



# Visiting Deities of the Hopi, Newar and Marind-anim: A Comparative Study of Seasonal Myths and Rituals in Horticultural Societies

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### Summary

The mythologies and rituals of the three populations show a remarkable amount of overlap, in spite of their distant locations: in northern Arizona, the Kathmandu Valley, and southern New Guinea. They exhibit the mytheme of a large number of visiting deities that appear at certain periods during the year. These ritually undertake a number of actions, usually related to the agricultural cycle, and then return to their respective homes. Usually violent sacrifice is involved as well. It will be suggested how these myths and sacrifices evolved in Neolithic horticultural societies, by pathway dependency, from earlier Palaeolithic beliefs.

Keywords: Visiting deities, Hopi, Newar, Marind-anim, agriculture, myths, rituals, violent sacrifice, Hainuwele, Palaeolithic origins.

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## Visiting deities of the Hopi, Newar and Marind-anim: a comparative study of seasonal myths and rituals in horticultural societies

By Michael Witzel and Suma Anand\*

### § 0. Introduction

The mythologies and rituals of the three populations studied here show a remarkable amount of overlap, though they are located far distant from each other, in N. Arizona, the Kathmandu Valley, and S. New Guinea. In addition, they belong to three totally different language families. Nevertheless they exhibit the mytheme of a large number of visiting deities that appear at certain periods during the year. These participate in a number of rituals, usually related to the agricultural cycle, and then return to their respective homes.

Usually violent sacrifice is involved as well. In addition to investigating these traits, a suggestion will be made how these sacrifices evolved in these Neolithic societies.<sup>i</sup> The ultimate question, pursued in this paper, thus is: how do horticultural or incipient agricultural societies adjust to settled life and food production?

#### § 0.1. Definition of Visiting deities: Marebito

The three societies selected here share the feature of visiting deities who appear once per year. This feature, common in Japanese mythology, is called *marebito*, ‘visiting person’ from *mare* ‘rare, strange, outside’ and *hito* ‘man’. It signifies a deity or deities that visit humans once per year.<sup>ii</sup>

Visiting deities are found in many societies, irrespective of their subsistence models; they are too many to discuss here in detail. In F.B. J. Kuiper’s analysis,<sup>iii</sup> the Vedic deities (Indra, Varuṇa, etc.) visit at New Year and reset the order of the universe and of human society through the mutual agreement of otherwise competing groups of deities. Similarly, the Kalasha’s *Indr* visit their valleys in Chitral (Northwest Pakistan) around winter solstice; the year of the Kalasha is clearly divided into two parts that coincide with the transhumance movement of their goat herds into the high mountains, where the ‘pure’ fairies live, as opposed to the ‘polluted’ valleys of the Kalasha.<sup>iv</sup> Similarly, the “history” of the neighboring Dardic speaking Kashmir retains the tradition of half-yearly visits of Piśācas and Nāgas, before humans settled in the valley. The up/down symbolism is the same as with the Dardic speaking Kalasha and their Nuristani speaking neighbors that had retained their ancient Indo-Iranian religion until forced Islamization in 1895.

The division of the Indo-European year into two halves has been studied at length by E. Lyle in numerous articles and in her seminal book *Archaic Cosmos*.<sup>v</sup> In the Indo-European speaking cultures just mentioned, the visit of the deities is symbolized in periodic *pūjā* type rituals that follow the ancient pattern on human guest friendship rituals,<sup>vi</sup> the threefold series of *invitation-feeding-send off*.<sup>vii</sup>

At the other end of Asia, the Japanese retain a similar tradition: “all” Japanese gods visit the ancient Izumo area (Izumo Taisha town) in October during the Kamiarisai

festival. We may also compare the *marebito* style bringing up and sacrificial killing of bears with the Ainu, who “send home” the offered bear, whose flesh is offered to himself.<sup>viii</sup>

Further, visiting deities are found in agricultural societies such as the ancient Greek one, with Persephone visiting from her married home in Hades for a few summer months when she makes grain grow.<sup>ix</sup> In the three societies studied here, the deities periodically appear in the form of masked humans (see below).

## § 0.2. Horticulture

The three societies selected here, are horticultural that is they use the hoe or the planting stick, but not yet a plough of any shape or form. This in itself is indicative of the archaic nature of their type of food production, as the *ard* type plough was already introduced in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and a regular plough that was used by the Indus civilization (2600-1900 BCE). However, the three societies studied here have fairly different types of horticulture.

The Hopi of northern Arizona grow maize, beans, etc., on small dry fields in spring and summer, in the desert below their ancient pueblo villages,<sup>x</sup> which are situated on flat *mesa* outcrops. Due to the desert climate, the pronounced southwest monsoon in summer plays a great role for success in their dry field food production, next to any winter moisture, obtained in the form of snow. There is a clear distinction between the moist agricultural season --a month after winter solstice to a month after summer solstice-- and the dry rest of the year. The rituals include traces of violent sacrifice.

The Newars of the Kathmandu Valley in central Nepal grow winter wheat and summer rice on the small terraced, irrigated, very fertile fields of the valley, or in small secondary valleys that have been carved into the flat bottom of the valley due to erosion and thus usually contain a smaller or larger stream. After the summer rains have set in by mid June, rice seedlings are transplanted by women who exchange teasing songs with the men and lunge into a mud fight at the end of the day. Rain therefore plays a great role in festivals, such as the Rato Macchendranāth and Indra Jātrā festivals that are enacted to stop excessive rains. The contrast between the summer rains and the dry season, in which winter wheat is planted and harvested by April, are very marked in rituals and festivals. It is not very much pronounced in myth, as the original Newar religion (e.g. the rain god Bunga Dyo)<sup>xi</sup> has been heavily overlaid by medieval Buddhism and Hinduism. Newar rituals involve violent, gruesome sacrifices.

The Marind-anim of lowland southwestern New Guinea grow coconut, banana, yams and taro and harvest sago in fields cut out of the jungle. Due to the prevailing tropical climate, rain is not as important as with the other two societies. Even then, there are two marked monsoon seasons: a dry winter monsoon and the wet summer monsoon. Just as with the other two societies, this contrast plays a major role in myth and ritual, marked by two major festivals. Violent, gruesome sacrifice is very much in evidence.

The question to be asked then, is: why do the three societies have a remarkable amount of overlap in their myths and rituals, though they are located far distant from each other in Arizona, the Kathmandu Valley and New Guinea, separated from each other by thousands of kilometers of land and ocean, and while belonging to three totally different

language families --Na-Dene, Tibeto-Burman and Papuan-- as well as to different cultural complexes? They have been variously influenced by prominent neighboring civilizations: the Hopi by influences from the maize cultivating peoples of central and southern Mexico, the Newars by heavy cultural overlays of various historical stages of northern Indian culture, and the Marind by their Papua (and other?) neighbors in New Guinea.

Further: why, when and under which circumstances did these similarities develop? Is it due to the --unlikely-- transfer of the concept and method of food production from one or more centers in the old world,<sup>xii</sup> in other words, due to diffusion? Or is it due to the common underlying characteristics of the human mind, such as Jungian archetypes, which would have produced the same or similar outcomes in the three regions, once the step from hunting-gathering to early food production was made after c. 10,000 BCE? The answer, as we shall see, lies elsewhere.

## § 1 Hopi

The Hopis' Pueblo ancestors, the 'Anasazi', of whom many monuments remain, lived to the northeast of the current Hopi reservation, in the Four Corners region. They practiced incipient food production since the beginning of our era, and perhaps as early as 1500 BCE. However, they moved, after a disastrous twenty-three year drought (1276 CE), to the south of the Rio Grande in New Mexico, to central Arizona, and to their current location in Hopi Land, where they live on three Mesas (and now also in modern villages below the Mesas). However, the Pueblo peoples maintain shrines in the Four Corners region, and make pilgrimages there. They have significantly influenced the Na-Dene speaking Apache and Navajo who were newcomers, hunters from the arctic North, where the Athabascans are their closest relatives.

### § 1.1 Food production

With the Hopi, the agricultural cycle begins in April with clearing the fields with hoes and digging sticks. Dry farming of beans, etc. begins in earnest in May. Apart from corn and beans (in sand dunes), they also plant squash and sunflower, melons, carrots, peas and onions, using irrigation and flood waters. The harvest begins in September, with squash, melons, and beans and then husked corn.

Work in the fields is divided between men and women. Men prepare the fields, grow and harvest corn. Women help in the fields, grow vegetables and collect fruit, and take care of seeds. The agricultural season is punctuated by the summer monsoon that starts about mid-June: the dry hot southwest of North America attracts moist winds from the Pacific. They bring dark clouds with them that discharge, on and off, in various areas with great force, at c. 105° F (40° C). The Hopi hope and pray for these clouds that sustain their crops in the pronounced desert climate of their home in northern Arizona, which has only 5 -7 inches (12-18 cm) of rain per year.

The two 'theoretical' boundaries of the agricultural season are marked by the *Powamu* ceremonies in February and September (see below).

### § 1.2 Visiting deities

These ceremonies involve the spirits, the Katsina (Kachina),<sup>xiii</sup> who are sent to help the Hopi clans. They normally are invisible and live underground, in the high San Francisco

Mountains west of Hopi land. They arrive in winter from the foot of these mountains, at Típkayai ('womb'), which is represented by a *kisonvi* plaza at Oraibi village, the conservative nucleus of Hopi tradition.

The Katsina function as friendly ancestor spirits, as clan ancestors (*wuya*). The chief Katsina, Ewtoto, is the ultimate ancestor figure. They number from 200-500<sup>xiv</sup> and appear in group dances as the spirits of the deceased, of plants, animals, even minerals. At these occasions they are substituted by male humans, masked and dressed in various costumes.

The year is divided into two parts; the visiting deities, the Katsina, are manifest in physical form for 6 months before they retreat back into their mountains. The two halves of the year represent the upper/lower world; the upper realm corresponding to the appearance of the Katsina in winter, in greater number from February onward. The underworld aspect is stressed by the return of the Katsina spirits to their underground home during the other half of the year, beginning with the Niman ceremony in July. The appearance and disappearance are echoed by the two *Powamu* ceremonies, in February and September. In agriculture, these correspond to winter prayers, and summer harvest.

The Katsina are impersonated by masked and costume wearing Hopi men; these become the Hopi 'Katsina clan'. These men are 'taken over' by the Katsinas they represent but remain themselves; thus they are at the same time spirit and human. For the rituals they are very much restricted, and must avoid whites, quarrel, stumbling (which brings drought).

Children are given Katsina toys and believe them to be deities; they are initiated at the age of 6-8 into the Katsina or Powamu societies. At the Bean Dance (Febr.) which celebrates the "magical" appearance of green plants in winter, at midnight, the new initiates are brought into the ceremonial underground chambers, the *kiva*, and the Katsina dancers appear without their masks in the night dance. They are thus revealed as actual relatives of the children, who now realize that they are not deities. The new initiates are then qualified for future Katsina rites while those inducted into the Powamuy society serve as "fathers" of the Katsinas. Their father, Eototo/Ewtoto, is the spiritual counterpart of the village chief; he knows every ceremony and appears in all major ones.

The masks participants wear are ceremonially fed and buried when their owner dies: its power returns to the Katsina. The right to wear them is hereditary within the clan.

### § 1.3. Hopi rituals and festivals

The Katsina calendar officially begins in January, when Chief Katsinas bless parts of the village and perform rituals to open the season for other Katsina performances. However, the Hopi also perform the Soyal ceremony during the Winter solstice, in which Katsinas help turn the sun back toward the summer path. Many rituals, like the Soyal, illustrate the dichotomy between winter and summer seasons. Others, such as the Powamu, facilitate agriculture and show the wet/dry dichotomy, often through Katsinas. These Katsinas frequently appear during the Plaza Dances in the spring, and their chief purpose is to bring rain. The Katsina season continues with popular Summer Dances and finally ends with the "Home Dance" or Niman.

Soyal is celebrated on all three mesas, with minor differences between them. Many Katsinas make their first appearance during this ceremony. On the Second and Third Mesas, there is an additional war ritual that occurs during Soyal where medicine is prepared for villagers to drink or smear on themselves for strength and

health. On First Mesa, this ritual occurs after Soyal; however, a War Chief appears on First Mesa but does not appear on the Second and Third Mesas.

This is remarkable because there are only a few indications of war-related rituals and of actual sacrifice in current Hopi traditions. However, Hopi mythology retains several instances of sacrifice and killing,<sup>xv</sup> and it must not be overlooked that the Yo-we Katsina was involved in killing Spaniards at Oraibi in the 1680 uprising against colonial rule, when the two strongest Hopi men, Haneeya and Chavayo, wore the masks of the Warrior Katsina and killed the missionaries with their flint knives.<sup>xvi</sup>

Importantly, there also is the yearly ritual of collecting young eagles from western hills, keeping them at home, and finally “smothering” them –without bloodshed -- to obtain their feathers for ritual use.<sup>xvii</sup> The eagles are buried in a special eagle grave yard. Otherwise there are no animal sacrifices.

In addition, there is a faint trace of human ordeal or sacrifice in the Sáqtiva (Ladder Dance), performed on the highest point of the Third Mesa, Pivánhonkyapi. Two freshly selected, cut and shaved poles that are connected by a cross bar face an identical set across a ravine, both with long ropes attached to them. Two men on each side, wearing eagle or hawk feathers in their hair,<sup>xviii</sup> climb the poles, swing forward, pass each other, and grab the cross bars on the opposite sides. Failure would result in a fall and certain death.<sup>xix</sup> They then fly over the ravine as the rope wound across the pole slowly unwinds.

The ritual has a remarkable parallel in the *voladores* ceremonies in Mexico among the Totonac, Otomí and Huasteca, where the flyers are dressed as hawks.<sup>xx</sup> As Waters has it: “Undoubtedly both Los Voladores and Sáqtiva point back to an ancient ceremony embodying all the elements of a rite of spring: the sacrifice of a living tree and the proffered sacrifice of a living man to help insure the continuity of life at the crucial season of spring planting.”<sup>xxi</sup> In the end, the question remains: when and how did the Hopi eliminate sacrifices that are connected with maize mythology among their southern neighbors, such as the Aztecs and Mayas?

The important Katsinas of Soyal include Ahöla, a chief Katsina on First and Second Mesa, and Ahöl Mana, a standard Kachin Mana who acts as his companion; Nuvak’china or Snow Katsina, a favorite impersonation during winter months who is thought of bringing cold and the winter moisture essential for crops; Qöqöqolom and their Kachin Manas; and Ahülani, who appears quietly with two maidens Kachin Mana (who carries yellow corn) and Sakwap Mana (who carries blue corn).

During Soyal, corn of all colors is brought into the Kivas and consecrated. On Third Mesa, the corn is returned to the Hopi women; on First Mesa, it is symbolically paraded by Ahülani and the two Corn Maidens before being returned. Prayer feathers are prepared for all purposes, including for relatives, family, friends, the increase of animals and crops, and so on. On Third Mesa, Mastop Katsinas appear and symbolically fertilize all females. A similar Katsina appears on Second Mesa during initiation years; no comparable Katsina is present on First Mesa. On the final day, on Third Mesa, Qöqöqolom and their Kachin Manas open the Kivas by marking hallways with cornmeal. On Second Mesa, Ahül and a single Mana perform this task. On First Mesa, Ahülani and the Corn Maidens do.

Powamu is also celebrated on all the mesas. Mainly facilitated by the chief Katsinas Ewtoto and Ahöli, it is very important for Hopi agriculture. A preliminary

prayer rite called Powalawu occurs eight days before the main Powamu ceremony. During the ritual, the chief plants 50 to 100 beans for these Katsinas. In the interval between Powalawu and Powamuya, informal Katsina dances and rehearsals are held to facilitate crop growth. Additionally, the shoots are watered periodically as a prayer that rain will nourish them in the upcoming season. These shoots are cut, bundled, and gifted to each household after eight days while Katsinas make marks on the ground with cornmeal and pray for rain. As mentioned earlier, during the bean dance, these Katsinas are also unmasked in front of the uninitiated children, showing them for the first time that they are humans, not deities. However, to the Hopi, the Katsinas are not simply impersonations. Rather, they represent simultaneously the divine and the profane. Moreover, it is believed that the Hopi actually become the Katsinas when they dance, making the Katsinas essential both for rain and for life in general.

There are many Katsinas that appear for the general purpose of bringing rain and facilitating crop growth. Some, such as Pautiwa (Sun God), Sai-astasana (Rain Priest), and Sio Salako are borrowed from the neighboring Zuni ethnicity. Others are known as Corn Dancers, one of the Rujan (Rasping) Katsinas, who are many in number. They dance to help corn grow and rasp at various parts of the ceremonies. Corn Dancers can appear at Plaza Dances, Mixed Dances, and Kiva Dances. The best known agriculture-related Katsinas include the Hemis Katsina, who brings entire corn plants from the first corn harvest to distribute to the audience, the Deer Katsina, who has power over the rain, and Angak'china, the Long-haired Katsina, who is danced in almost the same form across the Hopi villages.

Some ceremonies also generally bring rain. For example, an infrequent ceremony that brings the cloud supernaturals to the Mesas is known as the Salako ceremony. The Katsinas involved include Tukwinong, the Cumulous Cloud Katsina, who acts as a messenger to the rains, his sister Tukwinong Mana (Cumulous Cloud Girl), Salako Taka and Salako Mana, and Tangik'china, the Cloud Guard Katsina.

#### § 1.4 Connected myths

The Hopi ancestors emerged into the current, 4th world in the fashion of many Amerindian peoples, that is from below.<sup>xxii</sup> This is symbolized by the Kiva underground chambers, into which the clans retreat for all major rituals.

The emergence of the ancestors of the Hopis was followed by multiple migrations of their various clans into the four directions. They were accompanied by some Katsinas, sent by the creator-like deity Másaw to help them, e.g. to build the ancient magnificent “Red House” (Palátkwapi) settlement located somewhere in the mythological south. The Katsina, especially their ‘father’, Eototo, and Ahöli taught these early initiates in a four story religious building. Later, the city was attacked by the spider clan, and after some deliberations, all left the city. Further complicated wanderings followed until the Hopi settled in their current territory, around Oraibi, on their three *mesas*. Upon this, the Katsina went to the high San Francisco Mountains and became invisible. However, they can yearly be called back to the Hopi settlements and get impersonated by mask and costume wearing men.

The Hopis believe that when they emerged into the fourth world, they received maize from Másaw. They also affirm that their (non-Pueblo) neighbors chose the largest ears of corn; in contrast, the Hopis chose the shortest blue ear corn. Ever since, corn has



been very important in myth, ritual and society. One may even say that horticulture is *their way of life*.

## § 2. Newars

The Newars, the ‘original’<sup>xxiii</sup> inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley in the central Nepalese “hills”, speaking an isolated Tibeto-Burman language attested for about a thousand years, are by now a modern urban and rural agricultural society. They excel by their well-structured city and village layout, stressing a dichotomy between upper and lower, male and female sections, overlaid by a strict caste hierarchy that ‘descends’ from the royal and Brahmanic center down to the outcaste (*Pore*).<sup>xxiv</sup> Indeed they are, as Nepalese observers remark, a caste and ritual-ridden society, one that *lives* through their rituals. These govern everything from simple, daily household life to complex yearly festivals,<sup>xxv</sup> from birth to death.

### § 2.1 Horticulture

However, the very complex Newar culture, heavily influenced as it has been over the past two millennia or so by their southern neighbor, India, and its Buddhist and Hindu religions, even now reflects, in large measure, its horticultural origins and culture. One can still see farmers returning from their work in the fields, carrying a shoulder yoke, with implements on one side and a small child in a basket on the other. Their cities are just as agricultural as their villages.

As mentioned, even now the Newars do not use the plough, but a short-handled hoe.<sup>xxvi</sup> Actually, the Newars indeed do have *one* plough, although they use it only as a ritual object in the worship of the merchants’ deity Bhīmsen<sup>xxvii</sup> at Bhaktapur. They do not use it in agriculture, while other populations such as the Tibeto-Burman speaking Tamang who have settled, in more recent times, on the rims of the Kathmandu Valley do use the plough and draught animals. Instead, the Newars use a heavy hoe (*kodali*) with a short handle that is bent backwards toward the blade.

After the men have dug up the fields with this hoe, women plant rice seedlings in the freshly inundated fields. This takes place in the early monsoon season (mid-June). Rice is harvested in the autumn with the use of sickles.

The year is divided into two parts, the dry and the wet season, though they are not of equal length: the summer monsoon arrives in mid-June and continues into late September or early October. After that, the skies clear and remain dark blue until later in spring when the rising temperatures produces hazy skies, but hardly any rain.

There are a few days of rain around New Year, due to the lowering of the jet stream southward; they are welcomed by the farmers because, apart from summer rice, there also is a second crop, winter wheat. It gets harvested in late spring (April). In the dry and hot fallow season between April and June, vegetables are grown, and other weeds such as lower quality hemp (cannabis) spring up by themselves. The dichotomy between wet and dry seasons is marked in ritual just as with the Hopis.

The Kathmandu Valley thus has always enjoyed a good amount of agricultural surplus; in addition it lay at a crossroads of trade routes between India and Tibet, which furthered cultural exchange. Nevertheless, Newar society has been very conservative as far as its customs and rituals are concerned.

## § 2.2. Visiting deities

The two “halves” of the year are marked by the visits of two types of deities, the (male) Digu Dyo<sup>xxviii</sup> and the (female) Nava Durgā. The Digu Dyo are the spirits of clan ancestors of an extended family (*phukī*). They are represented by simple stones, some marked,<sup>xxix</sup> outside the traditional boundaries of the settlement,<sup>xxx</sup> and form a *pīṭha*, usually marked by a *torāṇa*. They are found in several directions outside the towns. The stone itself *is* the deity or the deity is *in* the stone.<sup>xxxi</sup> They are dangerous, and require the offering of meat<sup>xxxii</sup> and alcohol, however they protect the extended *phukī* groups within the towns, in analogy with Durgā *maṇḍala* deities (see below). Inside the towns they are represented too, in their Agā (Sanskrit *āgama*) house. The images of these lineage deities (Skt. *kula devatā*) are aniconic, a plate with a symbol. They are usually kept with the *phukī* leader. The Digu Dyo deity holds a lineage together; it has two large annual feasts.

They are brought to the Digu Dyo *pīṭha* outside the city, in the form of a carried image or symbol (*yantra*) during the Dewālī festival period beginning in late April, thus at the height of the dry season. They are worshipped by the various extended *phukīs* on an individual basis and time frame, and after their worship (with a *pūjā*) the *phukī* returns to town. This takes place during seven weeks beginning with waning moon of Caulagā and ends with the end of the dry season, prior to the day of Sithi Nakhā, the ‘official’ beginning of the rainy season. In this ritual it is important to unite the external aniconic and internal iconic *pīṭhas*. Both deities are same, though not always in popular understanding.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Importantly, these visits represent a movement of the lineage deities from their ‘tamed’, civilized version in their Agās inside the city to their ‘wild’ and dangerous forms in the countryside, the Digu Dyo *pīṭhas*.<sup>xxxiv</sup> We shall observe the opposite in the case of the Nine form of the Goddess (Nava-Durgā).

Digu Dyo:  
from inside → outside

Nava Durgā:  
outside → inside

In sum, this ancient Newar custom, barely overlaid by Hinduism in the use of *yantras*, represents generalized ancestor worship that is also found in somewhat similar forms with other, non-Hindu Tibeto-Burman societies, such as the Yi people of Yunnan.

A Hindu version of ancestor worship is that of the male ancestors carried out by Brahmins during the dark half of the moon in September (*Pitṛpakṣa*), preferably on the river at Gokaṇṇa,<sup>xxxv</sup> which is echoed, half a year later, in April, by another Śrāddha ritual for the female ancestors at Mātātīrtha, at the other end of the valley. The male/female dichotomy is marked, both in time and space, with a Brahmanical ritual.

Nava Durgā.

The nine dangerous forms of the Goddess (Devī or Durgā) have their ritual *pīṭhas* inside the city of Bhaktapur,<sup>xxxvi</sup> where they are represented by *yantras*, just like the ancestor deities. They, too, are the ‘domesticated’ forms of the dangerous deities that protect the town, with the most important one, the goddess Tripurasundarī, in its very center. These divine seats are echoed by *pīṭhas* outside the ancient walls of the town, where they reside for part of the year.

The nine Devīs appear, along with the male god Bhairava (a form of Śiva), at Mohanī, in early October,<sup>xxxvii</sup> when the rice harvest has been brought in. During period beginning now fall all major festivals. The Nava Durgās come uninvited and dance on Sundays or Thursdays, unannounced. They start their 21 area dances (*pyākhā*) in the east, in a part of Bhaktapur’s old town, then in the South, another old part of town, and finally in the west, the “new” town.

The Nine Durgā are invited by a family or an extended family (*phukī*) of the area; a pig is given to them and killed by Bhairava (in quite gruesome fashion).<sup>xxxviii</sup> The deities drink its blood from the open chest and their trembling begins, reminiscent of shamanic behavior,<sup>xxxix</sup> but here clearly due to possession by the goddess. Their dancing follows a geometric pattern (that of their *yantra*); afterwards they return to their temple in town, the Nava Durga *Dyachē*.

One important feature of these dances is that by Bhairava, the “going fishing dance” (*nā lākhegu pyākhā*). Accompanied by a lot of mocking, the Bhairava dancer, in heavy mask and costume, pursues boys and young teenagers through town, for hours on end, the aim obviously being their sacrifice (see below). Indeed, in the afternoon, other deities such as Mahākālī, the White Bhairava, etc. drink blood from a living cock (biting off his head).

The Nine Durgās also perform their dances in the 19 villages surrounding Bhaktapur, and thus reinforce their protection, but at the same time also reaffirm the area of dominance of the (former) Bhaktapur kings. However, at the village of Harisiddhi, belonging to the former kingdom of Patan, the Nine Durgās remain in their incarnations, as living deities, in their nine priests, who retain their ceremonial dress throughout the year. In their case, too, there are rumors of human sacrifice (see below).

The Nine Durgās remain present in town during following nine months, until the Bisket Jātrā, the solar New Year marked by the raising of the Indra pole, and until they finally disappear with Bhagasti, in June, just before Sithi Nakhā, when the cremation of the Durgā masks takes place. After this the 9 Durgās “sleep” for a quarter of the year.

Unlike the lineage deities, the Nine Durgās thus move from the dangerous outside into the city while the Digu Dyo do exactly the opposite: they are brought from their ‘domesticated’ seats (*pīṭha*) inside town to their wild and dangerous forms outside the city boundaries.

### § 2.3. Other rituals and festivals

Parallel to the complementary visits of the ancestor deities and the Nine Durgas, there are a few other festivals that involve *marebito* deities, and typically these are connected to the dry/rainy seasons.

First of all there is the age-old raising of the Indra pole at the solar New Year in Bhaktapur and Kathmandu in March/April, that to this very day echoes by the ancient Vedic *Indradhvaja* festival and the Germanic May pole. The visit by the (originally great) god Indra occurs at New Year, just as it had done in the Vedic past and as it still does with the Kalasha. His festivals are marked throughout the Indo-Aryan area by their *marebito* character, such as with Indr-Balumain visiting the Kalasha around winter solstice.

In the Kathmandu Valley there actually are two Indra festivals, that of raising the Indra pole at Kathmandu in April, the so-called “Small Indrajātrā”<sup>xli</sup> and that of the major Indrajātrā, 6 months later at Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, in September,<sup>xlii</sup> the so-called Bisket (*biskāh*) Jātrā. The latter Indrajātrā differs in Bhaktapur from the one at Kathmandu in some details and in importance. It is connected with dragging the chariots of Devī and Bhairava in Bhaktapur, and with fights between the two moieties of town, whose young men want to drag the Devī’s chariot into their part of the city. At Kathmandu it has been integrated into a major series of activities, involving an alcohol (*chang*) spouting Bhairava (Śiva), Lakhe (*rakṣasa* demon) dances, and since the 17th century also the chariot procession of the “Living Goddess” (Kumārī)<sup>xliii</sup> as well as royal participation: the king receives a *tilaka* (*tīkā*) mark of the goddess on his forehead. At Kathmandu the visit by Indra is also meant to stop excessive rain late in the monsoon: he is imprisoned in a small cage at the Indradhvaja pillar.<sup>xliiii</sup>

Just as there are two Indrajātrās there is a “Small Dasain” in spring (*Cait Dasain*)<sup>xliv</sup> in April, and again six months later the “real Dasain” in October.<sup>xlv</sup> The latter is a visit of the violent forms of the Goddess (Devī) who appears as her nine *Durgās*, who perform dances in all parts of the town of Bhaktapur and surrounding villages. In contrast, the *Cait Dasain* is a minor Rāma festival at Bhaktapur, where the worship of the Goddess prevails.<sup>xlvi</sup> As in other parts of the Valley and in Northern India, this is an important nine day period while at Bhaktapur the god Rāma merely worships the Devī asking her to help in his fight with the demon Rāvaṇa;<sup>xlvii</sup> this fight is of major importance elsewhere.

Then, there are two appearance of the deity Macchendranath, in April before the start of the rainy season and one in June and following weeks, at the height of the monsoon.<sup>xlviii</sup> In April the tall, lumbering chariot of the White (*seto*) Macchendranath is fashioned at Kathmandu and dragged through town; in June the Red (*rato*) Macchendranath is built and dragged through Patan for weeks on end. If it breaks down completely, it even has to be dragged to Bhaktapur.

The chariot of the White Macchendranath is built at the edge of northern Kathmandu on the road leading to the new palace (Durbar Marg), from where it is drawn through the old town up to the square in front of the old palace (Hanuman Dhoka, Durbar Square); it then returns to its temple in Macchendra Bahal (monastery).

The festival of the Red Macchendranath begins on the full moon day of the month of Baisakh (Buddha’s birthday), and it ends at the outskirts of old Patan at Jawlakhel in June. The figure of Macchendranath is then taken back to its temple in a small village south of Patan, Bunga. Hence its name Bunga Dyo “the Bunga god”. This actually is the deity’s old name, indicating a local god of rain. In the High Middle ages this has been overlaid by a Buddhist identity, as Lokeśvara (Avalokiteśvara) and only in the 17th century by a Hindu one (Matsyendranātha)<sup>xlix</sup>.

Both festivals thus are visits by the local Newar rain god, Bunga Dyo, before and during the monsoon season, similar to the visit by Indra in the September Indrajātrā meant to stop the rains.

### Sacrifice

Animal sacrifice is heavily involved with all major Newar rituals and festivals. They usually are those of a goat, or for poorer people that of a chicken or just an egg. However,

at major festivals, buffaloes (and sometimes pigs) are offered, They are killed in a gruesome fashion, suffering for nearly an hour with their throats cut, spouting blood that the Nava Durgā drink (and eat of their meat while still alive).

There are a number of hints that this included human sacrifice as well.<sup>1</sup> People generally believe it was done in the past. I myself heard this in the mid-Seventies about the village of Harisiddhi, where a human sacrifice was said to be performed, every 12 years, by the specially consecrated priests of this small town who walk around in their ceremonial dress throughout the year, and who cannot leave the Valley any more.<sup>li</sup> There also is the detailed report by Hamilton from the early 19th century,<sup>lii</sup> which he received from a local (Gāthā) informant:

“Got [*Gāthā*] dance, ... drink...blood... Once in every 12 years the Raja offers a solemn sacrifice [at the Taleju temple]. It consists of two men, of such a rank, that they wear a thread, of two buffaloes, ... and two fishes. The human victims are intoxicated, ... Bhairavi cuts their throats, and sprinkles the blood on the idols...”

All of which would fit the Harisiddhi rumors, though these were denied by an American *Pyakā* specialist. However, this denial seems to be same reaction as in New Guinea (see below, M. Mead): the contact with modernity produces reports, then absolute denial, and finally, a reshaped sanitized re-enactment. Such a case is seen with the human sacrifice at Kāmākhyā in Assam (attested also in texts: Kālikā Purāṇa) that was forbidden by the British in the early 19th century, is usually denied in India, and was then finally reenacted in 2002<sup>liii</sup>-- however by using a 6 feet replica of a man made of rice flour (*piṣṭapaśu*).

Animal sacrifice generally is a surrogate for human sacrifice, which is something that is experienced and finally accepted while growing up: see for example the horror of a small Bhaktapur child;<sup>liv</sup> I too witnessed this in a small child at a buffalo sacrifice that I accidentally came across on the road from Kathmandu Durbar square down to the Visnumati river, c. 1975.

#### § 2.4 Connected myths

Just like the rather invented myth about Indra picking flowers in a garden (Indrajātrā at Kathmandu), the Bhaktapur myth about the origin of the Nava Durgā seems rather contrived: They once lived in the forests near the city of Bhaktapur. Once a priest came upon their secret dancing. He conjured the goddesses and locked them in a secret room in his house. The priest's curious wife opened the door, the angry goddesses rushed out, and threatened to leave Bhaktapur forever. The priest implored them to stay as to avert disaster from the city. They agreed but put the condition that the people of Bhaktapur would perform the Nava Durgā dance every year. A temple was built for them and their masks are kept there. The underlying traditional medieval myth, however, is that of the Devī killing the demon Mahiṣāsura in a cosmic battle. It is related (in Sanskrit) in the *Devīmāhātmya*, the oldest copy of which happens to be preserved in Nepal. On another level, the goddess Earth is the wife of the Hindu kings.

In fact, some of these festivals have been so heavily layered over time that older myths have been overshadowed by later versions. A typical example is the development of “Macchendranāth” from a local rain god, who has the uncharacteristic name Bunga Dyo “god [of the village] of Bunga”. Later, he was turned into the Buddhist Lokeśvara,

who also goes by the typical name Karuṇamaya “full of compassion.” Only in the 17th century was he usurped by a medieval Hindu ‘saint’, a Tantric adept, Matsyendranāth.

The Indraajātrā of Kathmandu is even more involved.<sup>lv</sup> Like many deities, a ritual nucleus has attracted many other (mostly unconnected) functions and festivals as to result in a spectacular festival (quite differently performed at Bhaktapur). The former include:

- The Vedic Indradhvaja pole raising, connected with ‘creation’ and the stemming apart of heaven and earth as an act of Indra (attested in myth and in royal ritual),
- performances by Lakhe (Rakṣasa, demon) dancers in mask and costume,
- open door theater performances, critical of the regime; the same is done in magazines: in general, a carnival atmosphere prevails,<sup>lvi</sup>
- the large image of Ākāśa Bhairava at the Hanuman Dhoka palace spouts *chang*; there is competition by many teenage men to drink alcohol from this spout,
- Kumārī, the living goddess is the latest accretion that took place only in mid-18th century, due to a Malla king’s misdeeds towards the goddess; now she is the major participant of the chariot procession through town, involving also her “brother”,<sup>lvii</sup> most importantly, she gives the yearly divine mark of approval, the red *ṭikā* mark, to the king.

### § 3 Marind-anim

The Marind-anim are horticulturalists in coastal and inland southwestern New Guinea (Irian). In their fields, cut out of the jungle, they plant coco trees, banana, yams, taro and harvest sago; they also have domesticated pigs.<sup>lviii</sup>

The climate is dominated by a wet and a dry season: the Northwest monsoon brings the rains (April – September), and the period of the Southeast monsoon is that of the dry season (October-March). Due to the regular appearance of the monsoon, rituals directed to the appearance of rain are not prominent, compared to the other two societies discussed here.

The pleasant dry season, when there is a constant southeastern wind, brings relatively cool weather. The swamps dry up, and as the savannah can be set on fire, big hunting parties are possible. Food is plentiful (including fish in the receding creeks and ponds), and many festivals are held, on average, two dances per week in various villages. It also is the season of headhunting in neighboring territories. The wet season is preceded by a long period of hot and oppressive weather; it is one of misery, with various diseases and hunger. There is strong wind and constant rain, mosquitoes multiply, the increasing size of the swamps hardly allow for travel and people stay in their villages. Neither hunting nor feasting occurs, nor the use of the drum.

The two seasons are strongly reflected by a dichotomy found in society, myth and ritual: “east monsoon and west monsoon; day and night, *mayo* and *imo* [rituals], dry season and rainy season; sunset and sunrise; heaven and earth; coast and interior; coconut and sago; open plain and bush; upper world and underworld; sandy beach and loamy beach; dry land and swampy land; ... Sun and Moon; Uaba (fire, sun and east monsoon), and Yorma (sea waves and west monsoon); stork and eagle; white stork and black stork; coconut and betel in conjunction with crocodile and turtle...”<sup>lix</sup> Lévi-Strauss would have loved this system...

The –strongly marked-- male and female sections of society are both divided into nine age groups, with marked privileges as one advances in age.<sup>lx</sup> Prominent, too, are the exogamous, patri-descent *boans*, with the four phratries that Marind are divided in. This complex social system, too, is played out in myth and ritual.

The Marind have been studied extensively by Wirz in the 1910s,<sup>lxi</sup> who did his research in the first stage of colonial rule when much of the original culture was still in place, by the missionary Verschuren<sup>lxii</sup> and by van Baal in his thousand page *summing up* (1965).<sup>lxiii</sup> It is important to note that van Baal stayed in Marind land only in the Thirties and Fifties, when much of Marind culture had already been destroyed by imported sexual disease, colonial administrators (such as van Baal himself) and by the missionaries,<sup>lxiv</sup> so much so that J.F. Weiner<sup>lxv</sup> complains that a “most flamboyant, aggressive, ritually extravagant, and sexually energetic people saw the collapse of their world”. However, they survive as a community of several thousand Marind speakers.<sup>lxvi</sup>

### § 3.2. Visiting deities

The religion of the Marind is characterized by the prominence of the Dema, the mythological totem-like ancestors, of various forms. They are the originators of humans, animals, plants and objects found in nature. They created life as we know it, but they also are still present in this world, and can be evoked: “Everything is Dema.”<sup>lxvii</sup>

As such, they are the ancestors of Marind, and are connected with their totems, which they may have created themselves. Thus, they are called grandfather, brother or ‘belonging to...’<sup>lxviii</sup> and as such they connect clan and Dema. The clan ancestor typically made or changed objects into the clan’s totems. Differently from the strict dichotomy seen all over Marind life and religion, the amorphous group of the Demas are *not* used as a means of classification; there are no prohibitions to kill and eat totem animals.

Though the Demas were active in the mythical age, this is still very close to the present; the Demas remain accessible and themselves actively interact with the humans.<sup>lxix</sup> There is a Dema cult, but they are not worshipped as deities. Their places of habitation are known and respected. As many Dema have changed into stones, the ‘medicine men’ (*Messaw*) look for such stones (that are rare in the alluvial flatlands of Southern Guinea). Thus, Dema are frequently located where such stones are found, sometimes underground where the Dema live, and in areas where a particular totem species is frequent. Such stones are present in all huts devoted to Demas (Wirz’s *Geisterhäuser*).

The Demas can change shape at will; however, they are represented in ritual in human form: by a head, eyes, the heart or entrails (where the soul resides). The human head is prominent in the symbolism of the coconut with its three openings: as eyes and mouth, an almost archetypal image (see below, on Mayo ritual). The Dema may have female companions, the beautiful *Dema-nakari*, who appear in human shape, like fairies with a light complexion.<sup>lxx</sup> A typical Dema is Mahu, the dog Dema (*dema-ngat*) who changed into a dog, and then procreated other dogs, the Dema-dogs that still could speak and reason; its only from them that our dogs descended.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The Dema are freely are invoked in ritual, visit the Marind villages and interact with the population. At a certain time each year, the Dema manifesting both human and natural life visit a particular village. They are impersonated by men, who are dressed in elaborate costumes, wearing great totemic masks of enormous size and sophistication that indicate the nature of the visitor.

For example, the coconut Dema has a doll with a human face incorporated in the center of the mask, the *Ndik* bird has a long yellow beak. He usually is the first to arrive after his heralds have announced him. His two long 'trains' are carried by the *nakari* maidens. Other Demas clearly indicate bamboo or even a cloud at sunset.<sup>lxxii</sup> They appear individually or in a group and mediate between the totems ("grand-father," etc.) and the humans. The masks they wear *are* the Dema; they have power and are destroyed at the end of the Mayo rituals, when the Mayo house is plundered, destroyed and finally burned.

Like the Hopi, the Marind who act as Dema impersonate them and reenact their primordial actions; in fact, they are changed into the particular Dema they represent, that is as long as the ritual lasts. This may have severe consequences, for example "when an actor was being strangled by his costume, a ritual to facilitate departure of Dema was performed before actor was helped out of the costume." Similarly, "children born to women as a result of intercourse with dema [i.e. Marind men acting as Dema] were killed because they were not human, they were dema-children."<sup>lxxiii</sup>

At the end of the ritual, the Dema return to their place and their masks are burnt (see below, for the Mayo rites). The totem relations of the actors determine their role in ritual. In *Dema-vir*, the enactment of Dema and myth, they cannot impersonate a Dema who does not belong to their totem.

### § 3.3 Rituals and festivals

The Demas, thus, periodically visit the Marind villages when they and their actions in the mythical past are reenacted in ritual. They come from underground and other localities at the margin of the Marind territory, where they return to at the end of the ritual. They do so mainly in two major rituals, the Mayo and Imo, which are celebrated, respectively, in the dry and in the wet seasons of the year.

The first, the Mayo, is connected, along the lines described earlier, with the pleasant dry season and all that it evokes, in physical and mythological correlations: the sun and the upper world; the regeneration of coconuts and bananas, and sugar cane; the mythical figure Uaba (fire, sun and east monsoon) and the stork. Clearly, correlations are established with planting and with the Dema connected with plants. It is celebrated each year involving about a quarter of the Marind villages in a cycle lasting four years; it starts in the west and passes eastward in the following three years, just as the sun and the first humans did -- underground. The Mayo cult thus sustains, with the help of the Dema, life on earth for all participants.

On the contrary, the Imo ritual is connected with the wet season, the northwest monsoon, with the night and hunger; with headhunting, sorcery, and warfare. The Imo rituals depend on the Mayo and follow it.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Boys, girls, men and women get initiated into the cult between the ages of 10-25. The rituals teach them (mainly boys, but also girls) about the Dema nature of Marind life; they are socialized through these rituals. In fact, they are taught even simple actions of daily life as if they did not know them at all: how to drink water, eat food, apply oil and paint and with which colors, how to dress, how to bathe in the sea, how to use a canoe, how to obtain coconuts and enemy



heads.<sup>lxxv</sup> Further, the initiates learn the Dema stories, their ritual reenactments and their personifications.

The basic requirement for future participation in the Mayo is the knowledge of mythology and ritual; however, the women know little or nothing of it, and the ritual is 'overtly designed to keep ritual details secret, which actually forms a communication to the women of what is happening'<sup>lxxvi</sup> in the Mayo ritual: The Dema personified are brought into village; with the Ezam/Uzum ('husband/wife') in a special compound outside village.

The ritual ensuing then is too complex to be described in any detail; one may compare Wirz' and van Baal's detailed accounts. They introduce step by step the items that the initiates are to 'relearn'. Before they have been taught this, they may not use them at all; instead, as in all initiation rites, their behavior, food, sleep etc. are very much restricted.

The initiation is closely connected with the myth of the origin of humans from the west, from where they traveled underground eastward to emerge as humans. On the 1st day of the Mayo, a Dema performer imitates the *Mayo-mes-iwag*, an old woman. He places his foot on the candidates; they drop 'dead' and sleep; then all ornaments are taken off, loam is put into their mouth; they are awakened and fed food mixed with sperm, in increasingly larger quantities; they bath in a pool and are painted white (like demons) while the women initiates wear a plain apron; then the initiates listen to instructions, are fed unripe bananas (which is again connected to a myth, that of Geb and the origin of bananas); at night they return to the village. And so it continues, each day with more details on the facts of daily life and connected myths. For example, in the *Mes bik* ceremony (carrying ripe coco), the *Mayo-Mes-iwag* pushes coconuts towards seated initiate upon which they are allowed, for the first time, to eat them.

The final day is the most enigmatic but it has hardly been observed when it still was fully celebrated during the 1910s. Wirz spent one day and one night in the Mayo ritual hut, but unfortunately had to leave for the coast before the final ceremony. He describes the atmosphere as mostly solemn: without noise, talking in whispers. Wirz could not touch the drums or bullroarers. However, on and off some old men sang; then one swings a bullroarer and the singing began again. At night, the men had sexual intercourse in the bush, and indicated that by placing a twig on the two large tree trunks attached to the hut. Obscene talk was rampant. He was told that a beautifully adorned young *iwag* woman was brought in, told to lie down under the two trunks and have sex with a new initiate. Then a few men threw down some coconuts from nearby trees, as a signal for the beating of drums; at the same time two men pushed away the supports of the two big trunks and these crushed the copulating young initiated couple, who were immediately roasted and eaten. Wirz says: "so the old people told me".<sup>lxxvii</sup> This account is disputed at length by van Baal who did not believe in human sacrifice and cannibalism.

According to his and others' observation, in the 1930s and later this part of the ritual was merely a symbolic sacrifice of two coconuts that were made to look like human heads, representing the *Babé* (*Ezam*, husband) and his wife (*Uzum*). However, one does not need to criticize Wirz' account as severely as van Baal<sup>lxxviii</sup> has done; he and his colleagues arrived about 20 years too late, when the colonial administration and the missionaries had suppressed these rituals for some time<sup>lxxix</sup> and when the Marind, who continued some of their rituals even into the 1950s, seems to have substituted two coconuts instead. Such substitution is common in many cultures (for example in India). Note also that the Marind had no compunction in killing their neighbors to obtain heads

for their rituals: a new born was in need of a cut off head and the father also planted a new coconut palm tree: the coconut is the symbol of the human head. Also, there was the sacrifice of a young wallaby that was connected with the wallaby Dema, and the magicians (*messaw*) were believed to habitually kill people through their rituals.

However, van Baal describes the ritual as follows: “Two ripe coconuts are partially stripped of their husks, so that about one third is left. This remaining third is provided with a human hairdo. ... [They] represent a human head, the germ holes functioning as the eyes and the mouth... The Uzum is the first to be killed. This will be done in the early morning and during the preceding night the man who is to perform the act lends his wife. She has intercourse with an extraordinarily large number of men... Toward daybreak a deafening noise is made in the men's part of the house. It is then that the man crushes the coconut representing the Uzum, using the disk headed club. One or two nights afterwards the same thing happens to the other coconut, Ezam. The coconut meat is eaten by the assembled men, without any addition of sperma.” If the destruction of the coconut was not exact, death of the ‘executioner’ automatically followed, by itself.

As for the discrepancy between Wirz’ and van Baal’s accounts, van Baal’s own words must be noted.<sup>lxxx</sup> “At the time I came to the area [in the 1930s], the Marind had deliberately stopped disclosing their inner life to strangers.” The discrepancy can best be described in the words of Margaret Mead.<sup>lxxxi</sup> “many problems of hearsay and accentuation of violence, in reality and in imagination, just at the moment of cultural contact ... where items of the religious cults were abandoned, ‘finally’ completely denied, and then later reinstated.”

The final acts of the Mayo rituals include the digging up of a buried sugar cane “snake”; it is distributed to the initiates and devoured: it is a symbol of the killed young woman, the *Mayo Iwag*. Then the *Mayo-Takav* (“Mayo fire”) fire is brought, youngsters tear down the ritual hut, take away all its food and burn it down by the Mayo fire.

In general terms, the Papua idea must be underlined of the origin of food plants from a Hainuwele type female or a snake, who produced them from her own body, whereupon she is sacrificed. On the other hand, the origin of the coco palm is from a man’s head. In both cases there is a strong involvement of sexual acts. In fact, it has also been reported that “when the coconut sprouted, they were dug up and eaten. This act marked as the first beginning; we presume that it preceded the initiation of the young men into the use of the bullroarer. The final rights could only take place when, some nine months later, the bananas bore fruit.”<sup>lxxxii</sup>

### § 3.4. Connected myths

In the Dema myths, the stories of their travels and adventures are told that involve all four Marind phratries, and they are celebrated in ritual all over Marin Land. Their names and some myths are secret; however, there also are common names of the Dema.

It is typical for Marind myths that the Dema are killed, cut up and buried by humans; food plants grow from their dead bodies, especially palm trees and tubers, as was seen earlier in the Mayo ritual. This ritual is so fundamental that no origin is told; it centers on a man locked in permanent copulation, in the myth of Uaba and Ualiwamb. Imagery in the ritual refers to it (see below).<sup>lxxxiii</sup> This conforms to Jensen’s well-known

Hainuwele myth (from Ceram in E. Indonesia). It is a typical planter's myth, without actual culture heroes and it is constantly repeated in ritual. Marind myth making starts from outward similarities, for example the similarity of coconut and human head; van Baal<sup>lxxxiv</sup> calls it not only matter of tradition but also of playful speculation.

One of the major myths is that of origins:<sup>lxxxv</sup> In the beginning there were two Dema, Nubog, the female earth, and Dinadin, the male sky.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Their descendants are Geb and Sami. The black Geb originated from a stone<sup>lxxxvii</sup> when a stork cut a human face into the stone.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> The red Sami is said to have come from the interior. They are the ancestors of the Marind.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Another myth is more specific about the origin of humankind. The Dema had a great feast in their underground dwellings in the far west, from where they burrowed and traveled underground to the east. However, above them, on the earth, there was Dema-dog who heard then burrowing and followed the sounds to a place in the East, Kondo, where he dug at the bank of a creek: fish-like beings surfaced, the *anda*-fishes, a major totem. They actually were human beings without mouths and ears; their arms, legs, fingers and toes had not yet separated from their bodies. A stork Dema pecked at them. The local fire Dema ordered the stork to put the proto-humans on dry land. He made a big fire to warm them and threw bamboo stems on it. When they cracked, ears, then eyes, nose, and mouth split open. Then the Dema carved out arms, fingers, legs and toes. The clippings became leeches. The new humans went westward until they reached the present Marind land.<sup>xc</sup> However, the five earthquake Dema stayed below.<sup>xcii</sup> They churn up the soil for planting.

This myth reflects the standard world view of the Marind: the origin of the male sun, the male moon, and of humans in the west, their underground travel to the east, where both emerge and travel westward to rest or finally die, and then go underground again eastward. This standard East-West opposition is used by the Marind for many classifications:<sup>xciii</sup> the course of the sun is a symbol of the human life cycle, which is also symbolized in the Mayo ritual. Again, sexual imagination is pervasive: the sun copulates with the sea during the rainy season, but it is not clear what happens with the land during the dry season.

Another underlying classification is the opposition of this world and the netherworld, which lies just below the surface and where *all is turned upside down* and where ones uses the *reverse* language of the dead and the Dema. Remarkably, the spirits of the dead return to this world as shooting stars, just as the human ancestor Sobra originally fell down from heaven.

With respect to the Mayo and other rituals, the following myths are of great importance. The *Dema* Geb acts in a fashion similar to Sobra in capturing and killing boys, but he is caught by women, rubbed with semen and the first banana emerges from his neck. When he is killed his head becomes both the sun and the moon; otherwise, his head is planted and turns into the first coconut tree. His snake-form son Uaba and the latter's wife Ualiwamb escape from obligatory promiscuous ritual to the west and are found there in perpetual sexual intercourse. When they are brought back and then separated in the east, fire (and the stork) emerge from Ualiwamb's vulva, and the fire creates Marind Land. These and similar myths are constantly referred to in the ritual.<sup>xciii</sup>

#### § 4. Conclusion

The visiting deities of the Neolithic populations and their rituals discussed at length in the preceding sections naturally involve the transformation of an older belief system, that of Paleolithic religion and rituals. It involves a transformation from shamanic hunting rituals and the (reluctant) killing of prey to the invocation of plant deities (Katsina, Devī as Earth, Dema), along with the sacrifice of the plant deities and the regrowth of plants from their bodies.

This closely echoes the famous Hainuwele myth first analyzed by A. E. Jensen.<sup>xciv</sup> The question then arises how similar planter's myths could simultaneously develop in the old world and the Americas. A case in point has been the myth of the 'corn mother' that is found in both areas.<sup>xcv</sup> One has too easily assumed transfer across the Pacific to the original area in Meso-America of maize cultivation. However, the independent origin of food production in the Americas is now well established and trans-Pacific transfer, except for a few well attested cases from and to Polynesia (sweet potato, chicken),<sup>xcvi</sup> is not likely. If plants or small animals were indeed (accidentally) transported by natural or human activity, complete myths or systems of myth did not travel with them. The only secure transfer has been via Bering Land during the Ice Age and by Siberian peoples traveling by boat along the west coast of the Americas, but these people were hunter-gatherers, not agriculturalists.<sup>xcvii</sup>

Rather, in societies that have old collections of myths such as in India or Japan, the introduction of food production<sup>xcviii</sup> is clearly seen as an afterthought. The extant Vedic myths (c. 1500-500) do not speak of agriculture though the texts mention barley, and later rice. It is only in a late Vedic text (Vādhūla Sūtra)<sup>xcix</sup> that the origin of rice and barley are mythologized, but even there the list starts with the canonical one of the "five domestic animals": man(!), horse, cow, sheep and goat, to which a strange tale is attached: the origin of barley and rice from a bowl attached to the head of a fish... This opens up, even in the by and large pastoral Vedic texts, the idea that plants can be killed: there is the myth of god Soma's bloody head when the soma plant is pounded to produce the sacred drink, and there is the fear of cutting trees that is circumvented by putting a dry blade of grass on it before cutting it down.<sup>c</sup>

Similarly, the oldest (imperial) mythology of Japan, collected in the Kojiki (712 CE), talks about rice just in the margin<sup>ci</sup> but suddenly introduces a food deity, Oogetsu, who produces 'delicious things' from her body's orifices;<sup>cii</sup> then, after she had been killed by another deity, from her body arise: the silk worm, rice seeds, millet, small beans, grains, large beans, that then were all used by the gods for food production. This clearly is an afterthought in this originally continental, pastoral mythology.

The destruction and sacrifice of plants, animals and humans is therefore introduced along the lines of the Hainuwele myth, as a substitute for the Stone Age killing of animals (in hunting), and their subsequent rebirth from their bones, a belief that has been retained well into our times. There is the myth of Thor's ram that was reconstituted from his bones, one of which was cracked during the meal and thus the reborn ram limped. Or, there is the tale of the rebirth of humans from their bones in the Torah (Daniel) that ultimately is derived from the Zoroastrian belief of "life having bones" (*astuuaīti gaēdā*). The occurrence in the Bible has led, until very recently, to the prohibition by the Catholic

church of cremation. The Zoroastrians, too, preserve their bones in the Towers of Silence after the bodies have been devoured by vultures.<sup>ciii</sup>

Thus, when Neolithic food production developed, after c. 10,000 BCE, a new ideology was ‘planted’ on the older Hunters’ mythology and ritual: the Hainuwele type myth of the origin of food plants from a (sacrificed) human body of a food Goddess, from whose body parts food plants developed. The “killing” of food plants or its deity resulted in the subsequent rebirth of plants, something that is ultimately based on close observation of nature (regrowth from seeds or parts of a tuber), and thus by actively planting them.

The ‘primordial’ mythical human sacrifice of a Hainuwele type person could be substituted by the (quite gruesome) sacrifice of local ‘traditional’ animals (buffalo, pig, goat, chicken, etc.) that were dedicated to the God(desses); one also retained actual human sacrifice, parallel to that of Hainuwele, and even of the symbolical sacrifice of the female deity, Earth herself.

In sum, the three societies discussed here follow the trajectory of constant myth development according to commonly found *pathway dependencies*. Their myths and rituals ultimately go back to early Stone Age precedents.<sup>civ</sup> Consequently, their similarities and identities in myth and ritual do not constitute a case based on archetypes, common universals of the human mind, or of diffusion. Instead, these local developments followed the well-established, c. 130,000 year old *pathway dependencies* of thought that originated with Palaeolithic Homo Sapiens sapiens.

That they have been retained until today is not normally recognized by current humans.<sup>cv</sup>

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\* Suma Anand was a summer intern in 2012; apart from working on recordings of Veda recitations, she has contributed in the collection of materials for this paper, their evaluation, and in writing.

<sup>i</sup> Strictly speaking, the Newars are no longer Neolithic, as they have been exposed to Bronze Age and Iron Age populations living to their south, in northern India. However, even though they now live in tightly packed, medieval cities and small towns, their agriculture remains basically Neolithic, including the use of a hoe instead of the plough (see below).

<sup>ii</sup> See Witzel 2012: 571, 225.

<sup>iii</sup> Kuiper 1983.

<sup>iv</sup> Witzel 2004: 581-636; Cacopardo 2010: "Pure" upland meadows with Yach fairies/prepuberty boy goat herders :: "polluted" low land fields, with women (and men); Muslims are excluded anyhow. No priests are left today.

<sup>v</sup> Lyle 1990.

<sup>vi</sup> Thieme 1984-1995; cf. Witzel 1998: 512 sq.

<sup>vii</sup> The *pūjā* type rituals are found in many societies as the most simple, 3 part rituals that can be expanded enormously such as seen in the one year Rājasūya or Aśvamedha.

<sup>viii</sup> Witzel 2012: 399.

<sup>ix</sup> Thompson 1932-36: E155.2. *Annual resuscitation of a god*. (see below).

<sup>x</sup> The oldest, Walpi, is dated to c. 1200 CE, and thus is the oldest settlement in the US. The Hopi have extensive legends about their prior wanderings (see below).

<sup>xi</sup> See treatment by Locke 1980.

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Hatt 1951.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Bierhorst 1986: 83.

<sup>xiv</sup> Some 200 Katsinas are now in the Tucson museum; see Secakuku 1995.

<sup>xv</sup> See Waters 1977: 73 on the journey of the twins involving killing, further on the Coyote/Swallow race, p. 99, and cf. p.75 on the killing of the deer. However, there is no killing of the corn deity, the corn mother, p. 134.

- <sup>xvi</sup> See Waters 1977: 254.
- <sup>xvii</sup> See Waters 1977 : 199, 207 sqq. ; about the mythological origin of feathers, p. 38.
- <sup>xviii</sup> The young initiates into the Hopi societies are still called *kékelt* "young eagles", see Waters 1977: 195. For eaglemyths see Waters 1977: 56 sqq.
- <sup>xix</sup> For a description see Waters 1977: 194.
- <sup>xx</sup> See Waters 1977: 195 sqq. Remarkably, the neighboring Pueblo people of Taos have a yearly pole climbing ceremony, however, on St. Geronimo day (Sept. 29-30), which is reminiscent of climbing the May Pole in northwestern Europe, and that of the Vājapeya pole in Vedic ritual.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Waters 1977: 197.
- <sup>xxii</sup> See Bierhorst 1986:77 sqq.; cf. Witzel 2012: § 3.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> For their prehistory see Witzel 1980: 311-337, and 1993: 217-266; for recent DNA evidence, see Su *et al.* 2000: 582-590; Gayden 2007: 884-894.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> See Kölver and Gutschow 1975.
- <sup>xxv</sup> See the detailed description and analysis by Levy 1990.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Recently small Japanese tractors have been introduced, along with attached ploughs that fit the narrow terraced fields well, just as they do in Japan.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Derived from the Mahabhārata hero Bhīmasena, one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, later aligned with the third class, the Vaiśya, to which the merchants traditionally belong; see Levy 1990: 252-54.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Written *digu dyaḥ* in modern Newari; for details see Levy 1990: 310 sq; cf. p. 432. Discussion of these deities in Witzel 1998: 507 sq.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Can also be a *yantra* (like Taleju's) or (elaborate) human figures.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Marked by *pradakṣiṇāpatha* for circumambulation, see Kölver and Gutschow 1975; Gutschow 1982; Michaels 1994.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Seat of a god, in upper class families the seat of a form of the Devī, their lineage deity. (The Taleju form of the Devī was the lineage goddess of the medieval Malla Kings).
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Hence the popular etymology: *digu* > *dugu* 'goat'.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Levy 1990: 310.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> For a map of the Digu Dyo locations, see Levy 1990: 160.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> See for example: <http://www.ekantipur.com/photo-gallery/2012-08-17/1235/14875>.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Eight are well inside the town and eight at the rims of the town, outside the ancient city walls, with the most important one, Tripurasundarī, in the very center of town; see map in Levy 1990: 153.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Levy 1990: 584; they appear in town as an invasion (map p. 233).
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Levy 1990: 564.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> See Witzel 2011: 39-61.
- <sup>xl</sup> At solar New Year, see Levy 1990, festival no. [14-15], and for a historical interpretation, Witzel 1998: 512 sqq, 531.
- <sup>xli</sup> Levy 1990: no. [59-62]; p. 464.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Cf. Witzel 1998: 528.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Cf. Witzel 1998: 526.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Levy 1990: no. [31]: Devī, in April.
- <sup>xlv</sup> Levy 1990: no. [67-76].
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Levy, *Mesocosm* p. 432.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Thus connected with Mohanī [67ff]; with optional animal sacrifices; Rāma's non-sacrificial *bhakti* worship has now taken off.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Cf. Witzel 1998.
- <sup>xlix</sup> About 1620 CE we find the first inclusion of Lokeśvara / Karuṇāmaya / Bungadeva (just like the newly introduced official worship of Kṛṣṇa at Patan) into the Hindu pantheon (as Macchendranāth); see the *Matsyendrapadyasataka* of Nīlakaṇṭha, a manuscript dated 1677 CE; further Locke 1980: 282 and 437; cf. also the *Bhāṣāvamśāvali*, II, p. 70.
- <sup>l</sup> Levy 1990: 331.
- <sup>li</sup> See Sardar-Afkhami 2000.
- <sup>lii</sup> 1891: 35, see Levy 1990: 515-16.
- <sup>liii</sup> See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1908706.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1908706.stm).
- <sup>liv</sup> Levy 1990: 324.



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- <sup>lv</sup> Cf. Toffin 1992, 73-92. Witzel 1998: 520, 531.
- <sup>lvi</sup> Cf. Witzel 1998: 530.
- <sup>lvii</sup> Cf. Witzel 1998: 530 sq.
- <sup>lviii</sup> Campbell 1988: 42 sqq.; taken from Wirz 1922, 1925; the pictures were taken in c. 1916.
- <sup>lix</sup> van Baal 1966: 462; cf. Knauft 1993: 146 sq., 140.
- <sup>lx</sup> Pictures and description in Wirz and in Campbell 1988: 62 sqq.
- <sup>lxi</sup> Wirz 1922, 1026. Note M. Mead's review (1968) and cf. van Baal's criticism of Wirz' work (1966: 4).
- <sup>lxii</sup> Verschuren 1947/48: 437, and: letters written by him to van Baal (1956: references p. 970).
- <sup>lxiii</sup> van Baal 1966. – van Baal was in Marind land in 1936-38, as a Government advisor (1950-1952), and as governor (1953-58), see M. Mead's review (1968: 381-82).
- <sup>lxiv</sup> "At the time I came to the area [1936], the Marind had deliberately stopped disclosing their inner life to strangers." (van Baal 1966: 179).
- <sup>lxv</sup> Weiner 1995:79.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> After sexual disease and infertility had been overcome, some 7000 speakers of Marind remained in 1950; there has been subsequent population increase.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> van Baal 1966: 68.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> van Baal 1966: 190.
- <sup>lxix</sup> van Baal 1966: 152 sqq.
- <sup>lxx</sup> van Baal 1966: 188; white, due to the skin color of the dead and of ghosts.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> Wirz 1922/1925, vol. II: 11.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> See Wirz 1922/1925, vol. IV, and Campbell 1988: 68 sq.
- <sup>lxxiii</sup> Knauft 1993: 166.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> Knauft 1993: 151-152; cf Weiner 1995: 80.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> Knauft 1993: 149.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> M. Mead 1968.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> Wirz 1928: 284.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> van Baal 1966: 187 sq.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> "Earlier than any other rite they were abandoned by the administration and after 1911 they could only be executed secretly and in an abridged form. ... Such celebrations occurred as late as 1922 (Wirz 1925: III: 5) ... The people of Makalin were celebrating a Mayo initiation in November 1921. West of the Bian [river], the Mayo celebrations continued every year, during the dry season, in June or July, the men withdrew for a one-night secret performance in the bush. ... It is certain that as late as 1952 the celebration took place at Wambi, and there are indications that even today [c. 1966] the Mayo is still alive there. (van Baal [1966]: 496.)
- <sup>lxxx</sup> van Baal 1966: 179.
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> M. Mead 1968: 381-82.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> According to Boelaars, see van Baal 1966: 579.
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> For other sexual myths, see Knauft 1993: 142 sqq; 148 sqq., Weiner 1995.
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> van Baal 1966: 194 sq. --- This is typical for Gondwana mythology (Witzel 2012), exactly as van Baal has it: "Though there is a great variety of myths, when taken together they neither constitute a logical constructed creation myth nor a systematic and complete whole explaining the origin of all things." (van Baal 1966: p. 180). – In addition, "few ... are good tellers of myth... often only a fragment (van Baal 1966: 208).
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> van Baal 1966: 208.
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> This is remarkably similar to Laurasian mythology (Witzel 2012), but it soon departs from this pattern.
- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> Which is more in line with Gondwana myth (Witzel 2012).
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> "Geb was a big man, all black, frightful to look at. His body was hard as stone and covered with acorn shell. Long hairs grew from his ears and he lived in a termite heap or an ant heap." (van Baal 1966: 209).
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> Wirz 1922/1925: 29; for human origins see also van Baal, 1966: 210 sqq.
- <sup>xc</sup> In another version, the first one emerging was an old woman, Sobra, who made the fire and shaped the humans; however, she also hid in a hole and caught, killed and ate boys, casting suspicion on others, so that (revenge) headhunting evolved. In still another version, she first lived in the sky and dug a water hole, but so deeply that she cut through the vault of heaven, and fell down on earth.
- <sup>xci</sup> Wirz 1922: II: 188 sqq.

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<sup>xcii</sup> As Knauff 1993: 138 has it: “Through elaborate dual organization, Marind myth and ritual facilitated widespread social as well as cosmological integration. Marind perceived the distinctive myth and ritual variations found elsewhere in their territory as providing important complements and permutations of overarching cosmological motifs.”

<sup>xciii</sup> For these various foundational sexual myths, see Knauff 1993: 142 sqq., Weiner 1995.

<sup>xciv</sup> See Thompson (1932-36): *E155.2*. Annual resuscitation of a god: Greece: Zeus, Dionysus and especially Persephone; Babylonia: Adonis, Tammuz. Note that ground opens, swallows up person (F942.1.): Greece: Althaimenes, Persephone, Sītā in the Rāmāyaṇa; and that the body can be resuscitated by arrangement of members: Edda, Finland, Italy, Egypt: Osiris; Greece: Arkas; India, and beyond: Siberia, Polynesia, Eskimo, Americas, Africa.

<sup>xcv</sup> Cf. Frazer 1963 and Hatt 1951.

<sup>xcvi</sup> See details in Witzel 2012: § 4: 276.

<sup>xcvii</sup> See now the genetic and linguistic data, in the recent Science article by D. Reich et al. Reconstructing Native American population history. *Nature* 488, 2012, 370–374.

<sup>xcviii</sup> Cf. Witzel (2012): 91 for a time line of agriculture.

<sup>xcix</sup> Edited by Caland 1990. Note the origin from a fish: fish were used as fertilizer well into medieval times.

<sup>c</sup> Similarly Indian ascetics were allowed to eat only fruit that had fallen down from the trees, not those still attached. Meat could only be eaten when killed by someone else (a cat, a butcher), see Schmidt 1997: 207-232.

<sup>ci</sup> Susa.no Wo’s destruction of the heavenly rice fields of his sister, the Sun goddess, see Antoni 2012.

<sup>cii</sup> *Kojiki* I 4, 119-129, see Antoni 2012: 41 and his commentary p. 547 sq; he too points to Jensens’s Hainuwele myth.

<sup>ciii</sup> A practice that seems to occur already in Neolithic archeology at Çatal Hüyük, Turkey (c. 7500 BCE to 5700 BCE).

<sup>civ</sup> See Witzel 2012: § 7.

<sup>cv</sup> Note the sacrifice of the lamb, Christ, in mass, and the consumption of his flesh and blood (as bread and wine), and of actual or symbolic animal sacrifices that are found almost world-wide; see Witzel 2012: § 7.