The paper analyzes shamanic cosmology. It is un-Indo-European in its principles and rather typical of Siberian people. The first part describes the ecstatic trances and the cosmological World Tree or Axis mundi, the combination of which is typical of true shamanism. The second part shows that some key features of shamanism can be found outside Siberia, among Caucasian, Greek and North Germanic people. It is shown that Prometheus and Odin have clear shamanistic features.
Abstract

The paper analyzes shamanic cosmology. It is un-Indo-European in its principles and rather typical of Siberian people. The first part describes the ecstatic trances and the cosmological World Tree or Axis mundi, the combination of which is typical of true shamanism. The second part shows that some key features of shamanism can be found outside Siberia, among Caucasian, Greek and North Germanic people. It is shown that Prometheus and Odin have clear shamanistic features.

Keywords: Shamanism, Comparative Mythology, Germanic, Greek, Caucasian Introduction

In a preceding paper, I described the approach that Indo-Europeans had about cosmogony and the structure of the sky. I showed that the Indo-European cosmogony envisioned the sky as three layers: the Upper-Sky, the Middle-Sky and the Lower-Sky. The gods and celestial bodies in each sky are different and have specific roles, names, colors and attributes.

In this paper, a completely different cosmology is analyzed: the shamanic conception. It is un-Indo-European in its principles and is (or - should we say - was) rather typical of Siberia, but, as will appear in the paper, traces of shamanism can also be found in Europe.
In his famous and ground-breaking book on shamanism, Eliade describes the typical features of the shamanic practices and the cosmological Weltanschauung of shamanism stricto sensu.

The first part of the paper describes the ecstatic trances and the cosmological World Tree or Axis mundi, the combination of which is typical of true shamanism. This means that the paper will stick to a restrictive definition of shamanism, as per Mircea Eliade (1907-86). Other books, like Shamanism of encyclopedic nature with more than 180 contributors, though interesting, have an extremely extensive approach of "shamanism". In particular, Shamanism (2004-SEWBAPAC) does not distinguish ecstasy from possession, which appears methodologically troublesome.

The second part shows that some key features of true shamanism can be found outside Siberia, among Caucasian, Greek and North Germanic people. In particular, Prometheus and Odin have clear shamanistic features.

One of the greatest merits of Eliade’s epoch-making book was also to dismiss the previously prevailing idea that shamanism was a kind of mental illness, and to separate shamanism from witchcraft and sorcery.

2 It can also be noted that Shamanism (2004-SEWBAPAC) does not include an entry "Cosmology" as a general theme.

Naturally, shamanism is a complex religious phenomenon, it would be naive to claim that it has remained unchanged for centuries, if not millennia, since the dawn of mankind. It is doubtless possible to peel the different layers that led to Siberian shamanism as it was practiced synchronically in recent times. As a matter of fact, the European traces of shamanism differ in a number of interesting points, certainly informative of the original and oldest core of shamanism.

1. Canonical features of shamanic ecstasy

The fundamental power of the shaman is ecstasy, that is to say the ability of the shaman's soul to (admittedly) move out of the shaman's body (without causing death...) and then wander in the whole world, including the sky and the netherworld, for different purposes, especially healing and divination, and also guiding the souls of the dead toward the netherworld.

The following quotes from Eliade (Eliade, 1972) document shamanism and will be useful when some sections of Caucasian, Greek and North Germanic mythologies are examined. Whenever possible, Eliade's (Eliade, 1972) quotes will be compared with quotes from Shamanism (2004-SEWBAPAC).

"A first definition of this complex phenomenon, and perhaps the least hazardous, will be: shamanism = technique of ecstasy." (Eliade, 1972, p.4) [the first definitive feature of shamanism]

"The shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld." (Eliade, 1972, p.5) [defines ecstasy]

"Shamanism in the strict sense is pre-eminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia." (Eliade, 1972, p.4) [a geographic, though not exclusive, criterion]

"The principal function of the shaman in Central and North Asia is magical healing. Several conceptions of the cause of illness are found in the area, but that of the "rape of the soul" is by far the most widespread. Disease is attributed to the soul's having strayed away or been stolen, and treatment is in principle reduced to finding it, capturing it, and obliging it to resume its place in the patient's body." (Eliade, 1972, p.215) [the shamanic conception of sickness and healing]

"A shaman differs from a "possessed" person, for example; the shaman controls his "spirits," in the sense that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, "demons," and "nature spirits," without thereby becoming their instrument." (Eliade, 1972, p.5) [shamanism is not possession]

"We consider it advantageous to restrict the use of the words "shaman" and "shamanism," precisely to avoid misunderstandings and to cast a clearer light on the history of "magic" and "sorcery." For, of course, the shaman is also a magician and medicine man; he is believed to cure, like all doctors, and to perform miracles of the fakir type, like all magicians, whether primitive or modern. But beyond this, he is a psychopomp, and he may also be priest, mystic, and poet." (Eliade, 1972, pp.3-4) [emphasis mine]

"Divination and clairvoyance are part of the shaman's mystical techniques." (Eliade, 1972, p.185)

4 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBAPAC, p.217): "The shaman's role as psychopomp is a direct extension of the shaman's power to walk between the worlds."

5 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBAPAC, p. 500): "Among the northern peoples, the dominant explanation of illness was that it was the result of the loss of the soul, with both spiritual and somatic symptoms. The shaman's objective was to restore the soul to the individual, and at the same time revitalize the life powers that form the foundation of spiritual and physical integrity. The conception of illness as the loss of one's soul entailed the belief that the soul had been stolen by the spirits of the dead. To recover it, the shaman had to undertake a spiritual journey to the
2. Shamans and fire

"Magic and magicians are to be found more or less all over the world, whereas shamanism exhibits a particular magical specialty, on which we shall later dwell at length: "mastery over fire," "magical flight," and so on. By virtue of this fact, though the shaman is, among other things, a magician, not every magician can properly be termed a shaman. The same distinction must be applied in regard to shamanic healing; every medicine man is a healer, but the shaman employs a method that is his and his alone." (Eliade, 1972, p.4) [emphasis mine]

"The idea that fire ensures a celestial destiny after death is also confirmed by the belief that those who are struck by lightning fly up to the sky. "Fire," of whatever kind, transforms man into "spirit"; this is why shamans are held to be "masters over fire" and become insensitive to the touch of hot coals. "Mastery over fire" or being burned are in a manner equivalent to an initiation." (Eliade, 1972, p.206) [emphasis mine]

3. Eagles and renewal of organs

"The content of these first ecstatic experiences, although comparatively rich, almost always includes one or more of the following themes: dismemberment of the body, followed by a renewal of the internal organs and viscera; ascent to the sky and dialogue with the gods or spirits; descent to the underworld and conversations with spirits and the souls of dead shamans." (Eliade, 1972, p.34) [emphasis mine]

"The Yakut Gavril Alekseyev states that each shaman has a Bird-of-Prey-Mother, which is like a great bird with an iron beak, hooked claws, and a long tail. This mythical bird shows itself only twice: at the shaman's spiritual birth, and at his death. It takes his soul, carries it to the underworld, and leaves it to ripen on a branch of a pitch pine. When the soul has reached maturity the bird carries it back to earth, cuts the candidate's body into bits, and distributes them among the evil spirits of disease and death. Each spirit devours the part of the body that is his share; this gives the future shaman power to cure the corresponding diseases. After devouring the whole body the evil spirits depart. The Bird-Mother restores the bones to their places and the candidate wakes as from a deep sleep." (Eliade, 1972, p.37) [emphasis mine]

"In all these examples we find the central theme of an initiation ceremony: dismemberment of the neophyte's body and renewal of his organs; ritual death followed by resurrection. We may also note the motif of the giant bird that hatches shamans in the branches of the World Tree; it has wide application in North Asian mythologies, especially in shamanic mythology." (Eliade, 1972, p.39) [emphasis mine]

"According to the Yenisei Ostyak [=Ket], the Teleut, the Orochon, and other Siberian peoples, the "first shaman" was born of an eagle or, at least, was taught his art by the eagle. We may also recall the role played by the eagle in the stories of shamanic initiation and the ornithomorphic elements in

6 Cf. 'Fire' in Shamanism (2004-SEWB PAC, pp.127-28): "The power to handle fire is considered proof of individual shamanic and personal power."

7 Cf. 'Initiation' in Shamanism (2004-SEWB PAC, p. 153): "The initial blow - sickness, dreams, fainting fits, fright, or lightning strike - constitutes a physical and psychological ordeal that sends the soul of the candidate on a journey. Recurrently, this spiritual crisis portends a drama of death and dismemberment of the physical body before renewal of the vital organs and rebirth."

8 Cf. 'Initiation' in Shamanism (2004-SEWB PAC, p. 154): "The narratives tell of souls from Siberia to South America carried off by great birds of prey - eagles, vultures or mythical bird-spirits. Their magical flight lands on a giant tree where souls may nest and ripen - such as the great fir tree of the Yakut - or undergo ordeals, as with the Tree of Trials of the Mataco."

the shamanic costume, which magically transform the shamans into eagles." (Eliade, 1972, pp.70-71) [emphasis mine]

"We must also consider the mythical relations that exist between the eagle and the shaman. The eagle, it will be remembered, is held to be the father of the first shaman, plays a considerable role in the shaman's initiation, and, finally, is at the center of a mythical complex that includes the World Tree and the shaman's ecstatic journey." (Eliade, 1972, pp.157-58)

4. Helping figures: wives, wolves, etc.

"It is in such a mythical horizon that we must place the relations of shamans with their "celestial wives"; it is not they who, properly speaking, consecrate the shaman; they help him either in his instruction or in his ecstatic experience." (Eliade, 1972, p.79)

"We must note that the majority of these familiar and helping spirits have animal forms. Thus among the Siberians and the Altaians they can appear in the form of bears, wolves, stags, hares, all kinds of birds (especially the goose, eagle, owl, crow, etc.)." (Eliade, 1972, p.89) [emphasis mine]

5. The World Tree or Axis mundi

The shamanistic cosmological conception (as per Eliade) also includes a gigantic tree that connects the Earth and the Sky. The World Tree is, so to speak, the second pillar of shamanism, together with ecstatic trances. It is sometimes replaced or associated with a Cosmic Mountain.

Shamanism (2004-SEWB PAC, p.19), though acknowledging "Mircea Eliade is one of the most influential figures in academic studies of shamanism", has a one-eyed approach of his work: "Eliade's contribution was to provide insight
into shamanism as an ecstatic technique used to contact the world of spirits." This completely ignores the cosmological dimension that Eliade considers essential. Even more surprisingly, Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p.21) credits Joan Halifax with the restrictive definition proposed by Eliade: "[she] narrowed the definition somewhat by including in her definition of shamanism various features such as an initiatory crisis; a vision quest, an ordeal, or an experience of dismemberment and regeneration; the sacred tree or axis mundi and the spirit flight associated with it; and the role of the shaman as a healer, in addition to the ability to enter shamanic trance". Exactly what Eliade himself originally wrote.

"The Cosmic Tree is essential to the shaman. From its wood he makes his drum; climbing the ritual birch, he effectually reaches the summit of the Cosmic Tree; in front of his yurt and inside it are replicas of the Tree, and he depicts it on his drum. Cosmologically, the World Tree rises at the center of the earth, the place of earth's "umbilicus"." (Eliade, 1972, p.270)11

9 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p. 500): "In northern [Eurasian] shamanic practice, the most characteristic tool of the ecstatic trance technique was the drum, by means of which the shaman entered into a trance and gained access to spirit helpers, who took animal form."

10 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p.501): "The drum, whose surface membrane was divided into three parts corresponding to the shamanistic cosmology, was generally described as a means of transport, for instance a horse or a boat."

11 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p.263): "A common motif is the Tree of Life, the axis mundi, or "world pole," whose roots are deep in the earth and whose branches disappear into the sky. This idea could be reflected in the tent or yurt pole that supports a house as the world tree supports the world. The World Tree is a representation of reality, located at a point considered to be the center of the world, as well as the connection between worlds in many traditional legends."

"Another mythical image of the "Center of the World" that makes connection between earth and sky possible is that of the Cosmic Mountain." (Eliade, 1972, p.266)

"It is such a Cosmic Mountain that the future shaman climbs in dream during his initiatory illness and that he later visits on his ecstatic journeys. Ascending a mountain always signifies a journey to the "Center of the World." (Eliade, 1972, p.269)

"The symbolism of the World Tree is complementary to that of the Central Mountain. Sometimes the two symbols coincide; usually they complete each other. But both are merely more developed mythical formulations of the Cosmic Axis (World Pillar, etc.)." (Eliade, 1972, p.269)

"The pre-eminently shamanic technique is the passage from one cosmic region to another - from earth to the sky or from earth to the underworld. The shaman knows the mystery of the breakthrough in plane. This communication among the cosmic zones is made possible by the very structure of the universe. As we shall see presently, the universe in general is conceived as having three levels - sky, earth, underworld - connected by a central axis." (Eliade, 1972, p.259)12

The World Tree is somehow imagined as pointing toward the Polar Star, especially among boreal and arctic people.

"In the middle of the sky shines the Pole Star, holding the celestial tent like a stake. The Samoyed call it the "Sky Nail"; the Chukchee and the Koryak the "Nail Star." The same image and terminology are found among the Lapps, the Finns, and the Estonians. The Turko-Altaians conceive the Pole Star as a pillar; it is the "Golden Pillar" of the Mongols, the Kalmyk, the Buryat, the "Iron Pillar" of the Kirgiz, the Bashkir, the Siberian Tatars, the "Solar Pillar" of the Teleut, and so on. A complementary mythical image is that of the stars as invisibly linked to the Pole Star. The Buryat picture the stars as a herd of horses, and the Pole Star (the "Pillar of the World") is the stake to which they are tethered." (Eliade, 1972, pp.260-261)13

6. Secondary symbols: fertility, snake

"In a number of archaic traditions the Cosmic Tree, expressing the sacrality of the world, its fertility and perenniality, is related to the ideas of creation, fecundity, and initiation, and finally to the idea of absolute reality and immortality. Thus the World Tree becomes a Tree of Life and Immortality as well." (Eliade, 1972, p.271)

"The cosmological schema Tree-Bird (=Eagle), or Tree with a Bird at its top and a Snake at its roots, although typical of the peoples of Central Asia and the ancient Germans, is presumably of Oriental origin." (Eliade, 1972, p.273)

This cosmological theme most probably belongs to a different tradition than shamanism.

12 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p. 165): "The shamanic worldview often presupposes a multileveled cosmos, with the heavens, and often an Underworld, complementing the mundane world of everyday existence. Shamans move between these worlds in the exercise of their calling. Mystical flight is integrally connected in most versions of shamanism with two other themes: curing soul loss and interaction with spirit beings. It is the task of a shaman to travel to one or another cosmic realm to retrieve the soul of the sick person and thus to restore the sick person to health."

13 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p. 502): "The [Finnish] Sampo has been interpreted as a human-made replica of the mythical world pillar, represented in a sacrificial context in a community cult. This supposition was based on the evidence of shamanistic practices not only among the peoples of northern Eurasia, but also among the ancient Germanic and Saami tribes. According to the established scholarly view, prehistoric peoples needed the symbolic representation of the mythical world pillar, supporting the heavens by the north Star." The word sampo is possibly
borrowed from Indo-Iranian skambha- 'pillar, column, Axis mundi', attested in Atharva-Veda X 8-9. The exact nature of the artefact called sampo remains debated.

7. World Pillars

The concept of World Pillar is attested in a number of places, but it involves sacrifices and a Supreme Being. It seems to represent a phenomenon significantly different from shamanism. It is attested over a very large geographic distribution in several continents. The system (World Pillar, sacrifice, Supreme Being) can coexist with shamanism, but is not directly related.

"In the archaic cultures, communication between sky and earth is ordinarily used to send offerings to the celestial gods and not for a concrete and personal ascent; the latter remains the prerogative of shamans." (Eliade, 1972, p.265)

"As we should expect, this cosmology has found an exact replica in the microcosm inhabited by mankind. The Axis of the World has been concretely represented, either by the pillars that support the house, or in the form of isolated stakes, called "World Pillars." For the Eskimo, for example, the Pillar of the Sky is identical with the pole at the center of their dwellings." (Eliade, 1972, p.269)

"The central pillar is a characteristic element in the dwellings of the primitive peoples of the Arctic and North America; it is found among the Samoyed and the Ainu, among the tribes of Northern and Central California (Maidu, Eastern Pomo, Patwin) and among the Algonkin. Sacrifice and prayer are conducted at the foot of the pillar, for it opens the road to the celestial Supreme Being." (Eliade, 1972, p.262) [It would be interesting to see if this shared mythological theme is correlated with inherited linguistic features.]

"The World Pillar is sometimes represented apart from the house - as among the ancient Germans (Irminsul, an image of which Charlemagne destroyed in 772),14 the Lapps, the Ugrian peoples." (Eliade, 1972, p.263)

"The Irminsul of the Saxons is termed by Rudolf of Fulda: "universalis columna, quasi sustinens omnia."15 The Lapps of Scandinavia received this idea from the ancient Germans; they call the Pole Star the "Pillar of the Sky" or "Pillar of the World." The Irminsul has been compared to the pillars of Jupiter. Similar ideas still survive in Southeast European folklore; cf., for example, Coloana Ceriului (the Sky Pillar) of the Romanians." (Eliade, 1972, p.261)

"The symbolism of the World Pillar is also familiar to more developed cultures - Egypt, India, China, Greece, Mesopotamia. Among the Babylonians, for example, the link between heaven and earth - a link symbolized by a Cosmic Mountain or its replicas (ziggurat, temple, royal city, palace) - was sometimes imagined as a celestial column." (Eliade, 1972, p.264)

8. Traceable evolutions of shamanism

As noted before, there is no reason to think that shamanism would be immune to changes and external influences. Eliade himself identifies a number of such influences.

14 Cf. (Torsten, 1998, pp.135-136): [translated from German] "During the first year of the war, the Frankish army coming from Worms conquered the fortress of Eresburg, located in the upper course of the Deimel river, and established a permanent garnison. Afterwards, the Irminsul, a cultual column worshipped in the whole country, was destroyed, which certainly had a devastating impact." The Irminsul was in the vicinity of present-day Paderborn (Niedersachsen).

15 In Chapter 3 of De miraculis sancti Alexandri by Rudolf of Fulda: "Truncum quoque ligni non parvae magnitudinis in altum erectum sub divo coelebant, patria eum lingua Irminsul appellantes, quod Latine dicitur universalis columna, quasi sustinens omnium." [The Saxons also worship a tree trunk, of no small size, erected in open air, called Irminsul in their language, which in Latin is Pillar of the Universe, supporting about everything.]

"But the ancient traditions of the peoples of Central and North Asia - who doubtless knew the image of a "Center of the World" and of the Cosmic Axis - were modified by the continual influx of Oriental religious ideas, whether Mesopotamian in origin (and disseminated through Iran) or Indian (disseminated through Lamaism)." (Eliade, 1972, p.266)

"The problem of the origin and dissemination of the shamanic drum in North Asia is extremely complex and far from being solved. Several things point to its having been originally disseminated from South Asia." (Eliade, 1972, p.176)

"It is highly probable that Tungus shamanism, at least in its present form, has been strongly influenced by Sino-Lamaist ideas and techniques." (Eliade, 1972, p.237)

9. Shamanism versus witchcraft and sorcery

Eliade tends to hold shamanism as a universal and archaic phenomenon, hence the title and subtitle of his book,18 but it must be underlined that the fairly rich documentation of rites and myths in Anatolia (Hittite or Hurrian) does not provide anything reminiscent of shamanism. Winkelman proposes an interesting evolutionist pattern:

"Although the ability to engage in what is considered to be sorcery is part of the practice of shamans, shamans' principal characteristics, associated with healing, divination, hunting, and group leadership, are not typically found in the sorcerer/witch. Shamans are also found in societies quite distinct from those of sorcerers/witches. Cross-cultural data shows that shamans are found in hunter-gatherer, pastoral, and incipient agricultural societies, whereas
10. Prometheus, a Pre-Greek shaman

Now that key features of shamanism are at hand, we can tackle the issue of traces in Ancient Greece. Eliade himself (Eliade, 1972, pp.386-394) raises this question, somewhat inconclusively, but does not mention Prometheus, who is quite certainly an excellent candidate for being a shaman.

The chapter dedicated to “Classical world shamanism (Ancient Greece and Rome)” in Shamanism (2004-SEWBPCAC, pp.478-84) does not mention Prometheus as a possible shaman. So it would seem that our analysis is absolutely novel.

As a rule, Greek Mythology is complex and intimidating. Each Indo-European people has a specific tendency as regards mythology. For example, Greeks tend to transform myths into moralistic satyres, Romans rewrote some sections of their mythology as the early history of Rome, as Dumézil proposed to analyze, Celts tend to transform mythology into fairly tales.


17 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPCAC, p.60): “Lama-shamans of Tibet and China, where shamanism has long been incorporated into the Buddhist religion, wore especially elaborately decorated priestly vestments, and items like protective face-covering fringes or flaps, breast mirror disks, and bell belts. Many of these ensembles also had an unexplained feature borrowed from Chinese theater.” (2004-SEWBPCAC, p.176) "The Adolf Dattan collection of the Orochi and Nanai people of the Amur River region offers remarkable examples of artifacts connected with shamanistic practice from people living along the southern Pacific coast of Siberia. The shamanistic artifacts in this real collection illustrate the confluence of Siberian, Chinese, and Tungus-Manchu cultures." (2004-SEWBPCAC, pp.564-65) "As can be well delineated, especially from historical documents following the activities of a missionary lama from Tibet, Neyci Toyn Lama (1557-1653), in Mongolia in the seventeenth century, Buddhism overcame shamanism, the final result being a kind of lamaized shamanism. [...] The old religion of shamanism did not become extinct, but rather was camouflaged under a mantle of Lamaism."

18 Cf. Shamanism (2004-SEWBPCAC, p.25): "shamanism may well be the oldest religion of hunter-gatherers".

Prometheus (npopnQsbg ‘forethought’) is a son of Iapetus (IarcsTog), who is also father of Atlas (AxXag), Epimetheus (ErcipnBsbg ‘hindsight’) and Ménéotios (Msvoixiog, Msvoix^g ‘vital fate’). The mother of Prometheus is said to be Clymene (KXupsvn), according to Hesiod, or Asia (Aoia) according to Apollodorus.

Our approach of Prometheus is that the backbone of the myth is shamanic. To it was added Zeus and his overhanging interventions. In other words, the narrative contains a shamanic subtext, involving Prometheus, and a moralistic supertext, involving Zeus.

In addition, the "figures" that appear in the narrative have in fact logical connections and not familial relationships. Atlas can be understood as the World Tree (§5), in human disguise. The name Atlas itself has a striking similarity with PIE *tēl- ‘to carry, to support’, but the prefix a-belongs to Caucasian morphology. Asia might mean ‘return, cure’ (< *nsiya). The three names Prometheus, Epimetheus and Ménéotios are Greek. Only Prometheus, the shaman, is a real human being, Iapetus is not Greek, and can be tentatively compared with Caucasian Avar epel ‘cover, lid’ and Inkhokvari apar ‘pole (for planking the ceiling)’. Iapetus possibly means ‘sky vault’ and combines the Caucasian class-prefix i-, the root Vap- and the Pre-Greek suffix -et-. Erebus ‘the dark netherworld’ (< *H1regw-) is a Greek word.

So, the basic components of the shamanic cosmology are present: Prometheus 'the shaman', Iapetos 'the sky vault', Erebos 'the dark netherworld', Atlas 'the World Tree' and Asia 'return, cure'. Now, let us comment Hesiod's Theogony in more details:


[Hesiod, Theogony verse 507] Now Iapetus took to wife the neat-ankled maid Clymene, daughter of Ocean, and went up with her into one bed. And she bare him a stout-hearted son, Atlas: [510] also she bare very glorious

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"And Atlas through hard constraint upholds the wide heaven with unwearying head and arms, standing at the borders of the earth before the clear-voiced Hesperides; [520] for this lot wise Zeus assigned to him." [describes the World Tree that connects sky, earth and netherworld]

19 Here and further the text of Ancient Greek poem is quoted by the second edition of Evelyn-White, Cambridge; Harvard: London, William Heinemann Ltd (Evelyn-White, 1920), this is the only edition used. Also, see the reprint at Perseus project for the constructions analysis, literary scholarship and mythological reminiscences of this text: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0130%3Acard%3D1

S'as S' a'uxKTons'S'flai nno'po'9sa noKi'roOU'ouiv : Ssa'oiq apyaA,sosai 'saoa Sia Kiov sMaAag : Kai oi sn' aisxov ©pas xavurnspov; auxap o y' 'nap : 'a9isv a9avaxov, xo S' as'sxo iaov anavxn [525] vuKxog oao'v nponav 'ap sSoi xavuirnpog npvig.

"And ready-witted Prometheus he bound with inextricable bonds, cruel chains, and drove a shaft through his middle, and set on him a long-winged eagle, which used to eat his immortal liver, but by night the liver grew [525] as much again everyway in the whole bird devoured in the whole frame." [ Cf. §3. Eagles and renewal of organs, and shamanic initiation]

xov 'sv ap' AAX'vng KaAlia'upou aAxi'og uio: 'HpaK'sng skxsivs, KaK'v S' ano vouaou a'a'sKv : lansxioviS'fl Kai sMaaxo Sua'pouavarov : ouk asK'xi Zvng 'Ou'umou uyi'sSoxog, [530] o'r' 'HpaK'sng ©nPayssovg K'sog sin : n'siow sv ^ xo noro9svi svi9ova nou'uPoxispav : xwa' apa a'o'svxi a'a apSsKsxxov uiov : Kai nsp xroo'svog nau9n xo'ou, ov npiv sxsaKsv, ouvk' spi'sx'ou Poo'ag unsp'ssvsi Kpovirovi.

"That bird Heracles, the valiant son of shapely-ankled Alcmena, slew, and delivered the son of lapetus from the cruel plague, and released him from his affliction - not without the will of Olympian Zeus who reigns on high, [530] that the glory of Heracles the Theban-born might be yet greater than it was before over the plenteous earth. This, then, he regarded, and honored his famous son, though he was angry, he ceased from the wrath which he had before because Prometheus matched himself in wit with the almighty son of Cronos." [this is certainly a graft on the original narrative]

[k535] Kai yap ox' 'Kpivovxo 9s0o 9vnxoi x' av9pronoi : MnKrovfl, xov' sxnsaxa 'svy Pov npo'pov 9u'ra : Saaaxsv'vog npo9s9Kns, Aloig voov s'anaeiaKrov : xoix 'sv yv aapKag xs Kai syKaxa ni0aou Sn'ra : sv pivra Kax9Kns KaMyag yaxpli Posi', [540] xra S' av' oxaa 'sura Pooq So'M : nvi sxvvfl : si9xaixag Kax9Kns Ka'u'ag apysi Sn'ra : S' xoxx 'iv npoaissin nax'p avSp'v xs 9s'ov xs : lansxioviSn, navxrov apiSsiKs' avKaxov, © nsnov, ©g sxsp'aroA Agrng SiaSa99o ©oipag.

[k535] For when the gods and mortal men had a dispute at Mecone, even then Prometheus was forward to cut up a great ox and set portions before them, trying to befool the mind of Zeus. Before the rest he set flesh and inner parts thick with fat upon the hide, covering them with an ox paunch, [540] but for Zeus he put the white bones dressed up with cunning art and covered with shining fat. Then the father of men and of gods said to him: "Son of lapetus, most glorious of all lords, good sir, how unfairly you have divided the portions!" [ Cf. §3. Eagles and renewal of organs. The shamanic exchange of organs, associated with shamanic initiation, is here described as a trick used by Prometheus to deceive Zeus.]

[k545] &g 'axo Kspxo'vros Zsvg a'9ixa 'Ssa siSrov : xov S' arns npoaissins npo'9sug ayKu'o'vnxng : 'k' sm'siS'vaag, Sowing S' 9sxo sxvng : Zsv KuSi saxs 'syaixs 9s'v aisiyvsxvov : xiD'v S' e'si, onnoKsnpnv as svi 'psai 9u'og avroyi [550] pa'S'o'povsrov : Zsvg S' a'9ixa 'Ssa siSrov : yv' © p' ou's 'yvoinas So'ov: KaRa S' oxaaou 9u'ra : Svnxoiq av9pronoai, xa Kai xs'sa99ai s'saIsv : xsplai S' o y' a'o'sp'axiv avsi'sxo 'sukov a'si'ap : xroaaxo Ss 'pevaq a'i, xo'og Ss 'i fcxso 9u'ov [555] ©g Isv oxaa 'suKu Pooq So'Mn svi sxsv : sk xou S' 9avoxaioxai svi x9ovi 'u' av9pronoiv : Kawai'a oxaa 'suKu 9unsxovr sni Pro'rov : xov Ss 'sy' ox'99'ag npoa'sn vs's'ynspxsza Zsvg : lansxioviSn, navxrov nspi 'Ssa siSrov [560] © nsnov, ouk apa nro Sowing sni'99o sxvng : &g 'axo xroo'svog Zsvg a'9ixa 'v'Ssa siSrov : sk xouou Ss' sxnsaxa 'svs'niv'svog aisi : ouk siSouv Ms'Maai npugp 'svog aKa'axoio : 9vnxoig av9pronoig, o'i sni x9ovi vaisaixoai.

[k545] So said Zeus whose wisdom is everlasting, rebuking him. But wily Prometheus answered him, smiling softly and not forgetting his cunning trick: Zeus, most glorious and greatest of the eternal gods, take which ever of these sacrifices you please and set them upon fragrant altars. But Zeus who drives the clouds was greatly vexed and said to him: "Son of lapetus, clever above all! [560] So, sir, you have not yet forgotten your cunning arts!" So spake Zeus in anger, whose wisdom is everlasting, and from that time he was always mindful of the trick, and would not give the power of deception Zeus.

1 Here and further the text of Ancient Greek poem is quoted by the second edition of Evelyn-White, Cambridge; Harvard: London, William Heinemann Ltd (Evelyn-White, 1920), this is the only edition used. Also, see the reprint at Perseus project for the constructions analysis, literary scholarship and mythological reminiscences of this text: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0130%3Acard%3D1

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"Our role is limited solely to discovering to what extent the various Indo-European peoples preserve vestiges of an
12. Odin, a Pre-Indo-European shaman
In the chapter dedicated to shamanism among the Indo-European peoples, Eliade first restates what shamanism properly said is about:
"Our role is limited solely to discovering to what extent the various Indo-European peoples preserve vestiges of an ideology and technique that are shamanic in the strict sense of the term, that is, which exhibit one of its essential features: ascent to heaven, descent to the underworld to bring back the patient's soul or to escort the dead, evocation and incarnation of the "spirits" in order to undertake the ecstatic journey, "mastery over fire," and so on." (Eliade, 1972, p.376)
Our knowledge of Ancient Germanic mythology is for the most part based on the North Germanic one, under the pen of Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241).
It remains an open question to which extent Norse mythology can be considered fully representative of Germanic...
The skull of the dead shaman with the figure was kept by his own children who were recognized as the priests of the ancestral cult. (Jochelson, 1924, p.164)

When travelling the figure with the shaman's skull [= xoil] was carried in a wooden box. In some districts, for instance, on the Omolon, the xoil was placed in a small wooden compartment and kept on poles or trees, after the manner of elevated graves of beloved relatives. Before a trip, a hunt, or a war expedition, the mummy was taken out of its wooden receptacle and smoked over the fire, into which fat was thrown. It was prayed to for help, and it was divided the bones of the corpse, and after having dried them, they clothed them. They worshipped the skull of the shaman. They made a trunk of wood and set on it the skull. Then they made for it (for the idol) a jacket and caps (two caps, - a winter and a summer one). They embroidered the coat all over. For its face they made a mask, with openings for eyes and mouth. Over the embroidered coat they put a coat of fawnskins; and over that, a blanket of soft reindeer-skins.

Then they placed the figure in the front corner of the house. Whenever they were going to eat something good, they first threw a piece of it in the fire, and held the figure over the smoke. This they did at every meal; and thus they fed the figure, which they worshipped like a god. (Jochelson, 1924, p.163)

"When travelling the figure with the shaman's skull [= xoil] was carried in a wooden box. In some districts, for instance, on the Omolon, the xoil was placed in a small wooden compartment and kept on poles or trees, after the manner of elevated graves of beloved relatives. Before a trip, a hunt, or a war expedition, the mummy was taken out of its wooden receptacle and smoked over the fire, into which fat was thrown. It was prayed to for help, and it was asked to decide whether the proposed undertaking should be carried out. Then the figure was placed on the ground and lifted three times. If it was easily lifted, the success of the enterprise was assured. If, on the contrary, the figure proved so heavy that it could not be lifted, so relate the Yukaghir, the project was given up. On some occasions the omen pointed towards partial success, that is, the xoil proved not altogether light or could not be lifted at once in the three prescribed attempts. Then the old men held council and decided what to do.

The skull of the dead shaman with the figure was kept by his own children who were recognized as the priests of the ancestral cult. (Jochelson, 1924, p.164)

It is unclear if this practice of Yukaghir people can be found among other peoples. In all cases, this mixture of ancestor cult and necromancy does not belong to the realm of shamanism, properly said, as Eliade himself acknowledged.
14. More-than-four-legged animals

Odin has a horse, which helps him travel across space. It can be noted that Pharmat also has a horse (Turpal), but this theme does not appear in Prometheus. The Greek version presumably is the bare core of shamanism, without later additions like animals, drums or horses.

"Odin's steed, Sleipnir, has eight hooves, and it is he who carries his master, and even other gods (e.g., Hermo dhr), to the underworld. Now, the eight-hoofed horse is the shamanic horse par excellence; it is found among the Siberians, as well as elsewhere (e.g., the Muria), always in connection with the shaman's ecstatic experience."

(Eliade, 1972, p.380)

Eight-legged horse Sleipnir (s_l_p) has the same consonantic skeleton as the Vedic mythical eight-legged deer sarabha- (s_r_bh) and the Ob-Ugric word for 'male elk': Vogul-Man si

21 There seems to be no indication of such a practice in Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC).

"sorpi, Ostyak-Khanty 'sarpí (s_r_p). Ob-Ugric cannot be an inherited Proto-Uralic word. It seems probable that Sleipnir was originally an elk, but was "upgraded" to a horse, after horses were domesticated. A connection with PIE *ker- 'horn' seems reasonable. The giver-language would then be some Indo-Iranian dialect. Ugric people have a mythical six-legged elk, whose two extra hind-legs were cut off by a hunter and thrown into the sky to form the Ursa Major constellation.

Interestingly, the Vedic word sarabha- is mentioned in relationship with difficult passages and reaching heaven, in a kind of shamanic flight through space:

"Go midst the pious who have paid their worship, and parted, dwell on the third cope of heaven,
Rise to that world, O Goat, where dwell the righteous: pass, like a Sarabha veiled, all difficult places." Atharva-Veda IX, 5. 8-9 [about a sacrificial goat]

It is unclear which people (Ob-Ugric, Indo-Iranian, some other unknown people ?) invented

22 more-than-four-legged deers. In all cases, it is certainly a graft onto Odin's original mythology.

Note that the Indian twin healers Nasatyau (< *nes- 'to return, heal') are also called Asvin (< *ekw- 'horse'). The synonymy is a feature of Siberian shamanism, which associates healing with horses.

A possible explanation for Siberian elements in Germanic mythology is amber trade:

"Elements of Siberian shamanism as well as European folk and mythological motifs, especially European ideas of animism, are found in Finno-Ugric shamanism. One explanation might be that these cultural traits spread along the trade routes of Baltic amber." (2004-SEWBPAC, p.486)

15. About Yggdrasil

Apart from the shaman-god Odin and his eight-legged horse Sleipnir, another component of North Germanic shamanism is the Cosmic Tree Yggdrasil (Old Norse Yggdrasill). It is supposed to be a gigantic ash-tree, that connects the sky with the netherworld.

An obvious etymology of the word is Ygg(r) 'one of the names of Odin' and drasill 'horse', though one would expect the unattested genitival 'Yggdrasil. A smarter analysis is 'yew pillar', combining yggia (< *igwya) 'yew-tree' and drasill (< er-) 'support, pillar'. In that respect, it is interesting to note that yews are associated with cemeteries in most of Europe. This is possibly a preservation of archaic beliefs that have survived Christianization.

16. Conclusion

The first part of the paper lists and discusses the features of shamanic practices and the cosmological Weltanschauung of shamanism stricto sensu, which Eliade described in his famous and ground-breaking book on shamanism.

The second part showed that some Indo-European languages, especially the western group with Greek Prometheus and Germanic Odin, contain genuine shamanic mythological and lexical material. Besides, Greek Prometheus has a Caucasian equivalent, Chechen nxabMaT, nxabH.

22 Cf. 'Horses' in Shamanism (2004-SEWBPAC, p.502): "Sleipnir of ancient Nordic culture, Mohammed's horse Alborak, and many others reflect the mystical connotations associated with horses. The winged horse symbolized the ability to fly into heaven, or to the Underworld, and horses with multiple sets of legs mirrored the number of pallbearers' legs as they carried the coffin to the grave."

Appendix - The cluster of shamanic roots

Several semantically related roots need a special focus: *ansu-, *nes-, *weik-, *wel-, *wat-. They are related to shamanism and, for the most part, attested in Western Indo-European languages (Celtic, Italic, Germanic, Greek) and, to a lesser extent, in Indo-Iranian. These roots are conspicuously absent from Anatolian and also Balto-Slavic and Armenian.

What is more, they have Caucasian morphology, in particular class-prefix #a- and #i-. Some of them are attest in present-day Caucasian languages.

Appendix - The cluster of shamanic roots

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What is more, they have Caucasian morphology, in particular class-prefix #a- and #i-. Some of them are attest in present-day Caucasian languages.
It is now established that Basque is fundamentally a Caucasian language. So it would appear that a Caucasian substrate used to exist in Pre-Indo-European Europe.

^ *nes- 'to return, to heal' (2001-LIV, pp.454-55), (1959-IEW, pp.766-67) Western Indo-European languages

^ Greek vso-prn, Ionian vsb-prn, vio(o)oprn 'to go, come, return'; vogto- 'a return home', cf. Nsorop 'the returner'. Asia (Aolia) (< *nisiya) 'return, cure'; ^ Greek 'vao-o' 'temple, shrine'; Doric, vao-; Lak. vao-, Ionian v-i-o-ro; Attic vro^-; Albanian knel-em (< *k-n-es-lo-) 'to recover, be living again'

^ Gothic ga-nisan, O.H.G. O.S. gi-nesan, 'to recover, be saved'; Old English ge-nesan 'to be saved, survive'; Gothic ga-nists, O.H.G. O.S. ginist 'health, salvation'; Gothic nasjan 'to make fit, healthy'; O.H.G. nerian, renner 'to save, heal, cure' ^ Swedish dial. nora 'to light fire', Old Icelandic akl-nu-ri (= life-saver) fire' Eastern Indo-European languages

^ Old Indian nas- 'to approach, resort to, join' Caucasian languages

^ [?] NW Caucasian: 'a-nas-t-q-a-ra, 'a-nas-lf-a-ra 'to move, step aside', Chirikba (1996-DCA, p. 116), who analyzes the verbs as compounds involving *na- 'thither'

'*(a)-ncu- 'god' (1959-IEW, p.48) Western Indo-European languages *ansu- (< with Caucasian #a-)

^ Germanic *ansu-z, Pl. *ansiw-iz 'god, age god'; Old Icelandic ass, oss, Runic a[nsu]-, Old English os 'age god', Greek ans-es (Latin Acc. Pl) 'demigods' ^ Venetic ahsu- (= asu-) 'cult effigy, cult figure' Eastern Indo-European languages *nsu- (< without Caucasian #a-)

^ 'nsu-: Old Indian asu-ra-, Avestic ahura- 'ruler, lord' Caucasian languages

^ NW Caucasian: * (a) -ncwa 'god' (1996-DCA, p.117)

^ Latin vates, -is (possibly borrowed), Gaulish ou axsi^ (Nom. Plural) 'seer, prophet' ^ also 'poetry': Old Icelandic vat-atli 'to be familiar with, aware of

^ *wat- or 'wot- 'shaman, seer, prophet' (derived from *wet- 'to see') Western Indo-European languages

^ Germanic *Wodana-z 'Odin': Old Norse Odin, Old English Woden, Old Saxon Woden, Old High German Wotan

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frantic, furious', Old English wod 'mad' ^ Old Irish faith 'seer, prophet' (< *wat-i), Old Irish fath 'prophecy, prophetic wisdom' (< *wat-u)

^ Latin vates, -is (possibly borrowed), Gaulish ou axsi^ (Nom. Plural) 'seer, prophet' ^ also 'poetry': Old Icelandic odr 'poetry', Old English wulf 'song, poetry', Welsh gwawd 'poetry' (<wat-u) Caucasian languages

^ NW Caucasian: Adyghe wsdd, Kabardian wdd, Ubykh wddd 'witch'

Watkins (Watkins, 1995, p. 117) holds that "the terminology of poetry and poetics in Irish is native and old", but this cannot be true of all the words listed by Watkins, who considers *wot-to be the lengthened grade of *wet-. But, if we add Southern French dialectal words like badoc, badaluc 'stupid, simple' orfadat, fadolas, fadurla 'stupid, crazy', then the vowel is rather *wat-. In all cases, the alternation e ~ a/o does not look Indo-European.

^ (H3)wel- 'to see' (2001-LIV, p.675), (1959-IEW, p.346) Western Indo-European languages

^ Old Irish fili (Pl. filid) (< *welet-) 'learned poet, seer'; medieval Welsh gwelet 'to see', Breton gweled 'sight' ^ Old Norse Vili 'a "brother" of Odin': possibly 'ecstatic vision' "24 Caucasian languages "H3wel-

^ Lezghian, Dargwa *fwil, *Ul 'eye'

^w/-tu- '(beautiful) sight'

Western Indo-European languages

^ Gothic wulpus 'glory, magnificence', wulpags = svSo^ 'glorious', Old Icelandic Ullr

(< 'wulpuz') 'a theonym', Old English wulder 'glory' ^ Latin voltus, vultus (< 'w/-tu') 'face, shape' (< 'w/-tu-

The suffix -et- of Old Irish fili (< *welet-) is the lengthened variant of -et- as in lapetus (larcso^, cf. §9). Beekes (Beekes, 2014) lists a number of Pre-Greek words with this suffix: KaisxoQ KainsTO^, *aansTOv, vsnsTO^.

*weik- 'holy, magical' (1959-IEW, pp.1128) Western Indo-European languages

^ (?) Latin victima 'sacrificial animal, oblation'

^ Germanic *weih- 'holy': Gothic weihis, Old Saxon wih-, O.H.G. wihi, wihi ^ Germanic *weih-: Old Saxon wih 'temple', Old English weoh, wig 'image of a god' ^ Old English *wik-an-:- wicca 'magician', wicce 'witch' ^ Germanic *wig-: Old
English wiglian 'to practice divination', wicce 'witch' ^ Old Norse Ve 'a "brother" of Odin': 'shrine'


24 Vili is usually held to be derived from 'wil- 'will, desire', but the connection with 'wel- 'to see' is better.

'divine' (1959-IEW, p.1128), (2008-NIV, p.102 reconstructs *dhëH1-s-) Anatolian languages

^ *dhas-: Hieroglyphic Luvian tasan 'votive stela' Western Indo-European languages

^ *dhas-: Latin fænum 'shrine', fascinus 'curse, amulet' ^ *dhes-: Greek ðês, Mycenian te-o 'god' ^ *dhis- or *dhis-:
Armenian di-kh 'gods' ^ *dhês-: Latin fēstus 'festive, pertaining to holidays fēria) ^ *dhis-: Old Norse dis 'fate goddess' ^ *i-dhisi-: Old Saxon idis, Old High German its, Anglo-Saxon ides 'goddess, lady'

The root is exceptionally attested in Anatolian languages, which supports inheritance of this particular root. In general, the Germanic words are left unexplained and the other words are integrated into a plausible root *dheH1s-. But, if Germanic words are added to the picture, then the root is either not Indo-European or is a cognate between Caucasian and PIE. In spite of the Caucasian-looking morphology (*dhis— *i-dhisi-), the root does not seem to be reflected in present-day Caucasian languages.

It is worth underlining that several of these roots combine with vé 'shrine' to form toponyms. Are attested in combination with vé: dis, Odin, Ullr. Indo-European words combining with vé to form a toponym are Freyja and Thor. So this criterion is not definitive in determining which words are Caucasian.

References


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Reconstruction of the hypotheses below is based on linguistic evidence using the comparative method. Archaeological evidence is difficult to match to any specific culture in the period of early Indo-European culture in the Chalcolithic. Other approaches to Indo-European mythology Shamanism in Warrior Magic and Religion. In any case, there were other forms of shamanism that were much more socially acceptable for men to practice. One of the central institutions of traditional Germanic society was the band of elite, ecstatic, totemistic warriors. Some of the warriors in these warbands were berserkers. Looking for more great information on Norse mythology and religion? While this site provides the ultimate online introduction to the topic, my book The Viking Spirit provides the ultimate introduction to Norse mythology and religion period. Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual, Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tène to the Viking Age. [13] Dubois, Thomas A. 1999. Nordic Religions in the Viking Age. p. 135-137. Pre-Islamic Turkic mythology was dominated by shamanism. The chief deity was Tengri, a sky god, worshipped by the upper classes of early Turkic society until Manichaeism was introduced as the official religion of the Uyghur Empire in 763. Pre-Islamic Turkic mythology was dominated by shamanism. The chief deity was Tengri, a sky god, worshipped by the upper classes of early Turkic society until Manichaeism was introduced as the official religion of the Uyghur Empire in 763. The Wolf symbolizes honour and is also considered the mother of most Turkic peoples. Indo-European tongues traced back more than 8,000 years to present-day Turkey. Is Kunlun the same as the kingdom of Kalinga (aka Klinig, today’s Orissa)? Indo-European *wel-in Armenian mythology, January 2016. Journal of Indo-European Studies, The 44(1):129-146. Authors: Armen Petrosyan. 4.16. Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NAS RA. These names and characters are considered in the context of the reconstruction of *wel-as an important stem in Indo-European mythology. Discover the world's research. 17+ million members. 135+ million publications. 700k+ research projects. Join for free. Public Full-texts 2. The mythology of the Proto-Indo-Europeans is not directly attested and it is difficult to match their language to archaeological findings related to any specific culture from the Chalcolithic.[3] Nonetheless, scholars of comparative mythology have attempted to reconstruct aspects of Proto-Indo-European mythology based on the existence of similarities among the deities, religious practices, and myths of various Indo-European. Source mythologies. Scheme of Indo-European migrations from c. 4000 to 1000 BC according to the Kurgan hypothesis. One of the earliest attested and thus most important of all Indo-European mythologies is Vedic mythology,[14] especially the mythology of the Rigveda, the oldest of the Vedas.