopard and the lion.*
 - As agents of conflict resolution and order within their local African contexts, these leopard-skin bearing newcomers helped to keep a world view intact that, in itself, showed greater continuity with that cosmology than anything that was to be found in the shamanistic transformations of the cosmology such as they were re-importing from outside Africa.
 - In this surviving world view
 - profoundly immanentist,
 - speaking of a balance between production and reproduction,
 - male and female,
 - mind and body,
 - the divine and the lewd
- lies perhaps, to this day, the hallmark of African life, and the source of Africa's great charm to Northerners.
- The order which these Sacred Outsiders helped to manage is today no longer viable above the local level of the village, the kin group, the urban ward – if even there.



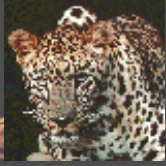
- The 'Exalted Insider'/'Sacred Outsider' opposition has been implied in the original cosmology of the lion and the leopard from its Neolithic formation on.
- Gilgamesh, Heracles and Bes helped to install their lion connotations throughout Eurasia – where they have remained ubiquitous in heraldry and literary symbolism until this day.
- Dionysus did the same for the leopard
- The striking concentration of extra-African attestations for the *Luwe* complex in the Caucasian realm, and the attestations von Sicard claimed for Northern Europe, could be interpreted in the light of extensive (though contentious) evidence of an Afro-Asiatic substratum in the contemporary languages and toponyms of those regions (Karst 1931a, 1931b; Hubschmid 1953).
- In the context of the *Black Athena* thesis, the debate on African demographic, linguistic and cultural elements near the Black Sea has been revived. Obviously, such influences would have had to pass via Mesopotamia and south-eastern Anatolia.
- Recognising the affinities, Frobenius (1931), with his idea of a South Erythraean cultural area reaching from Mesopotamia to Southern Africa, and in his wake von Sicard, preferred to see the direction of diffusion mainly from the north-east (Eurasia) to the south-west (into Africa), instead of the other way around, and they may have been right.
- A look at Figure 8.28 reminds us of the large number of proclaimed Luwe manifestations outside Africa, including potentially important ones like the Germanic god Odin with his contentious shamanistic traits, the Celtic god Lug, the Chinese dragon Lung from Fu Hsi times
- The correspondence between Figures 8.3. and 8.28 suggests that the distribution of ceremonial and ritual leopard skin use in Eurasia and at the fringes of Africa (in bards, saints, leopard-skin chiefs, kings and *sangomas*) reflects the spread of the cosmology of the lion and the leopard all over Eurasia and Africa, from a centre that (given its Neolithic connotations) must have coincided with the Extended Fertile Crescent, ranging from the Sahara to the Indus.



- We have identified two modalities within the extended underlying field:
 - one largely African modality where the leopard skin characterises the ‘Exalted Insider’ – and
 - another modality, largely outside Africa, in an Eurasian context where the leopard skin characterises the ‘Sacred Outsider’;
- and wherever these two modalities intersect, in West and North-west Africa, North-east Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa, we found a series of specific Sacred Outsiders (bards, saints, leopard-skin chiefs, kings, and *sangomas*) whose very characteristics and geographical placement corroborated the soundness of our overall approach.
- Yet so far the model remains largely descriptive. It is based on the mere empirical fact of the near-ubiquity of leopard-skin use, and leopard symbolism, throughout the southern two-thirds of the Old World.
- The privileged role of the leopard we have not yet explained;
- nor have we accounted for the discontinuity between the immanentist African and the transcendentalist Eurasian modalities of the underlying continuous field identified in terms of ‘Exalted Insider’ and ‘Sacred Outsider’.



- Our argument so far has shown how, in terms of leopard symbolism and attending patterns of shamanism and cosmology, Africa is in many respects continuous with the other continents
- However, given our initial question as to enduring patterns of African agency against the background of Africa's unique record of failure in recent decades, it is now time to assess the extent to which Africa, in the context of our analysis, can be argued to be different
- In the light of the continuities explored so far, such difference can only mean: 'having travelled a specifically different trajectory since the Neolithic'
- Can we pinpoint the characteristics of such a different trajectory?



7.2. Immanentism and transcendentalism



- The elaboration of the concept of transcendence has come to mark the distinction, however relative, between Africa and Eurasia.
- Even today a typical African world view would lay relatively little stress on transcendence, hence, for instance, the
 - difficulty of explaining great misfortune and death by reference to extra-human factors without recourse to an explanation in terms of human malice, such as witchcraft and sorcery;
 - hence also the insistence, on the part of many Africans, on personal participation in the flow of life force through
 - sexuality and
 - personal partaking of the sacred through ecstasy –two forms of immanent communion.
- Whence, then, came the idea of transcendence?
- The naming of constellations and the perception of their diurnal revolution was no doubt already an Upper Palaeolithic achievement: knowledge of orientational astronomy is essential for transient hunters wishing to return to base camps and seasonal quarters;
- however, when this practical knowledge developed into systematic, specialist contemplation of the heavens, did it lead to the emergence of a new form of looking at the world, and a new faculty of conceptualising the invisible world, not as continuous with the visible world but as a radical departure from it?
- The following factors, which historically emerged jointly in the Ancient Near East c. 3000 BCE, appear to be largely responsible for the emergence of transcendentalism:
 - The invention of writing[
 - The emergence of the state (where initially religious and political functions merged)
 - The emergence of organised religion
 - The emergence of astronomy as a science
 - the emergence of a class of specialist thinkers/writers/scientists/priest whose wielding the concept of transcendence was their main achievement and their main stock-in-trade?



- I propose that, at the south-western edge of the Extended Fertile Crescent, the early pastoralist culture of the then fertile Sahara, so beautifully attested by rock paintings from Tassili n-Ajjer (Breuil *et al.* 1954; Hampaté Ba & Dieterlen 1966; Lhote 1963, 1966) participated in the installation of the cosmology of the lion and the leopard,
 - although its earliest attestations, at Çatal Hüyük, are considerably older.
- Also, the later post-Neolithic developments towards the violent break-up of that cosmology have not bypassed Africa.
 - Here, too, impressive states emerged, not only in the late fourth millennium BCE in Egypt, but also in subsequent millennia, throughout the continent.
 - Yet Africa's trajectory has been very different from Eurasia's.
 - Africa's time of greatest impact on the rest of the world was in the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic, when somatically modern humans (black-skinned, presumably, for how else could they have survived in the tropics) emerged in that very continent, complete with articulate speech, advanced tools, use of paint, and the first attested animal representation ever to be made by humans.
 - This glorious period of Africa lasted into the Neolithic, when important domestic animals and plants were domesticated there and long-ranging exchanges with the rest of the Old World resulted from these innovations.
 - However, after Egypt and the Roman empire,
 - literacy remained an exception (and never became the norm) in Africa throughout the first and second millennium CE.
 - Imported world religions (Christianity and Islam) and
 - imported luxury goods (porcelain, firearms, liquor)
 - came to articulate elite expressions, and male dominance.



- Africa has throughout the latest millennium offered social, political and economic conditions where the cosmology of the lion and the leopard
 - could more easily survive,
 - or where it was more easily revived
 - when states collapsed
 - and literacy was at its lowest ebb.
- Here the *leopard* side of the ancient cosmology did not have to develop its own specialist niche, and did not have to become saturated with the subversion, the protest, and the quest for alternative routes to power implied in post-Bronze Age female power in Eurasia.
- What has spread, under the form of shamanism and its derivatives (including esoteric knowledge systems and divination) back to Africa in the ways examined in the course of this chapter and the previous chapter, was not a restoration of the old cosmology of the lion and the leopard, but an alien transformation.
- What remained in Africa was captured in the African section of our overview of leopard symbolism: the iconography of the Exalted Insider. This could not have been the original cosmology of the lion, or of the leopard either, but probably it was a transformation of the latter that did not so thoroughly reflect the specific agonies of Bronze Age and Iron Age violence and unchecked male power.



7.3. A shift in gender power



- What is a recurrent theme in the Eurasian material on leopard symbolism and pardivesture is the emphasis on female power, only vicariously wielded by men who wear a leopard skin as sign of their dependence on superior, divine women
- In addition to, and closely related to, the distinction between immanentalism and transcendentalism, could a shift in gender power help explain Africa's distinctive trajectory since the Neolithic?



- In addition to
 - the history of transcendence, as a religious idea,
 - gender dynamics

may help to explain the transformation of the ancient cosmology of the leopard and the lion in Africa and Eurasia after the Neolithic.

- A case in point is that of the rediscovered Nkoya queens in South Central Africa

- I got my first indication of the gender dimension of the global process that was at work here when, in the 1980s, I was working on the oral traditions of the Zambian Nkoya people, concerning the history of their kingship (Van Binsbergen 1988d, 1992b) In the mid-19th century CE, Nkoya royal courts came to be tributary to the Barotse or Lozi state, where patrilineal patterns of royal succession were then prevailing. A few decades later, British colonial rule was imposed (1900), which reinforced Lozi domination in western Zambia. For these reasons, for over hundred years now all Nkoya kings (redefined as 'chiefs' in the process of Lozi and colonial incorporation) have been male. When I worked in Nkoyaland from the early 1970s onwards, this state of affairs (coupled to the patriarchal assumptions of the nuclear family, wage labour, migrant labour, missionary teaching, and other local manifestations of effective incorporation in a global system under North Atlantic hegemony) had produced a local stereotype, among the Nkoya, to the effect that kingship was an expression of male power and violence – the obvious king was a man, son of his male predecessor. However, I was made aware of serious contradictions inherent to this view, because of the wealth of historical traditions at my disposal (reflecting pre-colonial conditions going back to at least the eighteenth century CE), and because of the additional light thrown upon these traditions by my own prolonged participation in current ceremonial and kinship practices at the contemporary royal courts. An obvious way of resolving these contradictions was by postulating that male dominance was a recent innovation in the ritual and political domain among the Nkoya. I began to realise that there had been a time, only one or two centuries back, when many if not most kings had actually been female, with the men in their lives relegated to the position of mere *mukwetunga*, 'royal escort' without a birthright to the throne. Soon I could reconstruct the *bakwetunga*'s (plural) inevitable attempts to seize power from male hands. Unravelling the dynamics of these contradictions afforded me the complex argument of my book *Tears of Rain*.

- In retrospect, however, that book's argument was not complex enough because when I wrote it I did not have the knowledge that later allowed me to detect a devastating complication: the Nkoya traditions contain mythical material that, to judge by parallel attestations elsewhere in the Old World, may often be thousands of years old. Yet, in Nkoya hands, that material was attached to shallow royal genealogies, and thus had come to be considered (by the Nkoya, but subsequently also by me as their historian) as more or less valid testimony concerning events only a few generations back, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE. My intensive exposure to Ancient Near Eastern mythical material finally drove this amazing state of affairs home to me, after more than twenty years of fieldwork among the Nkoya. This alarming insight, in combination with the impact of Martin Bernal's work on *Black Athena*, triggered my book *Global bee flight*.



- In that remotest corner of South Central Africa, equidistant between the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, where long-distance trade only seemed to have effectively penetrated towards the eighteenth century CE, the relatively recent transformation of political power towards masculinity echoed processes that elsewhere in the Old World had been attested several millennia earlier:
- the rise of male dominance, of male violence in warfare and raiding, of disruption of the pacifist assumptions of sociability and reconciliation that had governed the rural communities outside the royal courts – in short,
- a process of the redefinition of a politico-religiously underpinned social order with ample female social participation and authority, towards an organised, secular, violent state in the hands of an elite whose executive members were almost exclusively male.
- The suggestions made above, about the rise of writing, science, the state, the idea of transcendence, may all be partially relevant but they can only be appreciated once another fundamental issue is grasped: a *shift in gender power*.
- With writing, science, the state, an enduring domain is created for the production, management, accumulation and transfer of a power that, probably for the first time in history, does not require, either directly or indirectly, the capacity of giving birth, and of nurturation, inherent in the female body.
- The cosmology of the lion and the leopard was based on complementarity, as projected onto the outside world, the landscape, human institutions, ritual. Although the system revolved on the complementarity between two different species instead of the complementarity of two different genders of the same species, it was implicitly gendered – gender being the most fundamental one of the binary oppositions whose interplay rendered the system dynamic, turning it into a viable cosmology.
- The invention of writing (c. 3100 BCE) greatly enhanced the survival of mythical material into the hands of modern scholars; before that invention, we have to rely on iconographic, and in general archaeological, material. The above suggests that the cosmology of the lion and the leopard was already declining at the time of its oldest documentary attestations, with the emergence of writing, science, the state, and in general transcendence, when increasing male dominance tilted the complementarity implied in the cosmology of the lion and the leopard



- Now cosmologies are known to be capable of perpetuating themselves to a considerable extent, even if they are no longer in touch with the material economic conditions of the society in which they operate, and with its social and political organisation, so that even under conditions very different from those obtaining in the Palaeolithic and early Neolithic the cosmology of the lion and the leopard might have survived more or less intact.
- Many authors (Graves 1964, 1988; Gimbutas 1982, 1991; Sierksma 1962; Engels 1976) have reflected on the relatively recent conditions under which the rise of organised male violence, in the Bronze Age and particularly in the Iron Age, tilted gender complementarity, and gave rise to more exclusive male power, with the attending ideological structures ranging from
 - Judaism,
 - Christianity and
 - Roman Law, to
 - the codification of marriage and
 - the ambivalence regarding prostitution.
- Male power ignores the power based on the possession of uterus and breasts, tends to kill mothers' children in large numbers, and instead engages in the transcendent, virtual power that can be produced by means of writing, organisation, weaponry. The leopard skin, once a sign of male recognition of, even submission to, female power, became a sign of male military prowess.



- Everywhere in the ancient mythical record, we see older, complementary forms of female power which shimmer through underneath the descriptions of glorified male gods that are among the oldest products literacy has left us.
 - Yahweh creates by the power of his word (Gen. 1: 3) and thus betrays himself to be a priestly product of the middle first millennium BCE, even though a plurality of older and more plural gods, not necessarily male, lurk under the expression *Elohim*, by which the Supreme Being is also denoted in the Old Testament.
 - In Ancient Babylon, by the early second millennium BCE, Marduk is said to have created order by killing the motherly monster Tiamat, and Marduk proves his capability of doing so by creating, in a test session before the assembled gods, a *garment* – not by the eminently female art of spinning and weaving, but again by the sheer power of his word (Fromm 1976: 231f; Pritchard 1969).
 - That it should be a *garment* is interesting because then partly the same symbolism would apply that we have uncovered for pardivesture – as it the garment, from a sign of male dependence on a higher female power (as leopard skin) developed into a trophy of male superiority
 - In Ancient Egypt, we find the paradox of a detailed dualistic cosmology highly reminiscent of our Table 8.1, yet enacted in a virtually all-male pharaonic state whose central symbols are Ra^C and Osiris, both of them male gods; yet here the same process of masculinisation can be detected, and it is this process that throws light on the otherwise unsolvable riddles of Egyptian state formation in the Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic period.



- In the relatively recent human past, from the Upper Palaeolithic (c. 20,000 BP) onwards, local human cultures have been informed, *in part*, by an evolving general infrastructure, manifest in language, symbolism, and cultic practices
- This infrastructure stretches across the entire Old World and much of the New World
- Contemporary hegemonic geopolitics (along such lines as North-South, North-Atlantic/rest of the world, Christianity/Islam, 'White'/other phenotypes, scientific rationality/mythical thought) create and sustain a mind set (or paradigm) within which it is extremely difficult – not to say taboo – to think such an infrastructure: in its light the notion of Eurocentricity, of North Atlantic superiority etc. would appear as the ephemeral, self-gratificatory illusions of upstarts inhabiting a relatively insignificant appendix of Afrasia
- The *Black Athena* debate, Post-Colonial Theory, Intercultural Philosophy, are recent developments, of the late 20th c. CE, to fundamentally critique contemporary hegemonic geopolitics while at the same time insisting (contrary to much of Afrocentrism) on the retention of scientific rationality
- Meanwhile there has also been the politically correct (but blind and often vicarious) insistence on autochthony as another impediment to long-range analysis



- In such imbalance, the complementarity that forms the backbone of the Neolithic cosmology of the lion and the leopard, is broken and whatever happens to the pieces can no longer be understood in terms of the earlier intact model.
- Most of the later attestations of leopard-skin use that we have examined in the course of this chapter already derive from the a post-Neolithic phase so effectively evoked in the *Iliad*: the phase of male violence destroying an older, more gender-balanced cosmological order whose contours can still be made out.
- Here the *leopard* side of our ancient cosmology, torn loose from the *lion* side (and hence as mutilated as Luwe himself appears as half-being), furnished the symbolic material for a *counter-movement* in the very recesses to which female power had been banned or had retired by its own initiative:
 - mystery cults,
 - divinatory practices,
 - undercurrents of subversion and immanence,
- all constituting foci of alternative power, which could co-opt
 - not only women
 - but also men,
 - who (for a variety of reasons: lack of identification with the father, physical or psychological androgyny, a sense of gender equality, a quest for knowledge, a quest for alternative power, a search for income) had dropped out of male-dominated pattern.
- It was simply not necessary to articulate specifically a special secluded domain in which the *lion* side could survive: the whole male-dominated world of the Bronze and the Iron Age, and of the latter's successors, the Book Age and the ICT Age, was its domain – the detached and hence mutilated *lion* was simply taken for granted and became invisible, ramifying off in all sorts of directions.



- The *leopard* aspect of this cosmology captured the darker recesses of the Eurasian mind, in initiatory and ecstatic cults marked by the use of leopard skins and drawing partly on the unmistakable reproductive power of women which was increasingly denied them in public and domestic life.
- The great goddesses of Antiquity can be considered, to a considerable extent, to be transformations of the ancient leopard goddess.
 - That there ever was such a goddess is virtually ignored by students of the Ancient Near East. It was a serendipity to discover her in the course of our inquiry into global ritual use of the leopard skin. Yet at least one other scholar hit upon the same discovery: the Egyptologist Westendorff (1982 col. 665), who writes
 - ‘From these various individual traits that have lived on into historical times, it is clear that the leopard must originally have been a universal goddess of heaven, holding sway over the three levels of cosmos, kingship and cult of the dead alike; she granted life to the sun, to the king, and to humankind in general, and protected it, even though as a condition for rebirth she had to take it back again.’



- Our painstaking analysis of leopard symbolism, shamanism, and related themes has brought to light specific aspects of historical experiences on the African continent in the last few millennia. These help to pinpoint
 1. In which (empirically supported) respects it makes sense to consider (most of) (sub-Saharan) Africa as a historical cultural unit (*and thus salvage a major Afrocentrist point*)
 2. The heuristic power of the distinction between African immanentalism and Asian (and European) transcendentalism
 3. The effect of state formation, writing, the emergence of organised religion, as major factors in the installation and sustenance of transcendentalism
 4. These factors emerged in part in (northeastern) Africa and have never been completely absent from Africa in the last five millennia, yet by-passed most of Africa in that period
 5. Significant forms of African symbolic specialism (bards, saints, leopard-skin chiefs, kings and *sangomas*) may be interpreted as resulting from the regional interaction at the interface between African immanentalism and Asian transcendentalism
 6. Such striking aspects of Africanness as the celebration of the body, sexuality, female procreative powers, rhythm and music in general, ritual that is not primarily text-based and that is difficult to render in text, the veneration of ancestors, the belief in witchcraft, the refusal to accept natural death, the person-centred nature of African politics, and the failure to establish consensual national political culture based on legal authority and viable bureaucracy – these may all be interpreted, in part, as contemporary manifestations of Africa's long-range orientation towards immanentalism



- By the same diabolical pact between
 - technological rationality and
 - mythical thought,
 - driven by a quest for ethnic exclusiveness and transgressive power,such as produced the horrors of the Third Reich in Europe and of apartheid under European minority rule in South Africa,
- sub-Saharan Africa today is the scene of the most devastating destruction and violence in at least a dozen African countries where the state no longer exists and any surviving cosmology is, at best, a source of graveside comfort when burying the victims of the uncontrolled violence characteristic of this post-state situation.
- Here, we may see the leopard set loose in ways more akin to her recent cultural history on African soil
 - in secret societies,
 - quests for magical power, and
 - elite megalomaniathan in Eurasia.
- Especially in Africa the leopard is now torn loose from the complementarity that made her one of the two central symbols in a viable ancient cosmology. Subsaharan Africa has largely become the realm of the Exalted Insider. Unchecked by the sociability, the hierarchy, the celestial discourse concentrated on the lion, this recent African hypostasis of the leopard is the continent's worst nightmare.



- Our initial dilemma: Any attempt to specifically address 'the African situation today', risks to fall victim to geopolitical essentialism, which may take widely different forms, e.g.:
 - excluding Africans from world citizenship, or alternatively
 - dissimulating the fairly unique negative characteristics of the African postcolony for the sake of political correctness
- The present analysis sees contemporary Africans as historical actors within a cultural and cosmological field that extends, beyond the local horizons of ethnic groups and nations, to encompass all continents, in way that are scarcely informed by the geographical boundaries of continents *Therefore, it is primarily an affirmation of Africans as world citizens*
- However, we also face the task of explaining why the African predicament today is deeper than that of other parts of the world. Such a task inevitably implies reference to factors which single out Africa To the extensive literature stressing 'How Europe underdeveloped Africa' (Rodney) in the course of the last few centuries, and how subsequently the postcolony became a theatre of collapsed infrastructure, broken consensus, and violence, the present analysis adds one, perhaps minor, point of long-range history
- Notably: despite the many inroads of transcendentalism in the course of the last few millennia, an inveterate immanentalism has survived, which appears to be
 - 'Upper Palaeolithic World-wide' rather than specifically African, and which
 - continues to inform cosmologies and patterns of coping away from literacy, the state and world religions,
 - undermining the transcendence of these institutions
 - hence undermining their effectiveness
 - and furthering the persistence of an immanent life world in which the human body, the person, biological reproduction, womanhood, kinship, fusion with nature, and cosmological meaning continue to be major values.
- This continued adherence to an old worldview seems to constitute an important impediment to the massive embracing of modernist rationality which elsewhere in the world has brought demonstrable economic growth, effective statehood, etc.
- At the same time it means the preservation of powerful, meaningful and time-honoured alternatives to modernist rationality and to the hegemonic forces, largely situated outside the African continent, that have pressed modernist rationality into service as their main subjugating instrument for the attainment of global domination.



THE END