

SHAMANISM AND THE ANCIENT GREEK MYSTERIES:  
THE WESTERN IMAGININGS OF THE “PRIMITIVE OTHER”

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by

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## Preface

When I first began my investigation of shamanism, I discovered it in the context of ancient and medieval Eurasian nomadic cultures from the time of the Indo-European migrations to the expansion of the Mongol Empire—a very large stretch of time. At the start, I admit I accepted the concept at face value and did little to deconstruct it, as shamanism was more peripheral to my historical research at the time. As I first understood it, shamanism was simply an ancient and primitive religion, and it appeared to me that it was widespread, not only throughout northern Eurasia, but globally. However, as I turned the attention of my research from historical to ethnological, I found this supposedly global phenomenon problematic. I could not identify any unifying set of practices or beliefs between the countless traditions found throughout time and space which scholars and New Age mystics alike have called shamanism. Even among the northern Eurasian groups the concept is applied with difficulty. Nevertheless, I proceeded as if there was in fact a historic (or perhaps prehistoric) root religion which one might call shamanic. My quest brought me to the Lakota Sioux of Pine Ridge, SD, being that the Native Americans have been a popular, if not cliché, choice for enthusiasts and scholars alike of so-called primordial spirituality. This prevalent sentiment in itself reveals much about the problem of shamanism.

I find it embarrassing now to think of the naïve mindset I had been lulled into up to this time. While at Pine Ridge, I had a number of interactions with a spiritualist woman who claimed to be possessed by the spirit of the White Buffalo Calf Woman, the mythic purveyor of the

Sacred Pipe and the Seven Sacred Rites. She also described herself in Western terms as a witch. While she and her husband took me in for a few days (many people gave me lodging while I explored out there), she expressed that she did not like me nor did she appreciate my interest in her traditions. She called me a New Ager and accused me of cultural imperialism. That accusation represented a watershed moment in my research and a major paradigm shift in my perspective on shamanism. After long reflecting on my experiences at Pine Ridge, especially that one, I realized that, although I did not consider myself a New Ager, I had approached shamanism from the same epistemological perspective as the New Age Movement. Moreover, I suspected that many other anthropologists who research shamanism have fallen into this same epistemological trap. Beyond the concept of shamanism's heuristic function, something embedded in our psyches, perhaps a product of our culture, constructs our idea of the primitive, including primitive religion, and is bound with the concept of the indigenous other. Thus, this thesis is a criticism of the anthropological concept of shamanism and the epistemology through which scholars and mystics alike have arrived at the purported source of pre-Western wisdom and "archaic ecstasy."

In some ways Marshall Sahlins's *Culture and Practical Reason* has informed my criticism, especially in terms of the relationship of culture-structure and ecology. As globalization has created the ecological "marble block" for the sculpting process in Western consciousness, it has allowed the ancient construction of primitive otherness to persist in a new age. As this thesis will lay out, this process began in the ancient world, best illustrated through Hellenic culture, where the Ancient Greeks' economic and mystical endeavors in the Pontic-Caspian region simultaneously reinforced and were informed by their own culture-structure of the *polis* and its associated ideologies.

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If you gaze long into an abyss,  
the abyss also gazes into you.

- Friedrich Nietzsche

## Chapter 1

### **Introduction: The Problem of Shamanism in Ethnology, Archaeology, and Historiography**

In both academic and popular lexicon, shamanism is simultaneously one of the most recognizable yet least understood terms. The educated classes of the Western world have long known about the shamans of Central Eurasia, as the term itself comes from the Siberian Tungus *saman* (Laufer 1917), and the term is often taken to be synonymous with “witchdoctor,” “sorcerer,” “wizard,” “healer,” and other such Western lexical relics from the Age of Exploration and the waves of colonialism which followed. Almost uniformly Western observers, educated or not, understood the religious traditions of the native populations they encountered from Australia to the Americas in terms of indigenous otherness. The application of the term “indigenous” is problematic when used as an essential category of otherness in the Western perspective. Thus, this type of word-usage has received little criticism for its lack of a clear definition outside of the most basic (i.e., being native to a particular place) (Cunningham and Stanley 2003; French 2011). Although a full exploration of the concept of indigenous is beyond the scope of this thesis, as a Western concept it is bound to the problem of shamanism. Like indigenous, shamanism lacks a clear definition despite scholars’ attempts to conjure one (Eliade 1964; Jolly 2005; DuBois 2009; Sidky 2010). All attempts to define either “indigenous” or “shamanism” have heretofore ignored the role of otherness in their conception. Shamanism and indigenous, thus, inextricably inhabited the same space in the Western mind. It is the religion of the exotic, indigenous other, the natives, the savages, the barbarians, the primitives, and so on and so forth.

Therefore, it is imagined as the religion of our own primitive past, or so it might appear in the classical Western construction of otherness. In a way, this accounts in part for the pervasive application of the more widely recognized term “shamanism,” despite its intellectual migration out of its original Northern Eurasian context, in discussions of global indigenous religions today.

This thesis will illustrate how shamanism reflects more about the structure of the human mind than it does about the ethnographic subjects of the ethnography of religion, especially in imagining the past and in interpreting present cultures within the framework of said imagined past. As the scholarly genealogy of the concept of shamanism has already been thoroughly exhausted (see Atkinson 1992; Boekhoven 2011; Whisker 2013; and Fotiou 2016), this thesis will instead approach the issue from a different anthropological angle which A. M. Khazanov calls paleoanthropology, or the application of historical criticism to valuable ancient ethnographic sources (Khazanov 1984 *in* Wright 1998:25). As the so-called civilized literary and artistic centers of humankind have been observing and interpreting the so-called savage societies outside their walls for millennia, careful scholarship will find that some of the same anthropological questions that appeared in ancient discussions about the primitive other persist today, albeit in different contexts. Shamanism is nothing more than a product of that long discussion.

The rest of this introductory chapter will discuss some of the contemporary problems with the concept of shamanism in ethnology, archaeology, and historiography. This should prepare the reader for the discussion of the relationship of shamanism today and some of the dominant religious and mythological traditions of Ancient Greece, both of which emerge from the “civilized” mind imagining the “primitive other.”

## **Primitivism and Shamanism**

In the wake of globalization and postmodernism, anthropology has become divided on the definition and the accurate usage of the words “shaman,” “shamanism,” and “shamanic.” On one side of this division, followers of Mircea Eliade’s school of thought since the mid-twentieth century have understood shamanism as a kind of primordial religion, a tradition of mythology, ritual, and ontology purportedly ancestral to all religions in existence today. In this school of thought, scholars of religion seek cross-cultural parallels in terms of mythic archetypes, spiritual connections to the natural world and netherworld, and, most popularly, altered states of consciousness, especially through ritual intoxication or ecstasy (Eliade 1964; Liberty 1970; Harner 1980; Noll 1985; Wasson et al. 1986; Porterfield 1987; McClenon 1997; DuBois 2009). In spite of such mythologizing of human history, shamanism is not the remnant tradition of a bygone age before Western imperialism but rather the product of the invention of tradition and the politics of social space as a result of inter-societal relationships of power. As this thesis will demonstrate, it is an invented tradition, to borrow from the terminology of historian E. J. Hobsbawm, because its inventors (i.e., scholars such as Eliade) have concocted “shamanism” out of the traditions of a plethora of mostly unrelated cultures upon the premises that those traditions are 1) indigenous, or 2) primordial or very ancient. Often the two are conflated to refer to an ancient understanding of human nature more commonly known as the noble savage. Shamanism imagines, from the perspective of modern, global civilization, the indigenous minorities of the world as an homogenous, Romanticized, exotic other who possesses innate wisdom about the natural-spiritual world, which civilization abandoned when it left the wilderness for the *polis*.

Nevertheless, the study of shamanism has long played a fundamental role in an anthropological discussion on human nature which originated in the Enlightenment theories of Rousseau, Locke, Hobbes, and others (Lowenthal 1985: 232-3; Trigger 2006: 110-116). This rather dated debate persisted to the present through numerous paradigm shifts. Yet it often travelled beneath the current of discussion as an almost unspoken, sublime element which posits the human condition, past and present, in an ethical dimension. We can summarily describe this debate as divided over whether the primitive state of man, however imagined, was good or bad. Rousseau asserted that it was good. Hobbes argued the opposite. Historiographical parallels can be found throughout the major currents of anthropological discourse. Boas, although critical of Rousseau's naïve notion of primitive virtue and himself not a romantic, clearly saw in the world's indigenous cultures the origin of all human culture in the sense of cultural roots. In 1889 he claimed the "history of the sciences, the history of inventions, and *above all the history of religions* point to the study of their germinal forms among primitive peoples" (1989:67-8, emphasis mine). Primitive religion and primitive society, as Westerners have constructed them, represent the romantic germ of human culture in such a paradigm. For those observers during the Age of Imperialism, and for many observers today, "primitive" equates to "prelapsarian." In some ways, Boasian ethnology sought to unearth that ideal in its methodology, and so anthropology's course was set for the shores of the peripheral, foggy, perhaps even *Hyperborean* territories of the indigenous other for the next century of ethnographic research.

The admirable nobility of primitive societies was also an integral part of early Marxist social theory and gave rise to the concept of primitive communalism. Marx was fascinated with pre-capitalist, pre-feudal economies, and so the "primitive simplicity" of such societies, although he did not idealize them as pure communism (Marx 1969:271). Marx and Engels early on

forwarded their criticisms of the economies of “tribal ownership” in *German Ideology* for its shortcomings of patriarchy and slavery in the division of labor. However, the work of Lewis Henry Morgan, namely *Ancient Society* (1877) and *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* (1881), the latter in which Morgan makes extensive use of the phrase “communism in living” to describe aboriginal society, such as the social order of the Iroquois nations, had a lasting impact on the theories of Marx and Engels. Ethnological observation seemingly offered Marx and Engels the proof they needed to support their model of human history. However, Marxist anthropology, well into the twentieth century, stumbled over the seemingly paradoxical observations ethnographers made on primitive religion in egalitarian societies (Barsh 1988). The Mbuti, for example, whose economy and religion both revolved around reliance upon the entity of the Forest, presented a stumbling block for Marxists exploring the “primitive communalism” of these natives which had to be reconciled to the integration of their ideology into their mode of subsistence (Barsh 1988:194-95). On one hand, Marxists from Marx and Engels onwards sought out primitive egalitarian societies to support their economic model, but the aspect of religion, the reflection of social relations, contradicted their idealization of the other.

Anthropology, especially towards the latter part of the twentieth century, follows Rousseau’s ideal of the native, even if that ideal is embedded subconsciously as sublime empathy for the other. The conservative reaction to this school of thought, namely among sociobiologists such as Napoleon Chagnon, held Hobbes’s premise that primitive society is nasty, brutish, and short (see Chagnon’s comments in 2013:7-10). Both perspectives on the human condition operate in a larger paradigm of cultural evolution, as both camps imagine (or inadvertently imply) that indigenous peoples represent the most ancient past of all human ancestors. The implications of that premise traverse the Rousseau/Hobbes dichotomy, and

archaeological, historical, and ethnographic information has filtered through the paradigm of this archaic debate since the period of the Enlightenment.

The reality of our human past might never come fully to the light, yet humans continually look to the past to make sense of the present and for self-actualization. In academia, this is most manifest in archaeology, linguistics, history, and anthropology as a whole. The social and cultural conditions of the present undeniably affect the narrative(s) of human history. From the perspective of Hobbes, whose England had emerged from the Cromwell years into the era of royal restoration, chaos, turmoil, and tribulation typified the lawless state of man, and law naturally comes with social order. Thus the state of primitive man prior to social order is one of chaos, in the mind of Hobbes. Rousseau, alternately, from the perspective of living under the thumb of an oppressive French monarchy, viewed the primitive state before and outside of the social order of civilization as the truly good state of humanity. The historical conditions of each of these individuals' worlds naturally shaped their diametrically opposed views on mankind. Moreover, these views accompanied the spread of European colonialism and imperialism worldwide well into the twentieth century.

I do not plan to defend one stance or the other. Actually, I argue that noble and brutish savages alike are more the result of values which the observer subconsciously (or perhaps consciously on occasion) embeds in his or her reflections on ethnographic subjects. More recent anthropology has had some successes in rising above this dilemma, but the problem remains in the anthropology of religion, especially the diverse traditions associated with so-called indigenous cultures. That is not to say every scholar of indigenous religions is necessarily in agreement with Eliade. Rather, it is something deeply embedded in the Western perspective and perhaps even deeper in the human psyche, which has systematically created the space of

otherness in which the slots of “indigenous” and “shamanism” have been imagined.

Consequently, the social theorizations of Hobbes and Rousseau helped propel the debate on the nature of the primitive into the birth of professional anthropology, as we discussed above.

As the bulk of this discourse will delineate, this debate goes back much further than the Enlightenment, to Ancient Greece, with parallels and antecedents throughout the civilizations of the Ancient Near and Far East. The pessimism of Hobbes can be found in much of Plato’s work, whereas Hesiod artfully describes a much more idyllic quality in the natural man, much like Rousseau. A careful reader of Aristotle might notice he synthesizes both opposed qualities into his theory of life beyond the political sphere of the city-state. In any of the above cases, the savage other exists in an imagined region of space and/or time which is beyond the city-state, or *polis* (pl., *poleis*). Free of the social boundaries of Greek laws and customs, or *nomos*, the primitive other was imagined in terms of godliness or beastliness. Likewise, the noble savage of Enlightenment thought is an archetype of otherness which is removed from the social boundaries by both imagined space and time. From Enkidu in the Epic of Gilgamesh to Rudyard Kipling’s Mowgli, primitive otherness as noble savage appears in a naturally pure state of naïveté, untainted by the rise of the sedentary powers of human civilization. Primitive man thus represents the ethical paradigms of the present but also creates a space for characterizing past and present peoples in terms of imagined otherness. In other words, the noble savage represents humanity’s origins imagined as good and, moreover, that primitive cultures today signify living examples of those origins. It is Eliade’s “Yearning for Paradise” that he argues is at the root of the study of the primitive. Rousseau would applaud him.

Ultimately, such theories founded in a Romantic search for origins fall short of offering anything of real academic value. Shamanism plays an integral part in the current discussion in



anthropology about early human culture and the evolution of religions. The study of shamanism is, however, bogged down with the Romantic notions discussed above. Shamanism in this sense becomes overgeneralized and superficial. Moreover, the constructed form of shamanism offered through the works of figures like Eliade, Harner, Wasson, and others became popularized with the cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s and attracted Westerners interested in psychedelic drug-use and alternative systems of thought. This unintended effect of the ethnography of altered states of consciousness perhaps has left some stigma on its study but has also given it some popularity. On the other side of the intellectual chasm, more recent scholars such as Alice Kehoe reject the application of the term, “shamanism,” outside of the study of the region of its original context, that is, Central Eurasia (and more specifically, Siberia) (Atkinson 1992; Amitai-Preiss 1999; Kehoe 2000; Schnurbein 2003; Sidky 2010; Whisker 2013).

Somewhat recently, Pieter Jolly (2005) has attempted a reconstruction of the term, shamanism, which acknowledges its original indigenous usage but also tries to identify underlying principles which could be useful in examination of cultures which have been described in academia as “shamanic.” He proposes that shamanism refers to religious traditions which “possess religious functionaries who draw on the powers in the natural world, including the powers of animals, and who mediate, usually in an altered state of consciousness, between the world of the living and that of the spirits including the spirits of the dead” (pp.127-128). Jolly’s peers are unsatisfied with the cross-cultural usefulness of this definition. Klein, Guzman, and Stanfield-Mazzi comment on Jolly’s position as having improved the scholarly classification of shamanism but that it evades the problems concerning its application in cultures beyond the Northern Eurasian context. Even so, shamanism persists in academic discourse. Outside of Northern Eurasia, ethnographic material on so-called shamanic traditions is most prominent in

the contemporary writings on indigenous traditions of the Americas (Benedict 1923; Siebert 1937; Johnson 1943; Harner 1962; Spencer et al. 1965; La Barre 1970b; Ellis 1993), whereas Africa (Katz 1982; Lewis-Williams 2001), Southeast Asia (DuBois 2009), Australia (Radcliffe-Brown 1926; Elkin 1945; Lévi-Strauss 1963), and Melanesia-Polynesia (Layard 1930; Herdt 1977; Keesing 1982; Wallis 2002) receive far less attention. More often, ethnographic information on various native religious traditions can be gleaned from works specific to certain groups or communities but more generalized in subject matter. And often in these cases shamanic terminology seldom appears where other concepts, such as sorcery and ancestor worship, abound.

### **The Problem with Ethnographic Analogue and the Archaeology of Religion**

Given that certain ethnologists seek a unifying root of present native religions (or all religion), it makes sense they would look to the distant past as the primordial source of human spirituality. Lewis Binford (1962) calls the explanation of the ritual or mythological significance of an artifact in archaeological methodology *ideo-technic*; that is, what sort of ideology the artifact might have conveyed in its original context. There is a problem, however, since we cannot know for certain what the *ideo-technic* context of an artifact was if the archaeological culture is disconnected from cultures of the present; that is, if no historically verifiable connection exists between the assemblage and modern descendants or claimants. Furthermore, the historical contingencies of human migration and culture change raise the question of who the descendants of past cultures are, if any even exist. We can also add to this messy issue the fact that contemporary groups might give new meaning to prehistoric sites and artifacts to which they

claim some connection, whether Stonehenge or Kennewick Man. This becomes a heated topic in the politics of culture and especially in the construction of indigenous identity. For example, although no known descendants of Woodland Ohioan cultures exist today, Ohio mortuary sites such as Libben fall under the jurisdiction of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1998 simply because, from a modern perspective, these cultures are indigenous. Once bracketed as indigenous, ideo-technic artifacts tend to fall into the category of shamanism in the archaeology of religion. Numerous archaeologists, with some exceptions to be dealt with below, simply assume prehistoric religion equates to indigenous religion and thus shamanism. Modern constructs of “indigenous” and “shamanism” thus erroneously become lenses for the scholar looking into the distant human past.

Given that most of these types of explanation tend to be conjectural, scholars are tempted to describe the ideo-technic value of artifacts and sites in historical or ethnological terms. They typically do so through the use of a method known as ethnographic analogy, that is, the application of traditions of the present to explain the traditions of the extinct past, whether or not any actual relationship exists between the two (Trigger 2006:416-17). Archaeologists and historians have thus attempted to identify the occurrence of shamanic traditions in past cultures through the explanation of artifacts and sacred sites in terms of ideologies which parallel modern indigenous traditions globally. Despite the difficulties of limited primary sources, archaeologists essentially have, in terms of the politics of culture, the power to reconstruct traditions of shamanism in extinct cultural remains with little academic hindrance to the idea that shamanism is very ancient. This is not to say that the archaeological assemblages described as shamanic were not religiously or ritually important to the people who originally made and used the artifacts. Rather, we must ask, how are prehistoric religions shamanic?

Rather than any empirically sound delineation of the prehistory of religions, what we find under the guise of cross-cultural analysis is an insistence on indigenous religion as being very old and typically associated with Altered States of Consciousness (ASC). It is a rickety and unsound bridge that has been built between modern indigenous religions, prehistoric ideo-technic artifacts, and an imagined and Romantic Paleolithic “shamanism.” This is especially true for the archaeology of religion in North America. For example, Brown (1997) holds no reservations about describing the entirety of Eastern Woodland religions, their ritual paraphernalia and associated iconography, as shamanism. We do not know exactly what the relationships were between the religions of the various Eastern Woodland groups historically, let alone prehistorically so Brown’s attempt to lump them under one category is spurious. That is not to say there are no relationships between traditions. Stothers and Abel (1993:68-70, 79), without falling into the trap of using shamanic terminology, provide some compelling explanations for the ideo-technic uses of some Late Archaic cultic grave goods, ursine and canine skull-masks from the Williams Mortuary Complex on the Lower Maumee River. Likewise, Seaman (2007:174-82) interprets the “successful predator motif” of similar animal and human jaw-trophies and animal effigy pipes in ideo-technic, cultic terms without crossing over into the fanciful world of shamanism. The strongest connections between past and present indigenous North American religions have been found in the late-prehistoric and historical archaeology of Anishinabe (i.e., Ojibwa or Chippewa) Midewiwin ceremonial materials.

The strength in the study of Midewiwin tradition is the attestable continuity between past and present. However, even here scholars often make heavy use of shamanic terminology in the description of Anishinabe spirituality. For instance, Whiteford (1991:75) assumes “as with many other Native American peoples, the Anishinabe worldview has always been deeply religious and

mystical,” and frequently calls practitioners “shamans” with no method which explains why Midewiwin is shamanism. Midewiwin as shamanism has also been loosely associated with other North American prehistoric cultures: Fort Ancient (Cook 2012), Peterborough Petroglyphs (Colson 2007), and Canadian Shield rock art in general (Whelan 1983). One exception, a study of Misaukee Earthworks in Northern Lower Michigan (Howey and O’Shea 2006) draws an historic-ethnographic association with Midewiwin mythology and the proposed context of the site without using the shamanic terminology. Beyond the Anishinabe, Zedeño (2008:376) takes a similar “shamanic” approach to the ceremonial medicine bundles of historical Northern Plains groups such as the Blackfoot in the explanation of prehistoric ideo-technic bundle-assemblages as indigenous “concepts and principles that guide relationships between human and non-human agents.”

A number of scholars have focused on the ideo-technic value of rock art and associated mytho-religious contexts, specifically petroglyphs, in North America (Whelan 1983; Hedden 2002; Colson 2007; Lenik 2010) and worldwide (Price 2001; Wallis 2002; Lymer 2004; Porr and Bell 2012). Religious or not, rock-art refers to paintings, such as in the Lascaux Caves, France; inscriptions or petroglyphs, such as at Peterborough, Ontario; megaliths like Stonehenge, England; or combined rock-art, such as Kamyana Mohyla, Ukraine. Rock-art occurs globally and throughout time, albeit in endlessly different contexts with meanings which are temporally and culturally specific. Rock-art also offers the advantage of existing in the present instead of vanishing with their makers, but also the added complexity of changing meaning with each group to use a site over time. Many groups exist today who utilize rock-art as sacred sites, whether or not they were the original people to do so (Lymer 2004). For example, and to return to the topic of Midewiwin, Anishinabe spiritualists today utilize sacred petroglyph sites across

the Great Lakes region of North America in vision-seeking, rites of passage, and the transmission of tradition from generation to generation, which I observed on my own visit to Peterborough.

As such, Whelan (1983) and Colson (2007) feel compelled to describe the religious use of rock-art among the Anishinabe as an ancient tradition of North American shamanism. Both scholars utilize a “homological” method of “comparing archaeological data with related historic and ethnographic cultures,” which builds a strong case for a very old lineage of Anishinabe rock-art tradition but which makes no methodical connection to a supposedly primordial religion or Paleo-shamanism (Colson 2007:156-7). Like Colson, Whelan (1983:83) claims to make a systematic attempt to interpret rock-art, but his Anishinabe shamans become mere “handlers of supernatural power,” supposedly observable in the archaeological record. Likewise, Hedden (2002) identifies prehistoric and early historic petroglyph figures in Machias Bay, Maine as shamans but leaves unclear what a shaman exactly is. Lenik (2010) tries to keep his rock-art analysis within the mythological context of northeastern Indians, but he too liberally interprets figures and motifs within the bracket of shamanism.

Robert J. Wallis (2002) makes a bold attempt to synthesize ethnographic analogy and the archaeology of shamanism in his analysis of cave art on the Melanesian island of Malakula. On this island, Wallis contends, there is a strong correlation between the indigenous tradition of *bwili* shamanism and the ritual use of rock-art in the island’s cave systems. Seemingly a labyrinth adorned with abstract paintings and petroglyphs, the caves represent, according to Wallis, the ASC associated with shamanic traditions of rites of passage and vision-seeking, in other words, the imagery of the shamanic “trance” (p.749). Wallis, no disciple of Eliade, admits that the Western use of the term “shaman” is problematic, but he accepts that it has gained enough intellectual currency to warrant its continued use (pp.740-41). Although he is wary of the

overgeneralization when applied cross-culturally, Wallis favors a “neuropsychological” paradigm by which shamanism refers to socially sanctioned, ritually induced altered states of consciousness, which occur cross-culturally in a variety of specific and unrelated contexts. Cross-culturally, caves as mytho-ritual centers also seem to symbolize connections between the chthonic underworld and mundane above-world, a topic we will delve into in chapter 3. For now, let us draw our attention to ASC and the neuropsychological explanation of shamanism.

### **Entheogens and Altered States of Consciousness in the Narrative**

Now we are arriving closer to the driving force behind the categorization of indigenous traditions as shamanism. Since the popularization of mind-altering substances in the West during the 1960s and the emergence of the New Age Movement, shamanism has come to embody an epistemological alternative to traditional, modernist Western thought. As such, the ASC, especially as achieved through the imbibing of entheogens, or culturally and ritually specific mind-altering substances or hallucinogens, became a popular topic in the literature on indigenous religions. Some, such as Harner, even prefer to use the phrase “shamanic states of consciousness” to differentiate them from the ASC of non-religious experiences. For simplicity’s sake we will use “ASC” to describe the altered state in general, but in the context of ritual intoxication which others have described as shamanic. For many followers of Eliade’s view that shamanism is the “archaic technique of ecstasy,” the ASC is the common denominator of shamanic traditions, something which Sidky (2010) finds problematic for its sloppy generalizations. Michael Harner brought Amazonian ayahuasca to the attention of Western readers, V. G. Wasson legitimized entheogenic fungi as a primordial tradition in human

history, and a plethora of local, native intoxicants worldwide have been pouring into Western consciousness for decades, usually quite devoid of any authentic ceremonial context (See also Stewart 1980 on Peyote and Mescaline; and Pochettino et al. 1999 on Andean cebil snuff). Although traditions of ASC do not have to include mind-altering substances as ritually prescribed, and despite the fact that many traditions achieve ASC through fasting, prayer, suffering, and discipline, the ones with the mind-altering substance are far more popular among Western enthusiasts and acolytes. In any case, the vision is important in many indigenous religions and in many religious traditions generally (Noll 1985).

That being said, archaeologists of shamanism, such as Wallis (2002), following the neuropsychological approach, look for material evidence of ASC in both ritual paraphernalia and iconography symbolic of (or perhaps inducing) the supposed shamanic trance. Additional ethnobotanical and ethnomycological evidence, either from ethnographic analogy or laboratory analysis of archaeological materials, further contributes to the construction of prehistoric shamanic ASC traditions in such a paradigm (LaBarre 1970; Pochettino et al 1999; Merlin 2003; Russo et al. 2008). Wallis (2002:742, 753) argues that kava, a mild intoxicant part of some traditions in Oceania in both ritual and social contexts, was an integral part of *bwili* shamanism on Malakula in conjunction with the imagery of “trance metaphors and spirit helpers” of the cave rock-art. In the North American context, Emerson (2003), a follower of Eliade, holds that a number of Pre-Columbian pipes associated with the Cahokia culture reflect a “shamanic core” of ASC, ritual accoutrements, spirit helpers, soul flight, and animal-gender transformations. Much of Emerson’s discussion is conjectural and stems from an Eliadic imagination with little to no empirical backing. Similarly, Pavesic (2000:325-7) asserts that an assemblage of Early Archaic



pipes from Old Ferry Dunes site, Western Idaho, suggests a “ritual or magico-religious usage” in a shamanic context of healing, ASC, and life/death soul-travel.

Likewise, VanPool (2009) champions the shamanic interpretation of North American archaeology in her study of the Pottery Mound and Casas Grandes sites of the American Southwest. Following the theory of Liberty (1970), which posits that the dichotomy between priest and shaman is superficial and on a continuum rather than structurally and mutually exclusive categories, VanPool attempts to systematically define shamanism materially in terms of cross-cultural regularities in “shamanic tools” and “experiences.” Accordingly, and much like Wallis, VanPool claims the ASC is observable in the material record through the confluence of iconographic trance-imagery and ritualistic, trance-inducing paraphernalia which ranges from musical instruments to tobacco pipes (2009:183).

With all this focus on supposedly observable ASC in the archaeological record, we still have yet to arrive at a clear and sound definition of shamanism. I have no doubt that some if not each of these instances indicate some kind of ASC, but whether or not the inclusion of those instances in the category of shamanism would be accurate is another question entirely. Tobacco, especially the wilder strains of *nicotiana rustica*, is indeed an intoxicant (Janiger and Dobkin de Rios 1976), and it is one with a variety of traditions in which it is ceremonially important throughout the Americas and worldwide in the wake of globalization, for example, in conjunction with *Datura* in Afghan Malang tradition (Sidky 1990:294). Drums, singing, chanting, and other forms of music are used in religions around the world, not just the “shamanic” ones. Rock-art may indeed signify vision-seeking in many traditions around the world, but it also has many meanings alternative to achieving ASC. It is a tradition, not quite the

same as written history, nor oral history, but something revelatory, experientially and contextually specific.

Nevertheless, many scholars of indigenous religions focus much of their attention on the ASC. For some, the ASC is the essence of shamanism. Richard Noll, for instance, considers shamanism a “cultural cultivation of mental imagery” which attempts to recreate “spontaneous imaginative experiences” (1985:444). Problematically, he bases his understanding of shamanism on the framework of Eliade as an original religion at the center of which is the vision: “The magico-medico-religious complexes in traditional, non-literate societies collectively known as shamanism provide the best-documented example of vision cultivation” (p.444). The ASC or trance is certainly attestable historically and ethnographically throughout the religious traditions of the Americas and worldwide, as is the use of ritual intoxicants in some contexts. Peyote, mescal, and to some extent various species of mushrooms are among the more potent North American entheogens with traditions which are quite old. Ayahuasca is possibly the most widely recognized South American entheogen and is also quite popular for Western tourists and New Agers in search of authentic ethno-religious experiences (Fotiou 2016). Other South American entheogens like the coca plant have longstanding ceremonial traditions as well. Tobacco, which was widespread throughout pre-contact North and South America, has a broad spectrum of breeds which vary in strength, the strongest of which “literally knocked the Indians out” in ceremonial contexts and can produce more vibrant effects than a standard nicotine hit (Janiger and Dobkin de Rios 1976:296). Even alcohol, in early contact times, found a religious niche which has been described as shamanic among Eastern North American groups despite modern misconceptions about Indians and drinking (Trenk 2001), let alone its Eurasian contexts.

These are only a few gleanings of the countless examples of indigenous American uses of ritual intoxicants, many of which are attestable historically, ethnographically, and archaeologically. As stated above, ritual intoxicants only make up a small portion of ASC traditions among American indigenous cultures, past and present. Mind-altering experiences are interesting, and the added-flair of ASC embedded in any tradition bracketed as indigenous provides a sense of exotic authentication for many non-academic Western readers. For lack of a better phrase, drugs sell. Otherwise, Michael Harner would write about how the Lakota vision quest is a three-four day ordeal involving sweat lodge and abstinence from food, water, and human contact. Pain and isolation give the Lakota adolescent male his vision. Anything else is a shortcut or is purely recreational. Instead, Harner describes how ayahuasca and similar entheogens take you on wild trips, which naturally attracts attention from those interested in such things whether spiritually or recreationally. Given, Harner is a highly respected scholar and an advocate for Amazonian traditions of healing for Westerners. Nevertheless, his paradigm is suspect.

This is not to say that legitimate ethnological research has not been done on ASC and indigenous religions. Rather, the general interest in shamanism and the ASC stems from a societal urge to seek epistemologically alternative paths of wisdom which society assumes is not only prehistoric but primordial in human history. By “societal” I do not mean that every member of society follows or even necessarily feels this urge, but rather it is in the air, in the ether, in the sublime. It is also an ideology which is actually deeply rooted in the consciousness of civilization, which we touched upon above and which this entire thesis will lay out. As an ideology, it is, like many other origin myths found in the world, given to the populace of its culture below from the ascents of the structure above. Furthermore, like those myths, much is

conjecture. But for what aim, and with what evidence? The archaeology of religion searches for it because, perhaps without even really knowing it, we equate prehistoric religion with imagined, preconceived notions of primitivism. As primitive religion, we then assume such prehistoric traditions are related to existing modern ones which, as indigenous, are also primitive or the closest thing to primitive that we have. Basically, we are led to believe that shamanism is primitive and prehistoric. In a speculative bout, James McClenon goes so far as to suggest that shamanism is not only primordial but actually catalyzed human evolution, physically and culturally. For instance, on the origin of human fire-use, McClenon remarks, “H. erectus may have spent millennia gazing into fires while chanting, singing, and engaging in mimetic rituals, activities inducing therapeutic ASC” (1997:349). Imaginative and entertaining, McClenon’s model, of which this is only one episode, is pure conjecture.

### **From the Problems of Paleo-Shamanism to its Application in Historiography**

Alice Kehoe (1996) takes issue with this application of “shamanism” to the archaeological record, because it proceeds upon Eliade’s idea of a primordial shamanism. To Kehoe, the assumption that a primordial religious tradition once existed, from which all “shamanisms” descend, denies modern indigenous religions their own agency and context. This has seemingly created a rift between archaeological and ethnographic discourse. Some Paleolithic peoples may have practiced something which resembles some aspects of modern indigenous religions, but we cannot assume that indigenous religions are any older than the rest of the religious traditions of the world or that they have not changed, died out, or emerged in their own historical contexts.

The problem of shamanism has similarly cropped up in the historiography of Islamic civilization, most prominently in the relationship between mystic Islam, namely Sufism, and the conversion of the barbarian nomads of the north and east, namely Turks and Mongols (Trimingham 1971:54, see also pp.130-31 on Sufi syncretism with Indonesian and African religions; Amitai-Preiss 1999; Geoffroy 2010:21, 105). Again, the issue is one of applying the term beyond its means. Noll (1985:451) notes a Sufi practice of contacting spirit-guides during mystic vision-seeking experiences. Geoffroy (2010) maintains that shamanism and Sufism share some inherent quality, probably unrelated to the tendency of some Sufis to smoke hashish. Like Eliade, Geoffroy yearns for an identifiable tradition at the root of all religions, and unsurprisingly he focuses on the altered state of consciousness. Conversely, Amitai-Preiss (1999) thoroughly investigated the matter and concluded that there was no conceivable relationship between Medieval Central Asian shamanism and the conversion of groups like the Mongols to Islam.

Sidky's ethnography of Afghan Malang, essentially Muslim ascetics and healers in rural modern Afghanistan, identifies these traditions as part of a modern amalgamation of Islam and pre-Islamic Central Asian religion, or shamanism (1990). Modern occurrences of this phenomenon in Central Asia also have been associated with the syncretism of indigenous petroglyph sacred sites and Islamic *ziyarat* sites, or supposed grave sites of Islamic saints (Sidky 1990; Lymer 2004). For instance, Lymer notes that two Kazakhstan petroglyph sites in particular, Tamgaly and Terekty Aulie, associated with Bronze Age archaeological cultures, have been given Islamic meaning in modern contexts of Kazakh ancestor veneration but which have pre-Islamic contexts associated with millennia of Eurasian Steppe pastoralist religious traditions.

Himself an Afghan, Sidky argues that shamanism is integral to Afghan Islam for its traditions of healing and spirit-communication as well as ritual ecstasy. The pre-Islamic Central

Asian shamans, in Sidky's model, essentially became the mystics and holy men of Islamic Afghanistan associated with Sufism. The key difference Sidky notes, however, between Sufis and shamans is that the shaman aims to "gain control of particular spirits rather than to obtain mystical union with the divine," as the Sufi orders do (1990:278-9). Malang do not follow any specific guidelines aside from what their teachers pass on to them in their apprenticeship-initiation and the Qur'an. Within the context of Islam, these Afghan Malang utilize the ASC through both socially prescribed prayer-fasting and the use of tobacco and *Datura* as entheogens; they engage with malicious *jinn* entities in visions and in healing ceremonies; and overall they cultivate a mastery over the spirit world. According to Sidky (2010:231), "mastery over spirit helpers" is the single characteristic that separates shamanism from non-shamanic spiritualists whom scholars have lumped together under the same term. It seems like a fairly basic distinction, but also one that excludes the vast majority of indigenous traditions which Westerners often include as shamanic.

In a way, Sidky brings shamanism back to its own roots as a Central-Northern Eurasian phenomenon. However, although he is openly critical of Eliade's paradigm of primordial shamanism, Sidky does not engage long with the Eliade's implication that indigenous peoples worldwide are somehow attached to an imaginary Paleolithic religious tradition. Shamanism in its context of the Eurasian steppe, taiga, and possibly arctic regions is embedded in a deep history and prehistory of the socio-economic interplay of nomadic and sedentary civilizations. Similar circumstances may have occurred in other parts of the world at various times, but we might not be able to apply a term from one cultural-historical context globally based only on Eliade's understanding of shamanism. Sidky is correct in providing a specific criterion for describing religious traditions which emanate from Central Eurasia.

The shamanism problem worked its way into classical history in addition to archaeology. At least as early as Karl Meuli's 1935 essay, "Scythica," shamanism became an accepted term with which to describe the ancient religions of the barbarians of the northern Pontic-Caspian Steppe. A racial element guided the argument at the time, equating Scythians with the Hun-Asiatic "Mongoloid" physical and cultural type as per the theories at the time which certain German nationalists glorified and used to served their own political ends. Given that many of these so-called barbarians were part of the larger cultural complex of Central Eurasia, it is less of a stretch to describe their traditions in terms of shamanism. Even V. Gordon Childe (1926) notes the relationship between the Scythian religious traditions in archaeology and those of the later historical Mongols. Perhaps more accurately than the use of shamanism in American archaeology, a number of archaeological and historical studies of Central Eurasia from Bulgaria to the Altai region highlight an extensive cultural horizon of traditions which exhibit qualities similar and related to Siberian shamanism, and they have been described in such terms (Mančar 1952; Loehr 1955; Fol & Marazov 1977; Heissig 1980; Mundkur et al. 1984; Mallory & Mair 2000; Russo et al. 2008). However, we should be just as careful about categorizing the archaeological ideo-technic assemblages of the Pontic-Caspian Steppe within the shamanic slot.

Consequently, and falling in line with Eliade's paradigm, a large number of Greek classicists since the mid-twentieth century adopted shamanism as a means of explaining the development of Archaic and Classical Greek religious traditions (Carpenter 1946; Dodds 1951; West 1982, 1998; Ruck 1986; Littleton 1986; Lateiner 1990; Ustinova 2009) with little opposition (Bolton 1962; Bremmer 1983). This historiographical trend is rife with the same Romanticist problems which plague Eliade's camp, and indeed Eliade himself contributes directly to this trend (see Eliade 1972). In the simplest terms, the consensus today is that Ancient

Greek religion originated in the hypothetical shamanic traditions of Bronze Age Proto-Indo-European culture on the Pontic-Caspian Steppe, and thus one can identify shamanic “survivals” in Hellenic mythology and ritual with parallels in the contemporaneous culture groups to the north of the Greek heartland. Unfortunately, like Eliade, this system of thought relies upon a neo-Romanticist “noble savage” premise and ignores the more complex cultural processes which occurred on Greece’s northern frontier from the Archaic period onward, as well as the elements of Mediterranean and Mesopotamian religions. The issue of what has been called “Greek Shamanism” will constitute the bulk of this thesis with the goal of arriving at a more accurate definition of shamanism in a modern, global sense.

### **Shamanism as Practically Barbarian Religion**

Arriving at a sound definition of shamanism was well beyond the scope of my first M.A. thesis (Linebaugh 2013), as my focus was on the construction of the Greek/barbarian dichotomy in Late Archaic-Classical Greek culture. Nevertheless, I encountered a serious issue of cultural and religious interaction on the ancient Pontic frontier in which scholars read modern ideas about shamanism into the mix. What I found was a complicated system of otherization in which Greek colonial undertakings in the Pontic region generated an ideology of the otherness of the indigenous peoples of the Pontic region. Differences in lifeways and traditions between the polis-centered Greeks and the nomadic and semi-nomadic Pontic groups inspired the characterization of northerners in various fantastical ways ranging from bestial to virtuous. These characterizations came to form the Greek idea of the barbarian, which I will summarize in the following chapter. This thesis will focus on the influence of Pontic religious traditions in the



invention, or perhaps re-invention, of Hellenic religious traditions, specifically the mystery cults. It is this historical-cultural process that will demonstrate how the construction of shamanism occurs today, for the forces at work in the Hellenic world were those of ideology, power, and exploitation just as they are today albeit on a global scale.

Yet the idea of shamanism persists, and its existence has transcended its former position as a mere category of scholarly inquiry to become a legitimate cultural force among educated Westerners and non-Westerners alike. As shamanism has been applied to culture groups globally, past and present, based upon a nebulous collection of parallels in terms of practice and belief, scholars have hitherto ignored the larger processes of hegemony and agency in tradition. Thus, I pose two crucial questions: 1) who are the groups whose traditions are described as shamanic; and 2) who applies the academic construct of shamanism to said subjects? The answers to these questions tell all there really is to know about shamanism. In this global age, shamanism functions as a constructed model of tradition, which a privileged, educated segment of society inserts into discussions of the local traditions of culture groups who are on the periphery of the global *polis*. Such culture groups have been described in the past as “savage,” and more commonly today “indigenous,” and they are often understood as other from the perspective of the West. In a sense, the age-old noble savage premise has been guiding the study of shamanism, especially in the Eliade camp. The result of this type of science of religion is the construction of an idealized primordial root-religion of Hyperborean purity, supposedly preceding the observable social and environmental disasters of Western “progress.”

Is it any wonder then that spiritual movements like the New Age and Neo-Paganism, which Romanticize the remote human past, have embraced the shamanism Eliade, Harner, Wasson and others made popular? In an era of seemingly global calamity, shamanism is sold as

the purest religion and most in touch with Mother Earth, it is a response to Eliade's "Yearning for Paradise," a return to Eden. Nevertheless, consider the source. Is the motive of the science of religion and the construction of shamanism the creation of a new academic "mystery" tradition believed to be the original religion of the human race? If so, then it seems that a Tylorian model of cultural evolution has reemerged combined with a Romantic cyclical view of returning to the primitive. At the same time, marginalized indigenous groups are once more reduced to the fossilized status of noble savages whose cultures and traditions are mere exploitable resources for those of the privileged consumer classes, and a new global polis/barbarian ideology is reinforced.

The problem, therefore, is still one of definition. Unlike religions like Christianity and Islam, whose multitudinous variant traditions still self-identify as being part of the larger tradition, shamanism more accurately refers to religious traditions of independent lineages but which outsiders might perceive to be similar. As shamanism originally referred to specific Siberian traditions, how has it become a global religious identity among unrelated groups? Scholars have failed to agree on a basic definition of shamanism; yet, some underlying principle continues to lead other scholars to describe indigenous traditions as shamanic. Even those critical of the cross-cultural use of the term, "shamanism," acknowledge, that there are similarities between these traditions, but they assert that culturally specific terms should be used to describe the variations of each tradition. Their focus is on the differences between traditions, and some, especially Alice Kehoe, refuse to entertain the idea of a "primordial shamanism." This poses a problem to archaeology and history of religion, the premise of which essentializes shamanism as a hypothetical root tradition: 1) we cannot know with any certainty what the religious traditions were, including mythologies and rituals, for extinct cultures for whom we lack historical

contextualization; 2) the application of modern shamanism in interpreting extinct cultures has the possible error of forcing modern and possibly irrelevant traditions on the past, which of course proceeds upon the evolutionary fallacy that modern “shamanic” cultures are living relics of the past. This becomes increasingly problematic for the study of cultures which, prior to the last five centuries, left few or no records and whose traditions likely changed with the ebb and flow of history and cultural diffusion. Shamanism, thus, cannot properly refer to primitive religion. Rather, the question should turn to one of socio-economic relationships within the contemporary context of globalism.

What is shamanism then? It was and still is the religion of the “barbarians” in the sense that it is a construct which represents the traditions of the other in a global society. It has become symbolic of primitive man in global consciousness, but as an invented, or reinvented, tradition. In the colonial past of the West, it has been described at times as rude, savage, bestial, and superstitious; more commonly today it is understood as a source of wisdom untainted by the errors of history. Either way, shamanism is ultimately “other” from the hegemonic perspective of academia and the emergent religions reliant upon the ethnographic information which comes from academia. It is not really the anthropologist’s fault, however, as we have little power over the literature once it hits the minds of enthusiastic, yet idealistic readers. While literature on shamanism, academic or otherwise, persists in pursuing the wisdom of the constructed noble savage, some of it ignores the reality of marginalization and the multiplicity of traditions among ethnographic subjects, many of which do not always match up with the constructed image of nobility or primordial wisdom.

I hold that a similar process occurred in the culture of Ancient Greece. The following chapters will demonstrate: 1) the complex historical-cultural context of the Hellenic-Pontic

frontier, the Greek worldview of that frontier space, and the ideology of Greek/barbarian which emerged from that context; 2) Hellenic perspectives on indigenous Pontic religions and the emergence of Hellenic mystery religions as invented traditions; 3) How processes similar to or nearly the same as those which occurred in the microcosm of the ancient world occur today in the construction of shamanism as an academic and popular global tradition.

## Chapter 2

### Gods, Beasts, and the *Polis*: Redux

The previous chapter introduced the historiographical and anthropological problem of shamanism in which the larger issue of the construction of otherness is integral. These problems have affected the archaeology of religion, the ethnography of so-called indigenous cultures, and the classical history of the Ancient Greek world and surrounding cultures. This chapter serves to summarize and refine my 2013 work on one of the most persistent Classical ideas about human nature, one which manifested in Ancient Greek culture and likewise was adopted by the Romans. Ancient Greeks understood the world in terms of Greek or “Hellenes” (Ἕλληνες) and barbarian (βάρβαρος). Moreover, as the barbarian problem persisted in the Enlightenment and beyond, it is just as relevant to current discussions of otherness in anthropology.

The barbarian emerged in the Hellenic consciousness as a symbolic characterization of primitive man, both lawless and virtuous, and also as a template for describing, in terms of otherness, real groups the Greeks encountered in their cultural sphere of contacts. Greeks viewed indigenous groups on their frontiers as reminders of their own mythic past, and consequently the narrative of Hellenic ancestry incorporated barbarian culture into the construction of their own traditions, including the mystery religions. All the more, the barbarian emerged as the antithetical other to Greek-self and the primordial shadow in the Hellenic understanding of cultural evolution. The approach to this chapter stems from classicist and philological literature. Yet, the meat of the question is fundamentally anthropological in the sense that it provides us an excellent

historical example of the construction of otherness. Thus, my method is ethnological rather than philological, and could provide insight into both classical and anthropological discussions.

I utilize a diverse body of sources on the barbarians which include Ancient Greek art, such as vase-paintings and statues, and literature, such as poetry, drama, mythology, philosophy, and history. Perhaps more than any other source, the *Histories* of Herodotus, provides the largest wealth of ancient ethnographic material on barbarian cultures. In the use of Herodotus we must keep in mind the historical and cultural context of his work, but no scholar should ignore him altogether. Some scholars have even referred to him as a kind of ancient anthropologist, as social theory was among the scientific discussions of thinkers in Ancient Greece (Thomas 2000; Sturman 2008; Skinner 2012). His narratives, which weave cultural information into his larger story of the Persian Wars, sometimes in brief statements, sometimes in lengthy, detailed surveys, describe the cultural diversity of the ancient frontier of the Greek world rather than the static barbarian who often appears in the dramas, vase-paintings, and political rhetoric of Herodotus's contemporaries. Thus I will often refer to passages from his work throughout this discussion.

### **The Barbarian Other**

“Barbarian” denotes otherness, similar to other such descriptors in the English language, like “savage,” which fell out of use during the twentieth century, and its successors “aboriginal” and “indigenous.” The word implies that a group is outside the cultural boundaries of another group, simply us/them. This is a cross-cultural universal from which culture itself emerges. One might even say it is human nature to divide one's own group from other groups, as this is the root of patterns of kinship. This is not to say that some groups do not adopt the terms of other as self,

as in the case of self-identifying Native Hawaiians, Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians, and other groups. Thus, as the issue of creating otherness is tied up in the politics of culture, it is also yet a universally human behavior. Richard Feinberg notes “When people from differing communities come into contact, they inevitably develop images of one another, and they convey those images to other members of their own communities” (1994:25). It is the specific context of each us/them dichotomy, however, which denotes the nature of the relationship between the two. The “them” category is always other from the first person point of view, although this does not necessarily mean that one group has the advantage of power over another. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) argues that among totemic clan groups in Australia, for example the Arabanna and Aranda, otherness is based more on kin-group affiliation, systems of marital exchange, and the ideology of ancestor spirits rather than the exercise of power over other groups. Lévi-Strauss finds, therefore, that totemism, like the caste system of Hindi culture, is fundamentally constructed as a way to understand self/other, Us-identity versus them-identity. Although the details of each social structure are different (indeed, Lévi-Strauss carefully notes the difference between totemism as “primitive” and the caste system as the “reverse of primitive,” p.129), totemic clan and Hindu caste each operate, for Lévi-Strauss, in structurally similar fashion to divide the world into convenient categories within the mind of the individual. The contextual language changes from culture to culture; the structure, however, remains the same throughout humanity.

Lévi-Strauss struck something big. Us/them is a basic structure of the human mind, and everything else (i.e., culture) is constructed around it according to the context in which the self finds itself. Martin Heidegger, philosopher of the existentialist-phenomenology school, made a similar claim in 1927 regarding the actualization of the self as something other-than-other,

something “being-here” or *dasein*. Rather than make any sort of claim about social structure at large, however, Heidegger’s focus was the Self-as-being, and everything else was other. Despite this difference, Lévi-Strauss took a similar route towards his deconstruction of totemism down to its roots as social relationships in culturally specific, “primitive” or *sauvage* languages. Thus the Us/them structure typifies the workings of the human mind, but it is thereafter actualized in the context of the relationship which could take any number of superficial forms cross-culturally. Everything from rules of marriage (e.g., who can marry whom) to the exchange of goods and intergroup politics revolves around how groups differentiate one another. The dichotomy affects and is affected by the intergroup relationship. In some cases, especially in the context of complex socio-economic networks and systems of power, Us/them can assume an entirely lop-sided form in which the space of “them” is constructed in a way which reflects more about the ideology of the “Us” group than the nature of the “them” group(s). In the case of the barbarian, the Greeks and the Romans who followed them constructed this category of otherness as being outside the culturally constructed definitions of civilization, that is, the *polis*, or Greek city-state, or the Roman Empire, for the latter. The *polis* and the Hellenic cultural identity which *polis*-life embodied formed the ideological basis of the dichotomy of Us/them in the Ancient Greek mind. The structure of this ideology through which the Greeks understood themselves posited otherness as that which was not Greek. Although superficially this appears as a simple binary opposition of Us/them, Greek/barbarian, the structure is far more intricate and encompasses the complex historical process of colonialism in the Archaic Pontic context.

The word “barbarian” has its linguistic origin in Greek civilization during the Archaic Era (ca. eighth-early-fifth centuries BC). The earliest known written form of the word appears in Homer in reference to the Carians, inhabitants of western Anatolia who did not speak Greek but



were in prolonged contact with the Ionian Greek settlers in Asia. In the *Iliad*, Homer calls these Carians βαρβαρόφωνοι, that is, *barbarophonoi* or “bar-bar-speakers” (Homer *Iliad* 2.867). This early form of *barbaroi* indicates otherness in a very basic sense, that these non-Greeks seemingly spoke nonsense, at least in the eyes of Homer and his audience, and the Carian *barbarophonoi* spoke nonsense comically in the epic. It is also quite possible, however, that the Hellenic use of the prefix “βαρβαρ-” in reference to foreigners predates Homer, whose literature comes from the eighth century BC, and that Homer had been but the first (or one of the first) to record its use. In any case, βαρβαρόφωνοι represents the earliest known Greek linguistic occurrence of our “barbarians.” By the time Herodotus was writing his Histories, the word βάρβαρος, or *barbaros*, had been commonplace in the Greek language for at least three centuries. Moreover, it came to represent an imagined space of otherness associated with non-Greeks abroad and particularly to the north, though not necessarily limited to the north.

Much like the Greek Ionian colonial activity in Anatolia in the eleventh century BC (See Demand 2006:177 on the influence of Eastern cultures on the so-called “Ionian Enlightenment”), the Greek colonial endeavors throughout the Mediterranean and Black Seas from the seventh century BC into the Roman Imperial period brought the Greeks into contact with various groups whom they found profoundly other (see Appendix A, Figure 1). More than the Mediterranean Greek colonies such as those in Italy and Sicily, the colonies throughout the Black Sea region, known then as the Pontic, exposed the Greeks to northern steppe cultures whose nomadic modes of subsistence contrasted markedly with the agrarian-based *polis*-economies of the Greeks. It was these Pontic cultures who inspired the archetypes of barbarism in Greek media, a point which Shaw (1982-83) makes. Siep Stuurman (2008) surmises that Greek-Pontic colonialism even led to the rise of “anthropology” among Greek thinkers such as Herodotus due to the

simple, pragmatic fact that the Greeks observed cultural patterns entirely alien to their own and, hence, tried to make some sense of those foreign cultures. Likewise, Joseph Skinner (2012) marks Greek colonialism as the catalyst for ancient ethnographic media which included not only the classic ethnographies of Herodotus, himself an Ionian Greek, but also the wealth of alternative expressions of foreign culture from Greek perspectives such as literary and visual art.

In any case, the subsequent relationship that developed between the Hellenic colonial system and the native Pontic cultures generated an ideology of otherness which was far more complicated than a simple structuralist binary explanation. Modern scholars have traditionally interpreted the Greek/barbarian paradigm in Lévi-Straussian terms in which the Ancient Greeks supposedly understood their self-identity through the definition of what they were not (Hunt 1998; Browning 2002). For instance, Nancy Demand posits that the Greeks organized their known world into “opposed categories” (e.g., male/female, citizen/non-citizen, human/animal, free/slave, Greek/barbarian) which constituted Hellenic self-identity through ontological contradistinctions with barbarian other-identities (2006:238). Similarly, Christopher Tulpin acknowledges that “one way to define what Greeks were like is through a contrast with barbarian characteristics” (in Tsetschladze 1999:49). In the structuralist sense, the Greek/barbarian pair denotes both a positive self-identifier of Greek-ness and a negative other-identifier of barbarian-ness.

This brings our inquiry to the question of what exactly separates the Greek from the barbarian. Although the binary structuralist model appears convenient enough for any historical emic ontological distinctions, it lacks the adequate depth for such an ideological plunge, and the historical-cultural context of the emergence of the barbarian as the characterization of otherness in a colonial relationship offers a much deeper pool. From the Greek perspective, the barbarian

represented that which was entirely external to or beyond the *polis*. The social structure of the *polis*, moreover, embodied the Greek/barbarian dichotomy through the creation of discreet categorical social space for the interaction of *polis* citizens and foreign outsiders. The fourth-century BC philosopher Aristotle boldly claimed that man is a creature of the *polis* and that anything outside the *polis* was either a god or a beast (*Politics* 1.1253a). It was in the imagined space beyond the *polis*, even to the edges of the known world, in which the Greeks placed their likewise imagined barbarians.

In the Hellenic worldview, the *polis* was the peak of civilization. It was the concrete embodiment of the abstract concept of *nomos*, which could be described as the laws and customs of the *polis*, and which could typify the Greek conception of “culture.” Those outside the *polis*, conversely, were *anomoi*, without laws and customs or at least the “proper” context for using laws and customs. Although this is a strange concept for modern readers to grasp, *nomos* was, in Aristotelian terms, human self-sufficiency. People outside the *polis*, in this system of thought, lacked the means to live naturally and sufficiently as humans and, hence, found sufficiency in living as either beasts or gods. This *polis*/beast/god trichotomy essentially sums up how the Greeks envisioned the known world. Otherness was outside of the *polis* in the lives of human societies which either lacked the inherent virtue necessary to live within Hellenic *nomoi*, or else possessed such surpassing virtue that the gods favored them. Beasts could only be contained within the *polis* in the form of slaves, and gods through ritual mystery. These social slots are otherwise beyond Hellenic comprehension except when accessed in their socially-prescribed *polis*-settings. François Hartog thus describes the frontier between Greeks of the *polis* realm and the barbarians outside and beyond as “other” space, socially inaccessible or incomprehensible to the Greeks (1988: 61-2).

### **“Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk:” Nomads in Relationship to the *Polis***

Opposite of the Hyperborean-Golden Age-noble savage, Ancient Greeks typically portrayed native Pontic barbarians as bestial and extreme in contrast with the supposed value of moderation in *polis*-culture. Further below we will discuss a few instances of this perspective, such as the animal-like Neuroi or the drunkenness of Celts and many others. Frequently in ancient media, barbarians appear stupid, high-spirited, slavish, violent, and given to wanton drunkenness and sexual licentiousness. At other times the archetypal nomad-barbarian occurs as a mythic, non-human foe who exhibits simultaneously the virtues and vices of primitive ignorance, as in the case of the cyclops Polyphemus in the *Odyssey* (Shaw 1982-83). Although the cyclops, as a monster rather than a human, does not necessarily belong to a group of barbarians, as a mythic archetype he represents the bestial dimension of life outside of the *polis* in the Hellenic worldview. He drinks too much, he is cruel rather than hospitable, and his lifeway and habitation are crude compared to the relative comfort of the audience. At the same time, he drinks too much because he lacks the refined knowledge of grape cultivation, fermentation, and sociable drinking in symposia. His virtues instead are in the simplicity of animal husbandry, specifically shepherding from which he receives his sustenance of meat and milk.

As both non-human and as symbolic of pastoral nomadism, Polyphemus illustrates the extreme barbaric other of the Hellenic worldview, a space usually reserved at the furthest extent of the inhabited world, the *eschatiai*, alongside half-human, half-animal entities, monsters, and

deities. However, at the same time Polyphemus represents the relative simplicity of the primitive past, a life of simple pastoral subsistence which typified the economies of the steppe but which the *polis* relegated to their peripheries. Thus we find a paradox in the Greek/barbarian ideology in which Scythians and other nomadic barbarians appear simultaneously as both peaceful milk-drinkers and warlike cannibals.

How does the category of barbarism operate upon such apparently contradictory premises? The answer to this riddle lies in the kinds of colonial exploitation which took place on the Pontic frontier—economic and cultural. Out of the colonial context of Hellenic Black Sea enterprises and explorations, the figure of the barbarian emerged, at once the invented amalgamation and exaggeration of Greek views of native Pontic cultures, but also as representative of the source of Greek material gain in the region. The Hellenic colonial system in the Pontic resembles similar historical systems of cultural interaction on the Eurasian Steppe between nomadic and sedentary populations (Bartold 1958; Saunders 1971; Lattimore 1979; Khazanov 1984; Di Cosmo 1994; Wright 1998; Liu 2001; Kradin 2002, 2006; Skaff 2004; Frachetti 2012). The studies listed indicate that pastoral nomadism on the Eurasian Steppe developed in symbiosis with the agrarian, sedentary cultures to the south of the steppe. In such theories, nomadic economies become inextricably bound to the larger economic systems of the sedentary cultures with which they interact. Consequently, nomadic economies develop a demand for goods which they themselves cannot produce and come to rely upon trade from urban centers, either directly or through a series of hands. Though traditionally portrayed as “predatory” in the acquisition of exotic products of civilization, in reality, Eurasian nomads occupied a marginal space under the economic thumb of the “high” civilizations that traded with them. When the Persian King Darius tried to draw the Scythians into his war, the nomads

frustrated the Persians with their perpetual evasions and maneuvering which seemed no different from their ordinary seasonal migrations. The Scythian ruler, Idanthyrsos, taunted Darius according to Herodotus:

Never yet did I fly because I was afraid, either before this time from any other man, or now from you; nor have I done anything different now from that which I used to do in time of peace: and as to the cause why I do not fight with you at once, this also I will declare. We have neither cities nor land sown with crops, about which we should fear lest they be captured or laid waste, and so join battle more speedily with you; but if it be necessary by all means to come to this speedily, know that we have sepulchers in which our fathers are buried; therefore come now, find out these and attempt to destroy them, and you shall know then whether we fight with you for the sepulchers or whether we shall not fight (Hdt. 4.127).

Here we see that the only territory the Scythians permanently claimed was of ritual importance to them as their traditional burial grounds.

Historical occurrences of conflict between Eurasian Steppe nomads and urban civilizations (e.g., Sarmatian/Roman, Xiongnu/Han-Chinese, Turk/T'ang-Chinese, Turk/Arab, Mongol/Jin-Chinese, Mongol/Arab, etc.) reflected more of the volatile nature of the symbiosis than any kind of inherently predatory quality within pastoral nomadic societies. In an examination of the T'ang-Turk frontier of Medieval China, Jonathan Karam Skaff describes how fluid such seemingly sedentary/nomad frontiers tend to be historically:

The China-Inner Asia borderlands from the early 600s to the early 630s exhibited a great deal of interchange and experimentation. The frontier truly appears to have been a permeable zone of ecological transition that permitted people to move in both directions along the borderlands in terms of their physical locations and their political allegiances (Skaff 2004:133).

The sedentary/nomad symbiosis revolved around a power relationship of high-handed socio-economic hegemony on the part of the urban civilizations and dependency and warlike opportunism on the part of the nomads. The frontier between the two ecological extremes facilitated dynamic cultural exchange and political posturing for the twain.

Like the Greek/barbarian paradigm itself, the relationship between nomadic and urban economies does not fall neatly into a dialectical binary of master/slave, yet this dialectic often typifies the sedentary view of that relationship. Rather, the relationship is more organic: power tends towards urban-economic hegemony but at times is seized upon by opportunistic nomads, whether “kings,” khans, or chieftains who might benefit richly from cooperating in trade with *polis*-dwellers, or the formation of tribal alliances who might exploit contingent weaknesses in their urban neighbors and turn the tables of hegemony in the formation of large kingdoms and empires, however transient. In other words, khans do not emerge in vacuums but in the context of preexisting economic dependencies with urban societies. Likewise, urban societies which act as the hegemonic colonizer in the relationship with nomadic groups typically have more success in trade with nomads than with conquest or wholesale enslavement. Failure to meet the economic demands of the natives, in this context, often leads to the “predatory” behaviors of banditry on smaller scales and nomadic conquests on larger scales. Thus the symbiosis of nomadic and urban societies is historically delicate and even volatile.

How does the Greek-Pontic frontier fit into this paradigm? The period of Greek-Pontic colonialism which began roughly in the seventh century BC, with a few earlier colonies on the southern coast of the Black Sea in the eighth century, established a system through which the Greeks imported raw goods, like wood and animal hides, and indigenous slaves to the Mediterranean and exported agricultural and manufactured urban commodities to the Pontic nomads (See Appendix A, Figure 1). Explorers, merchants, mercenaries, and otherwise wandering Hellenes had likely already known about and traveled throughout the Pontic region for centuries before and inspired stories such as Jason and the Argonauts. The colonization which followed established the Greeks’ role as mediator of northern goods and ideas to the

Mediterranean. This process of trade occurred through the emergence of Greek colonies along the Pontic coast, Olbia being the most prominent urban center of Hellenic colonialism in the region (Treister 2004; Braund & Kryzhitskiy 2007).

The relationship that developed between the Greeks at Olbia (i.e. Olbiopolitans) and the nearby Scythians, for example, indicates a symbiosis that falls into the scheme taken up by various scholars, such as Khazanov. For instance, Gavrilyuk (2007:140) specifically applies Khazanov's theories to the Scythians, as does Leypunskaya (2007:122). Leypunskaya describes this relationship as having started with Greek trading explorations inland with small quantities of exchange occurring until the end of the sixth century BC, when trade between these Greeks and Scythians rose dramatically. This trade increased until about 470 BC when the Olbian *chora* shrunk considerably due to various pressures. These Scythians responded by reforming their system of acquiring the goods they themselves could not produce—they expanded their geographic region of material acquisition. In other words, they tapped into other Greek markets besides Olbia and perhaps provoked greater competition with neighboring tribes.

The parallel with other historical instances of civilization/nomad interactions across Eurasia is not surprising. Di Cosmo noted how the Xiongnu created a “steppe empire” as “a more effective means to extract from China the resources they could not produce” (1994:1093). Di Cosmo puts forth that aggressive nomadic empires, such as the Xiongnu, emerge as a reaction to the collapse of trade between sedentary and nomadic groups, especially when the nomadic groups become dependent on the sedentary societies for certain goods. In the case of Scythia and Olbia, the collapse of trade between the two groups led to the rise of a greater Scythian kingdom, creating “protectorates.” In Gavrilyuk's theory (2007:142-3), the Scythians of the sixth to fifth centuries BC created economic and political hegemony over the wooded-steppe and



steppe zones through military conquests in order to dominate trade with the Greeks. This leads us to question whether or not we can define “Scythia” as an example of the “steppe empire” pattern of Di Cosmo. Herodotus’s account of the Scythians’ unstable relationship with the other Pontic tribes in the war against Darius might hint at just such a complex system of alliances and inter-tribal competition (Hdt. 4.102, 118-120). Hence it is not out of the question to consider the relationship between Greeks and Scythians in terms of a nomadic empire or kingdom akin to similar historical phenomena on the Eurasian Steppe before and after the Scythian zenith.

Braund’s position on the “existence of a Scythian kingdom” near Olbia supports this historical pattern (2005:42-3). Braund finds that the development of a Scythian kingdom in the north Pontic region “meant that Greek colonists could more easily reach agreements and develop relationships to mutual advantage.” Furthermore, Braund holds that the growth of this relationship between Greeks and Scythians very likely caused the development of the Scythian kingdom. He attributes this symbiosis to the exchange of agricultural goods for the raw materials and slaves of Olbia’s pastoral neighbors. As the Scythians could not produce agricultural goods like grain, olive oil, and alcohol (and many other types of goods) themselves, they could acquire them through the Greek economies, such as Olbia, and other nearby sedentary groups. Given that Greco-Scythian trade also thrived beyond the hub of Olbia, similar processes probably occurred throughout the north Pontic. The result would have been the rise of powerful tribes to kingdom status, perhaps even in competition with one another. Herodotus (4.118-25) illustrates the delicate inter-tribal relationships that occurred between Scythians and their neighbors during the Persian Wars (See Appendix A, Figure 2). The collapse of Olbian trade exacerbated inter-tribal tensions and competition, and it altered the nomad/civilization symbiosis between Greeks and barbarians.

Such alterations, Braund continues, occurred on the Pontic Steppe throughout the Greek and Roman eras, especially in Olbia:

For the whole position of Olbia, both the civic core and Greater Olbia, depended on a symbiosis with neighboring peoples and cities. At the same time, however, it would be naïve to imagine that relationships with all neighbors ran smoothly, not least because Olbia could expect to be drawn into conflicts between different groupings in the region (2007:60).

Braund lists periods of expansion and abandonment in rural Olbia in times of crisis as proof for the breakdown of relations between Scythians and Olbiopolitans based upon the archaeology of the outlying Olbian farmlands. He claims that after the expansion in the sixth century BC, a large number of rural sites were abandoned; the sites were rebuilt between 430-400, but they were again abandoned between 300-250. Though the archaeological sites showed no signs of physical destruction, Braund supposes that the farmers simply fled before marauders arrived. If Braund's hypothesis is correct, this indicates that the breakdown of the symbiosis was observable enough to the farmers that they knew to flee ahead of time and subsequently organized an exodus.

### **Barbarians as Naturally Slaves in the *Polis***

As a result of *polis/nomad* relations, the Greek-Pontic colonial system allowed for socially stratified nomadic societies to emerge, with evidence found in the abundance of "royal" burials which show unbalanced wealth distribution among groups such as the Scythians. Thus Pontic barbarian rulers who benefit from their economic relationship with the colonists often exchanged less fortunate, subjugated barbarians with the colonists in exchange for Mediterranean goods. For instance, Herodotus notes that Thracians often sold some of their children into slavery (5.6). However, on the Greek side of the relationship, the indigenous Pontic folk who found

themselves in the Mediterranean world as slaves in the household, or as institutionalized *polis*-slaves like the Scythian police in Athens, also came to represent the constructed category of other in very concrete terms. This is not to say that all slaves were barbarians. In fact, an inscription dating from around 415 BC found in Athens details the types of slaves confiscated in a specific case as well as the price each slave sold for in the auction (*Inscriptiones Graecae* I3 421, col. I). The list contained five Thracians, three of whom were women, two Syrians, three Carians, two of whom were women, two Illyrians, one Scythian, one Greek from Colchis, one Melittenian, and one Lydian woman. Although such extant data are rare, it appears that most slaves were of barbarian origin, but Greek slaves were not unheard of. Rather, it is the ideology of slavery which coalesces with the ideology of barbarism in the Hellenic worldview.

The ideological system which operated in Ancient Greece posited freedom as the nature of Greekness and slavery the nature of barbarism. In the fifth century, Herodotus (6.9-11; 7.135) associates despotism, or political tyranny, with the Persians. In this system of thought, barbarians were naturally inclined to either be tyrants or ruled as slaves by tyrants, while Greeks should naturally exist in a state of freedom. The Classical philosophers Aristotle (*Politics* 1255a 2-3) and Plato before him furthered theories about the connection between barbarism and slavery. Plato, for instance, argues that Greeks should enslave barbarians rather than Greeks to maintain a tenacious division between Greek and barbarian (*Rep.* 469b-c). As the Greeks understood it, a Greek in the state of slavery is likewise in a state of barbarism unable to be, by nature, free. In other words, a Greek slave was no better than a free barbarian. Slaves within the Greek *poleis* provided concrete examples of the nature of barbarism which citizens could understand in terms of Hellenic ideologies on slavery and barbarism. This concept dovetails with the ideology of the *polis* as Greek nature. Beyond the *nomos* of the *polis* of the Greek worldview,

barbarians lived outside of the boundaries of human freedom, slaves to bestial appetites and to tyrannical warlords. The stereotypes associated with this “beast” category of barbarism typified how the Greeks viewed the native Pontic peoples on their frontier and from whom they received most of their slaves. Beyond the frontier and into misty lands unknown, the barbarians become more or less fantastical (e.g., the Hyperboreans) and categorized differently from the tangible cultures who supplied slaves to the Mediterranean.

Despite the inherent contradictions within both the ideologies of barbarism and slavery, they operated together as a convenient, multifaceted means of justification for the construction of *polis* society. For example, around the fifth century we find in a number of cultural references, primarily in the comedies of Aristophanes (*Ecclesiazusae* 143; *Knights* 665; *Thesmophoriazusae* 920-45; *Acharnians* 43-54), to an institution of Scythian slaves in institutional public service to the *polis*. Various scholars have debated the chronology of the institution and demise of this so-called Scythian police force in Athens, who had been conscripted by a wealthy Greek politician named Speusis (Minns 1911; Hall 1989; Braund 2006). However, Balbina Bäbler is the first scholar to directly connect the issues of the Scythian police in Athens with stereotypes of Scythians in ancient Athenian ethnographic sources (Bäbler 2005:114-22). In fact, we might even call into question whether these barbarians were in fact slaves at all rather than free, and that the ideological paradigm of the *polis* simply may have constricted the Greek view of foreigners employed by the state into the language of slavery. From a modern perspective, we might not consider these Scythians slaves but rather mercenaries employed in the service of policing the *polis*. However, the issue that concerns us is the nature of these Scythians in the minds of the Greeks. Because they were barbarians in service to the *polis*, they existed in the Greek worldview as slaves. Within this ideological framework, barbarians cannot exist freely

within the Greek *polis* except in a state of slavery. Aristophanes's plays highlight the popular stereotypes of the Scythian police as cruel, mindless servants of the justice system. Furthermore, Aristophanes's employment of Scythians as a comic plot device demonstrates a divergence in notions of barbarism, especially between those who imported the Scythians and those who felt their whips of justice in the agora. Thus the institution of slavery in the Hellenic world was essentially the embodiment of the Greek/barbarian ideology. In pragmatic terms, slavery brought actual foreigners into the everyday lives of *polis*-dwelling Greeks, and the social relationship between free Greeks and barbarian slaves operated upon the ideology of categorical otherness. The various forms of Greek media (i.e., drama, artwork, literature) both perpetuated barbarian otherness and put the formal ideology to the test in the material world of the liminal space between free and slave.

### **Stereotypes and Other Hellenic Misinterpretations of Pontic-Caspian Cultures**

Consequently, the stereotypes of the bestial barbarian developed in conjunction with the use of Pontic slaves in the Greek *polis*, and a template through which Greeks interpreted and characterized Pontic and other barbarian cultures emerged. As we have discussed, the popular Greek view of Scythians and Thracians, barbarians whom they were in direct contact with most frequently, characterized Pontic cultures as high-spirited, ignorant drunkards. Plato (*Rep.* 4.435e) refers to the inherent quality of the souls of barbarians in Athens, such as Thracians and Scythians, as high-spirited (i.e., *thymoeides*). In characterizing northerners as such, Plato implies a certain sense of irrationality and erratic nature in the souls of barbarians. In Plato's mind, they were excitable, easily fooled, and easily angered, given more to emotions and appetites than to

rationality. Plato of course was not alone in his sentiments. The idea of the ignorant or foolish barbarian pervaded all dimensions of the ideology of barbarism from Hyperborean blissful ignorance to Thracian stupidity. High-minded clichés emerged in which barbarians appeared “primitive and rather simple-minded” (Hdt. 4.95). Herodotus even scoffs at the Pontic cultures’ tendencies towards lifeways of rapine instead of agriculture or civilized crafts (i.e., *techne*) (Hdt. 2.167).

Moreover, the Greeks viewed the barbarians as given to depravities such as sexual promiscuity, extreme acts of cruelty, and, most commonly, drunkenness. Herodotus’s Books 4 and 5 are teeming with minor accounts of promiscuous Pontic barbarians, which of course could indicate as much of the ethnocentric attitudes of the Greeks as well as foreign kinship and marriage patterns among Pontic cultures which may have been confusing to most Greeks. The Agathyrsians, for example, (4.104) “have promiscuous intercourse with their women, in order that they may be brethren to one another and being nearly all related may not feel envy or malice one against another.” Similarly, Herodotus provides the following ethnographic description of the nomadic Massagetai of the Caspian region:

Each marries a wife, but they have their wives in common; for that practice which the Hellenes say the Scythians have, is not in fact done by the Scythians but by the Massagetai, that is to say, whenever a man of the Massagetai may desire a woman he hangs up his quiver in front of her waggon and has sex with her freely (Hdt. 1.216).

This excerpt on the Massagetai could possibly represent a Greek misunderstanding of polyandry in association with patterns of natal residence and unilineal descent, such as among the Indian warrior-caste of the Nayar. Among the Nayar, women take multiple “temporary husbands,” as men were frequently away on military duty. As a result,

These men had visiting rights with their ‘wives,’ and if one of the men on visiting found another’s spear or shield outside the house, then he would go away and try again the next night (Fox 1967:100-1).

Perhaps this comparison is overly imaginative, but the Nayar warriors might also share something with the ancient steppe cultures given the Indo-Aryan origins in the same region as the Massagetai. But let us not become too distracted with such conjecture.

The main point here is that Herodotus's perspective on the Massagetai barbarians stems from his own Hellenic biases, from a culture in which emphasis is placed on the male role in social relationships rather than the female. Thus any cultural system in which women inhabit a different role is exotic and destined to become misinterpreted by the Greeks. Hence men and women have equal rights in Issedonian society (Hdt. 4.26), the Massagetai are ruled by a powerful female warlord (Hdt. 1.205), and Sarmatian women hunt and make war alongside their husbands (Hdt. 4.116). The Thracians too, in the Herodotean account, allow their daughters to have wanton intercourse with anyone and also practice polygamy (Hdt. 5.5).

Tied in with this general characterization of barbarians as sexually liberated, Greek attitudes towards women influenced this type of motif, often exemplified by the mythic Amazon figure (Tarbell 1920; Graf 1984; DuBois 1991; Blok 1995; Blundell 1995; Smith 2003; Skinner 2012). Essentially, the Greeks viewed women, as they did slaves, as having natures similar to barbarians. Like barbarians, women were naturally slaves in the *polis* (i.e., to their husbands). Outside the *polis*, Greeks imagined women as powerful and promiscuous, something which Greek men should fear. These notions became constructed into the archetypal Amazons, a mythic race like the Hyperboreans. Unlike the Hyperboreans, the Amazons exuded tyrannical, beastlike, and warlike freedom diametrically opposed to *polis nomos*, and consequently, the Amazon figure acted as a template for any vaguely ethnographic characterization of northern cultures like the Massagetai and the Sauromatae (i.e., Sarmatians) in which women had elevated status. Moreover, the Amazon template served in the dramatic portrayals of legendary barbarian

women such as Atossa and Medea, and Amazonomachy (i.e., combat with Amazons) became a popular motif in art and literature. Moreover, as we will discuss further next chapter, mystery cults which involved Mother Goddess worship also reflected the Hellenic perspective of primitive womanhood with analogues in barbarian religions.

Like the fearfully cruel and warlike Amazons of Greek mythology, historical and semi-legendary accounts of Pontic cultures highlight instances of tyrannical cruelty meant to demonstrate the beastlike nature of many of the barbarians. Accounts abound of the terrible punishments and human sacrifices in barbarian cultures. Again, Herodotus provides a wealth of such accounts. On one occasion, Herodotus details how a Thracian king “did a deed of surpassing horror” when he plucked out the eyes of his sons for marching with Xerxes (Hdt. 8.116). The Tauroi, another group on the Black Sea coast, reputedly sacrificed shipwrecked victims to the sea, but the story may have been more of a sailors’ warning than a careful ethnographic observation (Hdt. 4.103). Nevertheless, Herodotus claims this group also earned its keep through pillaging and plundering.

Another more common motif of barbaric cruelty in Herodotus and other sources is the motif of barbaric cannibalism. The Scythians, who also practiced occasional human sacrifice, were said to mix blood with their wine for spiritual strength before war and in oath-taking. Psarras notes similar customs among the ancient Xiongnu on the eastern Eurasian Steppe (Psarras 2003:129-32). James Redfield (2002:37-8) argues that this Scythian custom in Herodotus, if true, could be considered a form of “modified cannibalism.” Another ethnographic passage in Herodotus illustrates some of the ethnocentric extremes of the barbarian motif:

The Androphagoi have the most savage manners of all human beings, and they neither acknowledge any rule of right nor observe any customary law. They are nomads and wear clothing like that of the Scythians, but have a language of their own; and alone of all these nations they are man-eaters (Hdt. 4.106).



The Androphagoi (Hdt. 4.106), whose name literally means “man-eaters,” fictional or not, were reputed to cannibalize outsiders, similar to modern stories about various Papua New Guinean exocannibalistic groups such as the Kamano. Observations of endocannibalism among groups like the Fore may also have contributed to the modern idea of cannibalistic natives (Lindenbaum 2013:22). Modern or ancient, how much is the speculative rumor of travelers and how much is ethnographically sound will continue to be a point of contention among anthropologists.

Additionally, Herodotus (1.116; 4.26) describes customs of ritualistic endocannibalism among the Massagetai and Issedonians. However, scholars have disputed whether or not Herodotus may have confused their customs with ritual defleshing of deceased relatives given his contextualization of the practice as a funerary rite (Bolton 1962; Mallory and Mair 2000).

One major difference in custom between Greek and barbarian which resulted in a widespread stereotype of Pontic peoples came from cultural attitudes towards drinking habits, mentioned briefly above. The Greeks, or at least the privileged and educated members of Greek society, preferred to drink diluted wine in moderation, and they laughed at stereotypes of drunken northerners, whom they typically regarded as gluttonous. For instance, Aristophanes’s *Acharnians* mocks the great praise barbarians give over-eating and over-drinking: “For great feeders and heavy drinkers are alone esteemed as men by the barbarians” (Aristoph. *Ach.* 65-99). A fragmentary poem by Anacreon likewise contrasts Greek drinking with Scythian drinking (quoted in Skinner 2012:69):

Come now, this time let’s drink  
Not in this Scythian style  
With din and uproar, but sip  
To the sound of decent songs.

Herodotus describes a Scythian drinking custom where only honored warriors who have slain an enemy can drink, and those who slew great numbers of enemies drink with two cups at the same

time (Hdt. 4.66). Herodotus also includes, perhaps as a lesson, the story of Cleomenes of Sparta who went mad from drinking unmixed wine from his association with Scythians (6.84).

On the topics of both barbarian drunkenness and promiscuity, the poet Archilochus compares a woman's act of fellatio to the Thracian custom of sucking excessive quantities of beer through straws (Arch. Fr. 42). Plato characterized barbarians, from Scythians, Persians, and Carthaginians to Celts, Iberians, and Thracians as excessive drinkers in *Laws* (637d-e):

So let us deal more fully with the subject of drunkenness in general for it is a practice of no slight importance, and it requires no mean legislator to understand it. I am now referring not to the drinking or non-drinking of wine generally, but to drunkenness pure and simple, and the question is—ought we to deal with it as the Scythians and Persians do and the Carthaginians also, and Celts, Iberians and Thracians, who are all warlike races, or as you Spartans do; for you, as you say, abstain from it altogether, whereas the Scythians and Thracians, both men and women, take their wine neat and let it pour down over their clothes, and regard this practice of theirs as a noble and splendid practice; and the Persians indulge greatly in these and other luxurious habits which you reject, albeit in a more orderly fashion than the others.

The Persians too, according to Herodotus (1.133), “much enjoy wine-drinking,” and they had various customs and taboos regarding drinking including deliberating on serious matters first drunk and once more sober. An identical passage of drunk/sober deliberations is found in Tacitus's observations among the Germanic tribes:

Drinking-bouts lasting all day and all night are not considered disgraceful. The quarrels that inevitably arise over the cups are seldom settled by merely hard words, but more often by killing and wounding. Nevertheless, they often make a feast an occasion for discussing such affairs as the ending of feuds, the arrangement of marriage alliances, the adoption of chiefs, and even questions of peace or war. At no other time, they think, is the heart so open to sincere feelings or so quick to warm to noble sentiments. The Germans are not cunning or sophisticated enough to refrain from blurting out their inmost thoughts in the freedom of festive surroundings, so that every man's soul is laid completely bare. On the following day the subject is reconsidered, and thus due account is taken of both occasions (Tac. Ger. 22).

The stereotype in Greek lore of the “wino” barbarian should be connected with the concept of *thymoeides*, or “high-spiritedness,” as we discussed above. The Greek writers and artists recognized indigenous customs of alcohol use and abuse which contrasted with Greek

moderation and sought to exploit those customs as evidence of “weaker” souls, natures given more to appetites and emotions devoid of *nomos*. Such is the way the Ancient Greeks perceived those barbarians at hand, whereas those more far-off drifted into the fantastic and often found themselves the subjects of ethical discourse.

### **The *Oikoumene*: from the *Polis* to the *Eschatiai***

Leaving the ethnocentrism, or more specifically *polis*-centrism, of the Greeks aside, the *polis* as a socio-economic entity wielded great cultural hegemony in the ancient world, especially in Greek colonial endeavors in the Pontic region. In other words, the Greek/barbarian paradigm concurrently emerged in the context of colonialism and perpetuated a sense of Greek superiority over native populations whom the Greeks exploited both economically and culturally. As humans were superior to beasts, so were Greeks to barbarians, excluding the godly Hyperborean-types, in their minds. Thus, systems of slavery grew around the flow of native northerners along with plenty of other raw northern goods, of which trafficked humans were but one raw good, into the Mediterranean world. Slavery in the Mediterranean and Near East long drew upon marginalized populations, especially nomadic groups, from peripheral frontier zones of the northern steppe, the southern deserts, and the high mountains from at least the time of most ancient Sumeria until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the twentieth century. As a specific brand of Mediterranean slavery, the Hellenic institution of slavery developed around the idea that barbarians could only integrate into the *polis*-system through the institution of slavery.

At the same time, the barbarian embodied Greek ideas about cultural evolution and the Greeks' own mythic past. In the barbarian lands, the beastlike and godlike barbarians symbolized past stages of the Hellenes' mythic narrative of ethnogenesis. The poet Hesiod summarizes the mythological premises in *Works and Days* (lines 109-201). In sum, the human race passes through a series of ages from primitive paradise in the Golden Age through the hardships and toils of the Silver, Bronze, and Heroic Ages. Each period in the cycle tends towards an eschatological cultural apex until the emergence of the Greek *polis* in the Iron Age, an age plagued with its own strife yet itself striving for a cyclical return to Golden Age virtue. As the Greeks understood their own past in these terms, so they also interpreted foreign cultures as being in various stages of this historical progression much like the more modern evolutionary theories of Morgan, Tylor, Frazer and others.

James S. Romm (1992) demonstrates that Hellenic ontology interlaced the mythological with the geographical, political, and economic forces of the *polis*. As a result, the Greeks envisioned a world divided into concentric circular zones which emanated outwards from Hellas towards the river *Okeanos* (i.e., Ocean), which encircled the earth. Recalling Aristotle's discussion of gods, beasts, and the *polis*, the Ancient Greeks imagined that the regions beyond their world grew more primitive the further away from the center one travelled. In this way, Ancient Greeks imagined that people not immediately part of their cultural system were more primitive, or were going through stages of cultural development which the Greeks believed they themselves had already undergone. Thus, geography recapitulated an ancient version of cultural evolution in the Greek mind. Herodotus reports that the Scythians claim they are the "youngest of all nations" (Hdt. 4.5). By "youngest" Herodotus means they are in an early, primitive stage of cultural evolution, although perhaps Herodotus rejects the poetic noble savage paradigm in favor

of empirical observation, historical criticism, and natural philosophy. Naturally, the values and ideas of Hellenic culture shaped this envisioning of the inhabited, known world, and ancient “primitivism” came into being (Lovejoy and Boas 1965).

The center, or “navel,” of the known world, a location steeped in cultic mystery tradition, was Delphi (Plutarch *De defectu orac.* 1.1; Strabo 9.3.6). Outward from Delphi one found the Greek world of agrarian city-states such as Athens, Sparta, Corinth and others, all of whom visited the Oracle at Delphi as a shared Hellenic tradition. As one travelled further north, one encountered Thessalians and Macedonians, equestrian Greek culture groups who at times resembled more the barbarians to their north than the Greeks to their south but could have also represented Greek perceptions of the Heroic Mycenaean Age. Beyond the Hellas and into the northern lands of the barbarians, one encounters barbaric groups who were commonplace in Greek lore and in everyday life for many *polis*-dwellers. These native Pontic groups included Scythians, Thracians, Dacians, Cimmerians, Phrygians, and many other groups of Anatolia and the Black Sea region. Moreover, their warlike customs and histories, especially their roles in the Persian Wars, might indicate a placement in the mythic Bronze Age or perhaps a continuation of the Heroic Age in the Hesiodic ontology—the mythic scheme, naturally, is one which does not neatly match the reality.

The Greeks traded with these peoples, and many commonly appeared in the *polis* as slaves. Thus these barbarians were an ordinary enough sight for the Greeks and, consequently, a recognizable template with which poets, historians, dramatists, painters, sculptors, and other artists characterized barbarism. In fact, the Scythian figure with trousers, a tall felt hat, bow and quiver served as a template for Greek depictions of numerous other barbarians, including the Persians. Greek heroes from earlier ages, whether Odysseus or Herakles, also appear as

somewhat “barbaric,” especially in their use of the bow, a skill Classical Greeks seldom used but which they believed was primitive. In a way, the template applied to these Greek heroes reflects the same Hellenic view of history and cultural evolution. If the Scythian template of barbarism represented a past stage of Greek culture, it would make sense for the Greeks to portray the heroes of their past in the terms of “present” primitive cultures.

While the material template (e.g., clothing, archery, etc.) may have been somewhat accurate for many Pontic-Caspian steppe cultures and of Iranian Medes and Persians, the Scythian template came to represent all of the groups lumped together as Persians during the Persian Wars without any cultural differentiation (the sole exception being Herodotus’s exhaustive efforts in describing in meticulous detail the culturally-specific uniforms of every group of the Persian forces in his “Catalogue of Armies,” book 7 of *Histories*), and many groups called “Scythians” could potentially have been non-Scythian groups amalgamated into the identity from the Greek perspective. In other words, the motive in Greek media was to exhibit the otherness of foreign cultures through a culturally recognizable template-characterization of barbarism. Scholars have often revisited this problem of accurately identifying ambiguous barbarian figures on pottery paintings given the Greeks’ arbitrary application of templates of barbarism (Schauenburg 1975; Raeck 1981; Roller 1983; Pinney 1984; A. Smith 1999; Harrison 2002; T.J. Smith 2003; Ivanchik, Braund 2005; Skinner 2012; See Linebaugh 2013:70-82 for a more detailed discussion of the specific pieces of art than my very brief synopsis presented here). Nevertheless, the template emerged out of Greek interactions with societies on their northern Pontic frontier and the resulting attempts to make sense of their observations of the other, popularly and intellectually.

Beyond that frontier zone, historical and ethnographic reality becomes mixed with fantasy. In the Hellenic worldview, the closer one travels to the *eschatiai*, the ends of the earth, the more fantastic and mythical the inhabitants of those lands become, and, moreover, the closer the wayfarer comes to the beginning of human history. Here elements of beast-barbarians and god-barbarians become more evident, and they inhabit, in the Greek mind, the mythic cultural stages of the Golden and Silver Ages, the time of virtuous paradise and the time after the “fall” from the gods’ grace. Barbarians on the fringes of the world also tend to appear with exaggerated qualities. James Redfield explains that in Greek lore the Scythians are often surrounded by more extreme versions of themselves (2002:37). Herodotus describes a number of groups beyond the Scythians who drift more-or-less in the liminal space between fact and fiction. The Neuroi, for example, were reputed to be shapeshifters or werewolves, and they fled from their land in the north due to an invasion of serpents. Although Herodotus doubts the story’s factuality, once more he maintains an ethnographer’s faithfulness to giving voice to the barbarian other in his inclusion of their story (Hdt. 4.105). Beyond their lycanthropic behavior, which led to Herodotus’s skepticism, the Historian describes these people as similar in custom to their Scythian neighbors. Matthew Dickie considers the Neuroi an example of native illusionists or charlatans (2003:73-4); however, one could interpret the account of the Neuroi in Herodotus as evidence of Greek misunderstanding of native steppe totemic myths about primordial wolf and snake conflicts. In any case, the trans-human/animal liminality of the Neuroi is representative of the bestial or brutal characterization of barbarism noted by Aristotle. This motif of Pontic Steppe barbarism appears in other forms in Ancient Greek media, such as the Centaur, more widely recognized today than the Neuroi, whose natural position between man and horse mythicized the nomad’s affinity for horsemanship (Tarbell 1920).

Other groups which Herodotus mentions (4.22-4), on the fringe beyond the Scythians include the Thyssagetai and Iyrcai, the descriptions of whom might possibly designate them as hunter-gatherer groups, and the sacred Argippaians, whose customs and physical characteristics set them apart from the Scythians, although Herodotus says they share the same manner of dress. The Thyssagetae and Iyrcai, according to Herodotus, “live by hunting,” and he provides a detailed summary of their specific hunting tactics using mastery over their heavily wooded taiga landscape, mastery over their horses and dogs, and mastery over the skill of archery:

The hunter climbs up a tree and lies in wait there for his game (now trees are abundant in all this country), and each has a horse at hand, which has been taught to lie down upon its belly in order that it may make itself low, and also a dog: and when he sees the wild animal from the tree, he first shoots the arrow and then mounts upon his horse and pursues it, and the dog seizes hold of it (Hdt. 4.22).

Herodotus’s ethnography of the Argippaians describes them as bald, both men and women, with flat noses and large chins. They lived in tents constructed around trees, foraged for wild cherries called *as-chy*, which they mixed with milk and from which they made cakes. This obscure “ethnographic” passage of Herodotus also describes the Argippaians as settlers of disputes among their neighbors rather than as warriors like many of the nearby groups. As such, it appears that legitimate ethnographic data has possibly mixed with notions of noble savage, *eschatiai*-barbarism, not to say the Argippaians may not have had some kind of role as peace-keeping council rulers in a mix of tribal conflicts and relationships similar to the function of the Iroquois Confederacy in North America.

The customs Herodotus describes could identify the Argippaians with any number of historical Eurasian Steppe nomads. However, the light in which he describes them makes the Argippaians something between a brutish Scythian and a primitive Hyperborean. Herodotus is sure of the validity of his sources though (4.24-5): “Now as far as these bald-headed men there is abundantly clear information about the land and about the nations on this side of them;” and he



continues to describe how Scythians and Greeks often travel to the territory of these nomads from the ports of the Pontic coast for trade with the natives. However, Herodotus claims nobody knows very much about the lands to the north of the Argippaians due to impassable mountains, possibly the Urals or the Altai (Bolton 1962; Wasson et al. 1986; Mallory and Mair 2000). He does report that the locals claim that goat-footed men and men who sleep for six months of the year dwell in the high country. Here Herodotus draws his line between believable and unbelievable, ethnography and folktale (although he does this throughout the entire work).

Likewise, Herodotus describes the lands further to the east of the Scythians as inhabited with groups similar to the Scythians but perhaps even more savage (e.g., Sauromatae, Issedonians, Massagetae) (See Appendix A, Figure 2). Beyond these groups we traverse the boundary into the fantastic once more. We find in the eastern *eschatiai* the Arimaspians, one-eyed, horse-riding primitives entwined in an eternal cycle of combat with gold-guarding griffins. These Arimaspians of the east, like the Hyperboreans of the north, represent the primordial ages of man in Hesiodic ontology and an archetype of barbarism at the ends of the earth (Romm 1992:70). One could also argue that the Arimaspians represent the most extreme version of the Scythian. Following Mallory and Mair (2000:42-3), the name “Arimaspian” might derive from the Indo-Iranian *arim* (“friends of”) *aspou* (“horses”), a fitting description for equestrian nomads, rather than Herodotus’s translation of *arima* (“one”) *spou* (“eye”) (Hdt. 4.27). Herodotus claims this report of the Arimaspians as one-eyed horsemen comes from both the Scythians and the Issedonians. Although the translation of their name is contestable, the one-eyed Arimaspians became an extreme motif of barbarism in Greek art. We will discuss this further in the next chapter, but the Arimaspians/Griffin motif also has its own cultural roots in the native

mythologies of the Eurasian Steppe. Greek traders and travelers certainly would have noticed such a widespread image.

In the complex frontier zone between the *polis* and the mythic *eschatiai* the Greeks observed, interacted with, and to an extent exploited tangible, historical native populations whom they understood and characterized through the lens of barbarism. Romm (1992) has noted similar concentric cultural-geographic arrangements in terms of southern barbarism with the Egyptians, Ethiopians, Libyans, Arabians, and the mythic Pygmies. Given that the Greeks commonly accepted the idea that the Hyperboreans lived beyond the source of the northern winds of Boreas (hence their name), Herodotus entertains the notion of a southern equivalent to the Hyperboreans called Hypernotians (Hdt. 4.36). Although an investigation of southern barbarism is beyond the scope of this thesis, Romm does a fair job explaining the relevance of “blameless Ethiopians,” warlike Arabians in combat with flying serpents, and Pygmies in perpetual warfare with wild cranes as categories of barbarism in their own right. Although southern barbarism certainly appears in Greek media with virtues and vices which mirror northern barbarism, the most common template of the barbarian draws its inspiration from Greece’s northern frontier.

As mentioned above briefly, at the furthest extent of the northern *eschatiai* dwelt the Hyperboreans who represented the primordial Golden Age of human history in the Greek worldview, a type of Romanticism or primitivism which would survive in Western thought into the present (Lovejoy and Boas 1969; Romm 1992). By all accounts the Hyperboreans embodied happiness, justice, and primitive virtue. Indeed the Ancient Greeks deemed the Hyperboreans to be the most virtuous and sacred of all humankind, closest to the gods but also to the primeval chaos of Ocean. It is little surprise that these mythical people found an esteemed place in Greek mythology and cultic religious traditions as the spirit-guides of the cult of Apollo and other

traditions. Even Plato took some interest in the manifestation of their Golden Age ancestors as the spirits of the wise (*Cratylus* 397e-398c). The following chapter will look more deeply into this issue, but for now let us provide some background for these Hyperboreans, a mytho-ethnography perhaps.

An exploration of the Hyperboreans could in fact produce enough discussion for an entire monograph, and it has inspired a few scholars to accept such a task (Macurdy 1916, 1920; Casson 1920). These mythic northerners usually remain a topic conjoined with the discussion of either other, more historically attestable groups or within the larger context of the myths in which they appear. For example, J. D. P. Bolton (1962), in a vast exegesis of the sources on the Greek traveler Aristeas, surmised that the Arimaspians might refer to the proto-Turkic nomads of the Altai and that the vegetarian, maritime Hyperboreans refer to the Chinese. J. P. Mallory and Victor H. Mair (2000) in their search for the cultural identities of the mummified pastoralists of the Tarim Basin, south of the Altai, arrive at a similar conclusion. If we consider the possibility that the Argippaians, Issedonians, Massagetae, and other groups lived north and east of the Caspian Sea, it is quite likely that Greek explorers and traders would have heard about the customs of cultures beyond these groups. In hearing about these customs, and perhaps even occasionally observing them or speaking with travelers from the more distant lands, the Greeks would have formed their own ideas about the distant cultures based upon their already developing mythic framework concerning the furthest extents of the *oikoumene*.

Timothy P. Bridgman (2005) offers the latest fully dedicated analysis of Hyperborean source material, and he concludes that the Hyperborean archetype emerged out of Greek interactions with Celtic European groups. While the Greeks certainly had interactions with the tribes of *Keltoi*, Bridgman's attempt to narrow the Hyperboreans down to one identifiable,

historical group is far-reaching to say the least. Nonetheless, one could certainly include the Celts among the milieu of barbarians of the north in the Hellenic worldview, and Greek writers, including Plato, at times did so, differentiating between specific cultural group-affiliations but essentializing the whole lot within the barbarian template. For instance, on the drinking habits of various barbarians discussed above, Plato lists the Celts among several others as all habitual alcohol-abusers in *Laws* (637d-e). Similar discussions appear in Roman literature on the Celtic and Germanic tribes to the north of the Roman Empire, most notably in Tacitus's *Germania* (22-23). Furthermore, the ethnographic descriptions of the Celts in Greek sources, like Plato, indicate the Greeks viewed them much like they viewed Thracians, Dacians, and other northwestern barbarians, usually with disdain but at times with admiration. During the third century BC, as if a final barbarous thrust through Bridgman's Celtic Hyperborean figure, the Celtic group known as the Gauls sacked sacred Delphi, one of two major religious centers which mythically connected the Hellenes with the peaceful, vegetarian Hyperboreans of the distant north.

Nevertheless, we cannot suggest that one culture was solely responsible for inspiring the Greeks to concoct the mythic Hyperboreans as the inhabitants of the furthest rims of the world. Rather, the Hyperboreans were the composite of Greek observations of the actual inhabitants of Pontic-Caspian Steppe and hearsay concerning cultures much further north, west, and east. Many of the sources are legend, folklore, myth, and outright lies or propaganda. As Romm (1993:47) illustrates, the Greek sources on Hyperboreans and other barbarians, real or imagined, often mixed Hellenic ethnocentrism with "reverse ethnocentrism," *paradeigmata*, the object of which is not to present accurate ethnography, good or bad, but to flip the ethnocentrism on the Greeks themselves. *Paradeigmata* refers to the use of descriptions of the other, namely barbarian cultures, as criticism of the ancient ethnographer's own culture. The Roman historian Tacitus, for

example, utilized ethnographic passages on the German barbarian tribes to criticize Roman culture in contrasting German disregard for gold and silver:

The natives take less pleasure than most people do in possessing and handling these metals; indeed, one can see in their houses silver vessels, which have been presented to chieftains or ambassadors travelling abroad, put to the same everyday use as earthenware (Tac. *Ger.* 5).

Tacitus likewise uses the dishonor of adultery among the German tribes as a criticism of Roman immorality (Tac. *Ger.* 19), and he praises the overall virtue of the Chauca tribe as “the noblest people of Germany” (Tac. *Ger.* 35). Hartog (1988) describes the same ethic in Herodotus, that some of the passages, historical or not, were meant to highlight the paradoxes and hypocrisies of Greek culture from within. The barbarian, at times, functioned as a mirror with which artists and writers could hold up to their own Hellenic society as well-disguised criticism. The Hyperboreans, not immune to the paradoxical motives of Greek writers and artists, became a complex and enigmatic template for an already paradoxical category of otherness. As chapter 4 will explain, the modern New Age Movement utilizes narratives about and idealized images of indigenous folk as a sort of *paradeigmata* with which one can criticize Western culture.

The primary mythological sources on the Hyperboreans paint an idyllic image of an Earth (Gaia)-born tribe at the ever-expanding edges of the world. Hesiod (late eighth-early seventh centuries BC) describes them as “well-horsed,” fed by streams of water, and possibly associated with amber (Catalogues of Women Fragment 40a). The horses alone indicate an association with steppe cultures, but amber, a precious raw good that the Greeks, Romans, and other Mediterranean cultures imported from the north via the Black Sea, illustrates perfectly well the cultural inspiration for Hesiod’s poetic expression (see Tac. *Ger.* 45, for an example of the Roman perspective on the northern amber trade). Roughly contemporaneous with Hesiod, Homer utilizes the Hyperborean figure in a dramatic expression of distant barbarism along with

Egypt and Cyprus in which the Hyperboreans represent the very edge of the world inhabited by humans (*Homeric Hymn 7 to Dionysos* 27 ff). The fifth century poet, Pindar, describes in more detail the primitive nobility and virtue of those who dwell “behind cold Boreas.” His *Olympian Ode* (3.12 ff) lays out Herakles’s quest to find the golden-antlered hind where he discovers the Hyperborean paradise, and Pindar’s *Pythian Ode*, moreover, details the cultural traits of these “hallowed” and mysterious people: sacrifice to and serve Apollo; Apollo delights in them; promiscuity; given to poetry, dancing, and music; free from illness, old age, toil, and battle. Pindar’s description of the Hyperboreans is fairly similar Hesiod’s description of the people of the Golden Age, the most substantial exception being their service to the young god Apollo rather than Kronos:

Once Perseus, the leader of his people, entered their [the Hyperboreans’] homes and feasted among them, when he found them sacrificing glorious hecatombs of donkeys to the god. In the festivities of those people and in their praises Apollo rejoices most, and he laughs when he sees the erect arrogance of the beasts. The Muse is not absent from their customs; all around swirl the dances of girls, the lyres loud chords and the cries of flutes. They wreath their hair with golden laurel branches and revel joyfully. No sickness or ruinous old age is mixed into that sacred race; without toil or battles they live without fear of strict Nemesis (Pindar *Pythian Ode* 10.30-44).

And compare to the poet Hesiod, on the people of the Golden Age:

The gods... fashioned a golden race of mortal men... and like the gods they lived with happy hearts untouched by work or sorrow. Vile old age never appeared, but always lively-limbed, far from all ills, they feasted happily. Death came to them as sleep, and all good things were theirs; ungrudgingly, the fertile land gave up her fruits unasked. Happy to be at peace, they lived with every want supplied, rich in flocks, dear to the blessed gods. And then this race was hidden in the ground. But still they live as spirits of the earth, holy and good, guardians who keep off harm, givers of wealth: this kingly right is theirs (Hesiod *Works and Days* 110-124).

Beyond the difference in devotion to one deity or another, the differences between the Pindarian and Hesiodic narratives include: 1) a specific ritual prescription of the Hyperboreans, whereas none are provided for the Golden Age folk; 2) an emphasis on the Muses, spiritual inspiration of poetry and music, among the Hyperboreans, whereas the people of the Golden Age

are simply described as having “feasted happily,” which does not entail they did not engage in music and poetry; 3) the Golden Age people received their food from the abundance of the earth; and 4) the spirits of the Golden Age become associated with the chthonic underworld as guardians after their demise, whereas Pindar notes nothing of that sort of the Hyperboreans. Nonetheless, the Hyperboreans are also associated with the chthonic earth in the Pythian traditions, as spiritual entities whom the oracles frequently contacted, and in Hesiod’s *Catalogues of Women*. Parallels between the two passages denote that both the Golden Age and Hyperborean mythic cultures were 1) pastoralists; and 2) neither suffered sickness, old-age, or war.

These mythic appearances of the Hyperborean-Golden Age noble savage were part of the Greek imagination of space which was both geographically and chronologically remote, but it was also sacred or powerful space. On one hand, the barbarian figure in Greek media (e.g., pottery-paintings, poetry, drama) inspired the exploration of the northern and eastern frontiers through symbolic links to heroic and mythic journeys of the Greeks’ past, a stance which François Hartog (2001) champions. In this ideological vein, barbarism is equated to the Greek Golden Age and is placed at the edges of the earth, the *eschatiai*, most notably characterized by the Hyperboreans. This ideology which I would call “Hyperboreanism” created a template of barbarism through which native northerners, thought to be close to the gods and in harmony with Gaia (i.e., Mother Earth or Nature) served as a source of northern wisdom for learned Greeks. Thus Hyperboreans were associated symbolically with a number of Greek mystery traditions; cults dedicated to Apollo. Pindar’s *Pythian Ode*, above, for example, illustrates the mystical importance of the Hyperboreans in Ancient Greek religious life.

The crafting of the noble savage archetype was the work of the artists and mystics of ancient society, whereas the social theorists of the time preferred to put this template to the test of empirical ethnographic observation. Like Plato's *Republic* and Atlantis in his *Laws*, and like the musings of much later European thinkers on the cusp of the Age of Exploration like Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, the Hyperboreans existed practically as invented *paradeigmata*, as imaginary subjects for ethical, social, and political discussions conveniently brushed off to the blank edges of the map where few ethnographers could challenge the source and the majority of the audience would remain blissfully ignorant as to whether the subject culture was real or not (Romm 1992). Herodotus is critical of such imagined space, or at least he gives that impression. Herodotus outright rejected the noble savage and rather allowed barbarian cultures to demonstrate their diversity, their strengths and weaknesses, their multiform virtues and vices. He was still an ancient "cultural evolutionist" to a degree, but he wanted proof that the Hyperboreans existed before he would ever describe a foreign culture in Golden Age terms. Another passage out of Tacitus, a description of the most northern people in Roman knowledge known as the Fenni, demonstrates a similar "critical" examination of distant northern barbarians which put the noble savage paradigm to the test. Although technically not Hyperborean, this nomadic tribe, likely the Finns, Saami, or some other related or ancestral Finno-Ugric group, Tacitus describes in tongue-in-cheek fashion which uses a template of primitive simplicity, based on what appears to be a hunter-gatherer society, in order to poke fun at the complexities of Roman life:

The Fenni are astonishingly savage and disgustingly poor. They have no proper weapons, no horses, no homes. They eat wild herbs, dress in skins, and sleep on the ground. Their only hope of getting better fare lies in their arrows, which, for lack of iron, they tip with bone. The women support themselves by hunting, exactly like the men; they accompany them everywhere and insist on taking their share of the game. The only way they have of protecting their infants against wild beasts or bad weather is to hide them under a



makeshift covering of interlaced branches...yet they count their lot happier than that of others who groan over field labor, sweat over house-building, or hazard their own and other men's fortunes in the hope of profit and the fear of loss. Unafraid of anything that man or god can do to them, they have reached a state that few human beings can attain: for these men are so well content that they do not even need to pray for anything.

Tacitus then concludes this passage with a mention of the fanciful beyond the Fenni, meaning that they mark the border between human and non-human worlds, that Tacitus's survey has reached its terminus and struck the *eschatiai*:

What comes after them is the stuff of fables: Hellusii and Oxiones with the faces and features of men, the bodies and limbs of animals. On such unverifiable stories I shall express no opinion (Tac. Ger. 46).

## **Concluding Remarks for Chapter 2**

The resulting multivariant models of barbarism that emerged in Hellenic media generated a general sense of the otherness of northern, Pontic cultures, but also an otherness which was more fluid. Hellenes might simultaneously have viewed the indigenous nomads of their frontiers as primordial in both the senses of animalistic vice and primitive righteousness. Moreover, the Hellenic imagining of their geographic and cultural frontier was organized in these templates of primitivism, a trend which Lovejoy and Boas (1965), James Romm (1992), and Harry Levin (1969) note persisted in Medieval and Modern European exploration. Barbarian as a template for the characterization of otherness utilized both real ethnographic material and a highly ethnocentric *polis*-ideology in the construction of a frontier of both social space and economic and cultural exploitation between Greek and barbarian, civilization and nomad. The effects of colonization in the Pontic region catalyzed the growth of equestrian nomad "kingdoms" and a thriving slave trade. Moreover, Ancient Greek colonialism established a circuit through which privileged, educated Greeks could access native steppe religions and integrate elements of those

traditions into the emergent Hellenic socio-religious structures known as mystery religions. This final classical issue will be the subject of the next chapter, after which this discussion will turn to more contemporary matters relevant to otherness and invented tradition manifest in shamanism.

## Chapter 3

### Pontic Barbarian Religions and the Invention of the Mysteries

The previous chapter discussed 1) how the concept of *eschatiai* informed the Hellenic worldview and activities in the Pontic from exploration to colonization, 2) how Greek activities in the Pontic generated the gradual construction of the Greek/barbarian antithesis, and 3) how the Hellenic ideology of the barbarian furthermore created two antithetical archetypes—the slavish, animalistic barbarian based on ethnocentric stereotypes of the historical peoples of the Pontic (e.g., Thracians, Scythians, etc.), and the noble savages of a more fantastic type who always dwelt on the furthest peripheries of the Greek *oikoumene*, or known world (e.g., Hyperboreans, Arimaspians, etc.).

This chapter will examine how the Greek/barbarian ideology, as a product of Greek-Pontic colonialism, generated 1) a demand for “Hyperborean” wisdom in the Greek world through the rise of Hellenic mystery religions; and 2) cultural appropriation of the exploitable indigenous peoples of the Pontic in the construction of mystery traditions in the Greek heartland. Essentially, the Greek mystery religions emerged in a state of Greek-Pontic colonialism and cultural imperialism. Furthermore, this chapter should contribute to the debate on shamanism within academia. As a number of scholars (Dodds 1951; La Barre 1970a-b; Eliade 1972; West 1982; Noll 1985; Littleton 1986; Ruck 1986; Lateiner 1990; and Ustinova 2009) interpret various aspects of ancient Greek religious and mythological traditions through the lens of shamanism, this discussion should revise the idea of “Greek shamanism,” a concoction of E. R.

Dodds's 1951 work, *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Moreover, it will reveal that just as the mysteries were invented traditions of culturally hegemonic stature, to reconstruct them as a type of shamanism roughly 2500 years later is also a product of cultural imperialism.

The inquiry returns once more to the question of what shamanism is. Although the idea of "Greek shamanism" is exceedingly problematic, the description of Pontic religions from the same period as "Northern shamanism" is more permissible. Like the archaeological problems discussed in our first chapter, we should be careful not to inject modern ideas about globally indigenous religions into the interpretation of the material record of the ancient steppe.

Nonetheless, steppe culture was historically fluid, in that technologies, languages, ideas, and populations were exceptionally mobile and transient. Migrations east and west, back and forth from one end of the steppe to the other were routine until the Modern Period. With the domestication of the horse during the Bronze Age, nomadic culture effectively generated a process of cultural exchange and change which cycled for millennia, and consequently tribal alliances and empires grew and shrank in succession (Anthony 2007; Bartold 1958; Saunders 1971; Skaff 2004). Historically and archaeologically, Pontic traditions were part of the larger cultural complex of Northern Central Eurasia, albeit the western end of that geographical continuum of steppe and taiga-forests which runs from Eastern Europe to Mongolia. As a result of the natural highway this region provided, relationships between the many peoples of the Eurasian Steppe, prehistoric and historic, and its border lands were far-reaching (see Bruyako and Ostroverkhov 2004:194-195). Thus it should not come as a surprise that many cultural similarities can be found between, say, Pontic Scythians and Altaic groups from the same period.

It is no great leap to claim that this cultural continuum also incorporated the flow of religious ideas and customs. Although describing the ancient religions of the steppe as

“shamanism” risks misleading the reader, we should note that the Pontic religions shared a relationship, via the steppe, with the Altaic-Siberian cultures from which historical shamanism originated (See Appendix A, Figure 3). We cannot know how Scythian, Thracian, Massagetae, or Issedonian spiritualists interacted with the spirit world except from a few gleanings from sedentary observers and conjectural interpretations of associated material culture. Thus, the cultures of the steppe in the first millennium BC may or may not fit Sidky’s category of shamanism as mastery over spirit-entities. We simply cannot know, aside from the fact that these cultures were an integral part of the burgeoning world in which shamanism in the modern Northern Eurasian sense developed. Franz Hančar (1952:192) reports that between 700 and 100 BC the relationship between “Pontic Scytho-Sarmatian art and Siberia” is evident in terms of motifs of shaman-animal affinity, animal-combat, and animal-predation. Although we will delve into the specifics of the mythological and ritual significance of Pontic artifacts below, it will suffice to mention that cross-cultural parallels run deep enough to describe them in the context of Central Eurasian shamanism, even if for nothing more than heuristic reasons. Fol and Marazov (1977) identify among the ancient Thracians mythological symbolism akin to Scythian and Siberian traditions, especially in terms of shaman-animal affinity. The Thracians, who were likely the most sedentary of the Pontic barbarians, utilized imagery that suggests they shared some of their traditions with their contemporaries to the east (Loehr 1955; Rice 1961; Farkas 1981). Mundkur (1984:454) goes so far as to suggest, concerning Northern Eurasian nomadic art, that:

their common ‘animal style’ traits stem from a uniformity in the Eurasian nomad’s traditional way of life and relationship to the fauna of the steppe, boreal forest, and tundra and are expressed through ornamental, utilitarian objects such as belt buckles, weapons, mirror-frames, etc. The antecedents of this style apparently belonged to extremely early groups of hunter-gatherers whose art merely reflected magicoreligious beliefs about innumerable animal species of the vast Eurasian expanses.

China's historical relationships with the nomadic cultures of its northern frontier, especially with the Xiongnu, parallel those of the ancient West. The accounts of the nebulous *Hu* peoples, the Chinese equivalent of the "barbarians," in literature such as the *Hanshu* and *Shiji* are eerily reminiscent of Herodotus's reports of the Pontic-Caspian barbarian cultures from roughly the same time period. It only makes sense if readers eschew the Orientalist notion that the East and West were separate civilizational centers which existed in vacuums. Instead, consider that Europe and Eastern Asia were in fact connected for millennia through not only the trade routes of the south but also the traditional migratory routes of the steppe. The nomads of the steppe simultaneously interacted with the cultural cores at either end of the continuum and themselves were connected with one another. Sophia-Karin Psarras (2003), using historical and archaeological analysis, notes not only similarities between "Scytho-Siberian" and Xiongnu culture but also considers them to be part of that cultural continuum of the Eurasian Steppe. Xiongnu religion, according to the historical accounts and archaeological sites included horse sacrifice, human sacrifice to a war god, worship of the sun, moon, sky, earth, and ancestors, and like the Scythians the Xiongnu drank blood, here that of horses, mixed with wine and swigged from enemy skulls to solidify solemn oaths (Psarras 2003:129-32). In terms of Xiongnu art, the same Scythian motifs of animal-predation and animal-combat occur in grave goods associated with Xiongnu sites in Mongolia and Northern China with influences in Han Chinese art.

Given the antiquity of the Pontic cultures in question, our primary ethnographic sources are extremely limited, and Herodotus, furthermore, provides the bulk of observations and hearsay on Pontic groups from the Hellenic period. Nonetheless, the modern reader can glean from the writings of the "Father of History" a number of passages that are confirmed by the archaeological record of the steppe. Modern scholars have made attempts to compare Herodotus,

as well as the material record, with historical and modern ethnographic data (Childe 1970:38-9; Meuli 1935; Hančar 1952; Heissig 1980), and numerous striking similarities surfaced between the cultural patterns of the various Paleo-Asiatic, Ural-Altaic, Tungoso-Manchurian, and Turco-Mongolian groups which are analogous to the descriptions of the Northern Eurasian barbarians in Herodotus.

### **Animism, Totemism, and Northern Eurasian Ontologies**

In order to fortify our perspective of the ancient Pontic cultures and their historical analogues, we must first clarify the ontological principles which underlie historical Northern Eurasian religious traditions. Morten Pedersen's (2001) exposition of North Asian indigenous ontologies provides exhaustive and insightful understandings of the multifarious religious and philosophic modalities of the "shamanic" traditions of the vast region which stretches from the steppes of the Mongolian Plateau in the south northward through the taiga and tundra of Siberia (See Appendix A, Figure 4). Among a long list of indigenous groups, Pedersen notes a major division, in terms of both social structure and ontology, between the cultures of Northern North Asia (NNA) and Southern North Asia (SNA). He also notes that this division is not purely dichotomous given that aspects of both ontological dispositions occur throughout the entire region. Rather, the division indicates the dominant type of worldview exhibited by cultures in each region without being mutually exclusive.

It likely sounds more dichotomous than Pedersen intended. Elements which typify NNA traditions occur to a degree in the SNA traditions and vice versa. Although Pedersen understands all of North Asian indigenous religion as generally shamanic in the truest, Siberian sense, he also

acknowledges fundamental variations between cultural groups on a north-south cline. Whereas the theoretical principles of animism bracket the more northern traditions, the southern traditions exhibit more totemistic modalities. These theoretical divisions, furthermore, coincide with variation in social complexity and community-group worldviews, but are by no means limited to one or another culture group:

Despite the tendency of different scholars to highlight different aspects of the North Asian societies, and taking into account their different theoretical standpoints, the established wisdom concerning the differences between NNA and SNA boils down to a basic distinction between horizontal and vertical relations... Put simply, whereas the societies of NNA organize the world horizontally (through notions of charismatic leadership, egalitarian ethos, bilateral descent, direct exchange, and orally based shamanist religion, etc.), societies of SNA organize it vertically (through notions of inherited leadership, a hierarchical ethos, patrilineal descent, indirect exchange, a script-based Buddhist religion, etc.) (Pedersen 2001:419-420).

As such, Pedersen breaks down various North Asian ontologies into animist and totemist worldviews. Animism and totemism are not necessarily religious traditions in their own right, nor are they mutually exclusive categories. Rather, following Pedersen, they describe the dominant worldview of the cultures in question, which incorporates the spiritual or religious realm. They are “governing principles” through which the social context of self/other is acted out (e.g., animist principles in hunting customs, totemist in rites of passages) (Pedersen 2001:419). As distinct categories of religion, animism and totemism are no more based in reality than shamanism, and they are often lumped together as variations of indigenous shamanic traditions (see DuBois 2009). The early schools of cultural evolution, largely shaped by the theories of E. B. Tylor, supposed that animism represented one of the oldest, if not the earliest, forms of religion. For Tylor, the empirical categories he notes (i.e., animism, fetishism, polytheism, monotheism, and science) which he perceived in his present era, represent stages of cultural evolution. Animism, in Tylor’s sequence, represents the earliest stages of primitive religion, and science is his pinnacle of human cultural achievement. Tylor built his categories of religion,



although not necessarily Romanticist, upon the same Enlightenment understanding of the savage other, perhaps with a slight Hobbesian bent, that the savage mind's unscientific approach to understanding seemingly mystical phenomena is at the root of all religion.

In any case, animism became synonymous with primitive religion in the evolutionary model in that all religions or spiritualities are survivals of primitive animism's "error." In the twentieth century animism naturally fell into the larger category of shamanism as the "living" example of the most primordial and egalitarian form of indigenous, shamanic religion. The truth is animism is as much a constructed product of Western thought as is shamanism. Yet, animism as a category persisted unchallenged in scholarship through most of the twentieth century. It is no secret that many peoples, indigenous or not, believe in spirits. The belief in spirits, however, is integrated into larger ideological and social contexts that cross the categorical boundaries which Tylor established. Should we throw out animism then? Recent scholarship would say no, that we should instead take it seriously once more, not as a religion per se, but as a dimension of cultural understandings of self/other, as an ontological principle for interpreting what exists in the world surrounding a member of a specific culture group and how that person should interact with said world (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Bird-David 1999; Pedersen 2001; Willerslev 2007, 2013). It is an identifiable element in the perspectives of various cultures rather than the single defining fundament of any religious tradition. It is neither primitive nor part of an Enlightenment theosophic paradigm.

Animism, which Pedersen describes as "Analogous identification" between persons both human and nonhuman (2001:413) and "heterogeneous perceptions of a potential interior spiritual quality in things" (p.414), typically occurs "where societal relations as a whole are horizontal in character" (p.416). In a libertine type of shamanism, as among the Yukaghir for example, where

any being has the potential to mediate between the spiritual and material realms, animist sociality between persons occurs in an egalitarian fashion. Humans communicate with the spirits of ancestors, plants, and animals and vice versa in a “boundless whole” of society, according to Pedersen’s Swiss-Cheese-Universe Theory (2001:416). In such a universe, the “whole” of the universe is all of the same unified substance, the “cheese,” and the “holes” in the “cheese” are different social positions to be occupied by animate beings ranging from geographic features and weather phenomenon to plants, animals, and humans. Moreover, the socialization or shifting between the existing categories is horizontal, meaning it is egalitarian and perhaps anarchic. Spirits and humans interact on a frequent and chaotic basis in this ontological model, but simultaneously they are all part of the whole. In contrast with the evolutionary model of religions (e.g., animism—totemism—polytheism—monotheism), Pedersen’s model of animism tends towards a socially variant model. We can infer that animistic traditions should be viewed in the context of their relationship with the hegemonic world system. Should animism occupy the same socio-economic position as shamanism, then shamanism as a term could apply to animist traditions in a Northern Eurasian context. Moreover, it has the potential to provide some insight, however slight, into the ancient cultures of the same Northern Eurasian region.

Like animism in the evolutionary perspective, totemism has at times been treated as an independent phenomenon, an identifiable religious tradition or stage of religious evolution, often synonymous with Tylor’s fetishism. Others looked to a more practical reason for the appearance of totemic traditions. Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, albeit in different ways, argued that totemism occurred as social means of regulating natural resources through the classification of social groups within naturally occurring categories. According to Malinowski, totemism is a utilitarian manifestation of primitive man’s interest in his environment, of figuring out through

the social institutions of totemic myths and taboos what is and is not good to eat for one's self. Radcliffe-Brown, on the other hand, describes totemism as the social ordering of natural resources for the good of the larger group structure, the establishment of social and ecological equilibrium. Totemism, in Radcliffe-Brown's system, is a practical solution to the problem of the "relation of man and nature in ritual and myth" (1929:399). Totemism, in such a theory, provides the indigenous mental framework of who has access to what resources, how, and perhaps why.

Namu Jila, in a more recent examination of the myths of various ancient Central Asian steppe nomads as they have been preserved in the written records of their sedentary neighbors, notes a common motif of a wolf/crow totemic pair as supernatural guardians of human hero-characters and as totemic ancestors. In a fashion reminiscent of the structural-functionalist perspective, Jila remarks that:

In the severe fight for survival within nature, the wolf and the crow are two inseparable "comrades" who skillfully cooperate with consideration for one another. The crow always crows "caw, caw, caw" when it flies, thus providing the wolf, who runs on the ground, with the information necessary for knowing the whereabouts of potential prey. In return, the wolf, after having eaten its fill, leaves the rest to the crow (2006:168).

As the groups from whom these myths come identify with the wolf and crow as totemic ancestors, a belief system which continues today among the Mongols, the mythic symbiosis of wolf and crow represent a type of clan-based ecology. The establishment of social identification with specific totemic categories and related taboos and restrictions on what is good or not good to eat basically functions as the mutual conservation of natural resources between totemic groups. The mythic pair of crow/wolf in Altaic totemism thus "has its grounding in a phenomenon observable in nature," and that, as a "process of social life," Jila's interpretation of the myth is that it is a cultural adaptation to an ecological problem (2006:168). As such, one

might view this type of totemism as the maintenance of Radcliffe-Brown's idea of "social order" to the natural domain of ecological adaptation for Altaic societies.

It sounds like a fair hypothesis, but as Lévi-Strauss (1963, 1966) notes, any functionalist (or structural-functionalist) model misses the underlying social-rational structure that totemism represents in intergroup relationships. Essentially, totemic divisions regulate the entire system of intergroup relationships beyond the acquisition of food. Rather, totemism describes a basic function of the human social mind which classifies and regulates the relationship between us/them in the perfectly rational language of the subject cultures. In Pedersen's model, where animism yields a horizontal ontology, totemism yields one that is vertically aligned. Pedersen describes totemism as being "homologous differentiation" between humans and nonhumans (p.413), based on Lévi-Strauss's understanding of totemism as a system of classification. Furthermore, Pedersen finds that totemic ontology creates a "heterogeneous conglomerate of mutually independent domains inhabited by humans as well as nonhumans" (p.418). Rather than the spontaneous shamanism characteristic of Siberian animist ontologies, totemic shamans are apparently the only human members of society with the ability to cross over the liminal categories of the "bounded grid" of the existing world.

Consequently, the ontological principle of totemism is one of a vertical axis from upper world to lower world. Clan 1 might be analogized to Species A in one domain, and Clan 2 might be analogized to Species B at another. Socialization between domains is thus facilitated by the shaman-figure. As Psarras notes on Scytho-Siberian art, and as a motif "common to iconography across the Eurasian steppe," the passageway "traveled by the shaman in rites of healing, sacrifice, and the escorting of the soul to the world beyond" appears iconographically and mythologically as the World Tree or Mountain, the vertical axis between the various levels of

upper and lower worlds (2003:117). Heissig notes that the Mongols believe that deceased shamans become spiritual entities embodied as sacred mountains or other such *axis mundi* in connection with both upper and lower worlds, or perhaps associated with one or the other (1980:14). The point is that in the totemic ontology, the social space of mediation between perceived categories is reserved for the shaman.

The World Tree also appears in early Chinese (Shang, Zhou, and Han dynasties) mythology in the form of a mulberry tree, the roost of the sun-birds and the ancestral black birds. Sarah Allan considers these mythologies in conjunction with associated contemporaneous archaeological ritual assemblages from between the eleventh and fifth centuries BC evidence of totemism in early Chinese religion (Allan 1981). Allan, following Lévi-Strauss, describes Chinese totemism as a “system of classification rather than social institution,” in which royal dynasts developed complex systems of exchanging power from generation to generation, and in which Chinese bone-divination magic operates as the institutionalized “manipulation of categories within the system to achieve practical results” (1981:304-5). Although Chinese “shamanism” is potentially as problematic as “Greek shamanism,” despite Allan’s surety about the existence of Chinese poet-shamans (p.300), her remarks on totemism provide some scholarly insight into the Northern Asian totemisms of China’s *Hu* (i.e., “barbarian”) neighbors.

Again, totemism as an ontological principle does not preclude animist principles. It is the social context in which either animist or totemist tendencies occur which is important. Pedersen adamantly holds that Southern North Asian groups like the Halx Mongols are predominantly totemistic in their understanding of self/other, but without explicitly rejecting any animistic modalities. Likewise, Northern North Asian groups such as the Yukaghir tend towards an animistic understanding of self/other categories, but this is not to say totemic elements are non-

present in their mythologies and rites of passage. Pedersen's model might appear more dichotomous than it actually is, but the point is that these constructed principles are most useful in figuring out how various groups understand the relationship between ontological categories in their specific contexts rather than as identifying generalized indigenous religious traditions at large. In the words of Lévi-Strauss, the categories are good to think with. Although Jila (2006) does not directly say it, I argue that the Turco-Mongol mythic wolf/crow symbiosis also signifies clan-relationships and perhaps obligations to one another, which makes sense given the historical alliances and empires which significant groups forged on the steppe frontier between societies and which needed intergroup cooperation to thrive.

This brief discussion of animism and totemism is pertinent to the discussion of shamanism in that: 1) evolutionary theories which classify animism and totemism as manifestations of primitive religion (i.e., evident of early stages of cultural evolution or the social ordering process) uphold outdated historical-materialist conjecture; and 2) that a hypothetical dichotomy still persists in the discussion of shamanism in which primitive religion appears on the one hand as man's exertion of his will on his environment through social structures, and on the other hand the environment's exertion of its will upon social structures. Sahlins' "critique of the idea that human cultures are formulated out of practical activity and, behind that, utilitarian interest" provides some explanation of how shamanism appeared as a phenomenon, not as actual primitive religion but as symbolic of primitive religion in a global structure (1976:vii). The raw "marble" block for the sculptor is quarried from the barbarian lands which symbolize the past. Animist and totemist modalities are identifiable cross-culturally as structural rationalizations and symbolism within certain cultures and often associated with religious and mythological systems. But the symbol of the primitive shaman means more to the

observer than to the observed, and it does more to reify our own structure than provide evidence for an evolutionary narrative.

### **“Northern Shamanism” and Pontic Barbarian Religions**

As this thesis is not specifically about totemism or animism but about the construction of otherness in the product of shamanism, these heuristic categories serve primarily to contextualize our discussion of historical cultures which were a part of this Northern Eurasian complex. With the principles of animism/totemism and horizontal/vertical ontologies which underlie Northern Eurasian worldviews in mind, let us now examine the historical and archaeological records of the ancient cultures of the Pontic-Caspian Steppe with special attention to how scholars have reconstructed and interpreted their religious traditions based upon their readings of the archaeology of the steppe and ancient sources on barbarian traditions. From there we should be better equipped to tackle the issues of “Greek shamanism” and “northern shamanism.” Hančar (1952) finds that between the period of 700 and 100 BC, mythic animal motifs featured most commonly in grave goods throughout the Eurasian Steppe from the Pazyryk sites of the Altai region (where modern-day Russia, Mongolia, China, and Kazakhstan meet) westward throughout the Pontic-Caspian Steppe region. Bruyako and Ostroverkhov (2004) note this continuum of Eurasian styles in the pre-Scythian Pontic Steppe graves, and Malashev and Yablonsky pay close attention to the occurrence of the “animal style” on Sarmatian male-warrior grave artifacts of the southern Ural Mountains (2004:267). Among the fauna included in the “animal style,” the stag occurs most commonly throughout Eurasia. Rice (1961:158) claims that the mythic stag is the “most characteristic single motif in Scythian art.” Moreover, Rice associates the stag motif with

Siberian traditions in which the stag represents the soul-vehicle that carries the deceased to the netherworld. Loehr (1955) essentially comes to the same conclusion in which the Scythian stag played a vital role in Scythian perspectives on the afterlife. We might be able to hypothesize about the vertical ontology of Scythian groups in light of these artifacts. Soul-travel to the underworld utilizes socially-prescribed soul-vehicles which manifest through the art of grave goods.

In Thracian art from the same period the stag appears frequently on grave goods, particularly ornate golden cups in the tombs of Thracian and Dacian individuals of higher social status (Fol & Marazov 1977:73). Farkas (1981:44) identifies the recurrent theme of the eight-legged stag on Thracian cups as indicative of both a style and mythology related to the Scythian style, but also part of a distinctly Thracian tradition. The eight-legged characteristic may convey a running motion, but it also could indicate supernatural power associated with the chthonic underworld in Thracian ontology. One might even consider the Thracian stag analogous to Sleipnir the eight-legged horse who carried Hermod into the depths of Hel to rescue the slain god Baldur in Norse mythology. In any case, the occurrence of the stag as a central part of Pontic funerary animal-ceremonialism suggests the stag held a sacred position in Thracian and Scythian traditions associated with the realm of the dead. Furthermore, in light of Pedersen's theories on totemism and vertical socialization, the mythic stag likely occupied, within the worldview of the ancient Pontic cultures, a discreet totemic category as soul-vehicle with which only a shaman-figure could communicate. Additionally, we cannot deny that these artifacts, typically gold, silver, or electrum, are uniformly part of a privileged segment of Pontic societies analogous to Pedersen's SNA hierarchical, vertically organized societies.



Zoomorphic art which depicts animal-animal and human-animal affinities and metamorphoses also occurs widely throughout Pontic art and has a deep cultural history throughout Northern Eurasia among material assemblages and extant traditions associated with shamanic activity. For example, Mundkur (1984) observes a “bicephalous,” or double-headed, animal style among ceremonial artifacts throughout Northern Eurasia from the Late Stone Age into the Scythian Iron Age. For Mundkur, the bicephalous animal style represents the “primordial religious attitudes” of shamanism: “Shadowy though they may seem, the roots of bicephalous art lie in the appeal of a few species selected as ‘assistants’ to the shaman and as partners in the man-to-animal or animal-to-animal transformations that characterize the tribal world of dualistic spirits” (p.474). Mundkur’s discourse ultimately takes the pan-shamanist stance of Eliade in his interpretation of the evidence as primordial shamanism. Nevertheless, his analysis highlights the widespread motif of animal transformations in the mythologies of Northern Eurasian nomadic groups, and this motif is further demonstrable in the Pontic material record as well. For instance, Hussman (1976:116) notes that among the Pazyryk tombs the occurrence of antlered masks crafted for horses (ca. fifth century BC). Hussman interprets these masks as a “horned lion-griffin” motif, but offers no further comment on its mythological significance. Rice (1961:118) forwards one possible practical explanation of Scythian antlered horse masks as an attempt to disguise the horses as reindeer for hunting. However, the masks are probably too ornate for such a practical purpose, and their occurrence as grave goods (complete with inhumed horses) might hint at an alternate interpretation. Given the interpretation of the mythic stag as part of Pontic and Siberian ideas about death and the netherworld, the horse masks might indicate ceremonial totemic transformations of horse-stag. Moreover, the

transformed horse-stag may have functioned as the soul-vehicle in that the horse, buried with its owner, carries the soul of the human to the underworld.

Horse sacrifice as a funerary custom occurred throughout the Pontic-Caspian Steppe, and Herodotus reports such a custom in two separate instances. On the Caspian Massagetai, Herodotus describes how this nomadic group sacrificed horses to their sun-god (Hdt. 1.216). Similarly, he includes horse sacrifice as an integral part of the funerals of Scythian kings (4.71-2). Childe (1970:38-9) claims the Scythian kurgan excavations verify the Herodotean accounts, and he furthermore associates the Scythian custom with historical Mongolian traditions of horse sacrifice. Heissig (1980:6) additionally describes the Mongol funerary custom of the suspension of sacrificed horses from poles as a shamanic practice. Psarras (2003) notes in the historical Chinese accounts of the Xiongnu and associated archaeological sites, horse sacrifice was also customary among these nomads.

Another popular motif in Northern Eurasian artifacts is animal combat, which often included mythical beasts such as the griffin. Farkas (1981:44) describes the scenes on the Thracian Agighiol Cups (ca. fourth century BC), which depict not only the eight-legged stag but also griffins attacking wild boars. The griffin motif, according to Hančar (1952), was also widespread throughout steppe sites associated with the Scythians. Mallory and Mair (2000:42-3) connect Herodotus's account of the legendary one-eyed Arimaspians who eternally fought the Griffins over their hordes of gold (Hdt. 4.27), with the Pazyryk Scythians of the Altai. Among the Pazyryk finds, Mallory and Mair cite a textile fragment which depicts two griffins locked in combat with one another. Hančar (1952) considers the animal combat motif the dominant style in Pazyryk art (e.g., "panther on reindeer," "griffon[sic] and tiger," "eagle-griffon[sic] on argali," "tiger on a mountain sheep"). E. H. Minns (1913:2, 92) similarly reports images of griffins

attacking fallow-deer on a silver amphora from the Čertomlyk Kurgan and on a gold bracelet from Kul-Oba. Psarras (2003) makes similar observations of Xiongnu grave goods, albeit in a strictly socio-political context of power and group-dominance. Additionally, Farkas (1981:37) notes the frequent occurrence of more realistic birds of prey in Scythian art (ca. seventh century BC) and Thracian art (ca. sixth-fifth centuries BC) with local, native variations in style.

However, Hančar (1952:192) also finds that Pontic Scythian art diverged from that of their Pazyryk relatives with the emergence of human characterizations as the dominant style by the late fourth and early third centuries. Reportedly, the Pontic “human form can have the shape of the great female goddess, the male monster-killing hero, or of the Scythian prince elevated by the deity through the potion which brings about the mystical union” (1952:192). As we will discuss later in this chapter, this shift in style likely resulted from a gradual influence of Hellenic mystery traditions in the Pontic. We also see the idea of the mystical potion, the *kykeon* in Greek, which was a part of the mystery rites of numerous Hellenic cults, here a part of northern barbarian tradition. It may very well simply be the scholar’s interpretation, but it could also indicate a degree of cultural exchange. Herodotus, writing in the fifth century, reports the Scythian pantheon and his interpretation of Hellenic analogues as Tabiti (Hestia), Papiaios (Zeus), Api (Gaia), Oitosyros (Apollo), Argimpasa (Aphrodite Urana), and Thagimasidas (Poseidon), with the addition of hero cults devoted to Herakles and Ares (Hdt. 4.59). Psarras connects Herodotus’s description of the Scythians’ custom of venerating a sword to the god of war with similar Xiongnu veneration of sacrificial knives (2003:129-32), and similar legends surrounded Attila the Hun. Hančar notes that the “youngest” Scythian kurgans on the Dnieper and Kuban rivers show the ancestor worship of a totemic Targitaos, whom Herodotus identifies mythographically as Herakles, as the progenitor of the Scythian people (Hdt. 4.5-10).

Hančar supposes that a cultural shift in ideology among the Pontic Scythians in contrast to their Siberian relatives coincided with increased social complexity on the steppe. Whereas, according to Hančar, the Pontic Scythians apparently grew into a system of “monarchy,” the Pazyryk graves demonstrate a societal structure in which an elevated shaman-figure holds leadership with a warrior class of “knights” beneath the shaman. Furthermore, Hančar recalls certain myths of the “Buryats [Buriats]...Jenissei Ketes [Yenesei Kets] and of the Jakutes [Yakuts] who believe the deified shaman to be the ancestor, cultural hero, commander-in-chief, and mighty protector of the tribe” (pp.193-4). The Mongols venerate Genghis Khan in a similar fashion to this day.

Among the Thracians, Herodotus identifies the worship of Ares, Dionysus, and Artemis (Hdt. 5.7). As with the Scythians, Herodotus interprets indigenous deities in Hellenic terms. However, when we inspect the Thracian archaeological record we find a great number of artifacts which commonly depict a horse-riding hero-deity and a mother or lady goddess. Fol and Marazov (1977:17) report, for example, the Hero, potentially Herodotus’s Thracian Ares, appears on roughly three thousand Thracian artifacts with astounding consistency. Consequently, Fol and Marazov deduce that the Hero represented a universal deity shared between the multitude of Thracian and Dacian tribes with only slight variations, typically localized names. Moreover, the Hero is often depicted in combat with a dragon, which Fol and Marazov connect to Indo-Iranian myths of Hero-deities such as Mitra and Indra. We will return to Artemis in her Hellenic context below, but the mother or lady goddess motif in Thracian art likely inspired Herodotus’s interpretation of the Thracian Artemis, whose domains are associated with animals, motherhood, and the hunt. The goddess with her animals is a common motif in the Eurasian archaeological record among the nomadic groups (Psarras 2003). As for Dionysus, one might

wonder if the tradition diffused into Thrace from Greece as an introduced cult. Then again, the Thracians, as well as the Scythians, were known in Ancient Greece for their love of alcohol. The Scythians however despised the Dionysian cult, so the Thracian Dionysus is still open to interpretation.

The Hero-God, on the other hand, may also reflect the belief in a Sky-God common throughout Eurasian Steppe cultures, especially stratified tribal societies. Heissig (1980:10) claims that the Sky-God, or “all ruling Eternal Sky,” is one of the most widespread shamanic deities in Eurasia, evident in traditions such as the Turco-Mongol ancestor-god Tengri. The Scythian Papias likely fits the bill for their Sky-God, as might the Thracian Hero. For instance, Fol and Marazov (1977:19, 36) interpret the Herodotean account of Salmoxis, god of the Thracian Getae tribe, as a form of Sky-God worship. Specifically, the authors note the reverence the Getae have for thunderstorms as manifestations of their deity. We will return to Salmoxis below, as Lateiner (1990:243) considers Herodotus’s report on this Thracian tradition “a travesty of Asiatic shamanism.”

To return to the issue of social complexity and shamanism which Hančar raises, the Pontic cultures by at least the fifth century BC diverged from the animistic traditions of Siberia with an elevated degree of social stratification. Hančar describes this trend in terms of a scheme of cultural evolution, a model typical of anthropological theory in the mid-twentieth century in the works of figures like Julian H. Steward and Marshall D. Sahlins. Most of the Pontic grave goods, as mentioned above, are artisan-crafted items of gold, silver, and electrum. This indicates the high status of the inhumed and perhaps expanded political and economic cohesion between related nomadic tribes, a historical trend which the Sarmatians, Huns, Turks, and Mongols echoed after the Scythians (see Saunders 1971). However, I posit that it also indicates that Greek

colonial activity in the Pontic impacted the cultural direction of the indigenous Pontic peoples, not to mention the factor of Persian imperialism in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Keep in mind that the frontiers between sedentary and nomadic groups are volatile and places of cultural exchange and shifting political alliances. Finely crafted goods made their way into the steppe in the form of rewards for loyalty to urban centers but also as loot from raiding and conquest. Although the emphasis on male warrior-deities in Thracian or Scythian cultures tells us little if anything about their gender roles and kinship patterns, the overwhelming emphasis on a male warrior class in the Pontic mortuary assemblages likely reflects Pedersen's observations of SNA vertical, totemist societies. Nonetheless, like the Halx Mongols, as well as the Buriats and Altays, the Thracians and Scythians maintained religious traditions akin to, if not directly related to, shamanic, totemic traditions, albeit in ways in which the shaman was elevated to a holy "chief" status and even deified as a venerated ancestor-hero.

The Thracian deity Salmoxis might validate this claim. Salmoxis (also spelled "Zalmoxis" and "Zamolxis" in some translations) first appears in Herodotus's *Histories* as a wily, barbaric charlatan who, after receiving his enlightenment from his Greek master (although Herodotus explicitly doubts this part of the story), Pythagoras, manages to fool his tribesmen into believing he was a god:

This Salmoxis I hear from the Hellenes who dwell about the Hellespont and the Pontus, was a man, and he became a slave in Samos, and was in fact a slave of Pythagoras the son of Mnesarchos. Then having become free he gained great wealth, and afterwards returned to his own land. Since the Thracians are both primitive and rather simple-minded, this Salmoxis, being acquainted with the Ionian way of living and with manners more complex than the Thracians were used to see, and since he had associated with Hellenes (not only that but with Pythagoras, not the least able philosopher of the Hellenes), he prepared a banqueting-hall, where he was received and feasted the chief men of the tribe and instructed them meanwhile that neither he himself nor his guests nor their descendants in succession after them would die. They would come to a place where they would live forever and have all things good. While he was doing and saying these things, he was making for himself meanwhile a chamber under the ground; and when this

chamber was finished, he disappeared from among the Thracians and went down into the underground chamber, where he continued to live for three years. They grieved for his loss and mourned him as dead. Then in the fourth year he appeared to the Thracians, and in this way the things which Salmoxis said became credible to them. Thus they say that he did. As to this matter and the chamber underground, I neither disbelieve it nor do I very strongly believe, but I think that Salmoxis lived many years before Pythagoras. However, whether there ever lived a man Salmoxis, or whether he is simply a native deity of the Getai, farewell to him now (Hdt. 4.95-6).

Carpenter (1946:112-32) forwards the idea that the Salmoxis narrative is actually a Hellenic misunderstanding of northern bear-myths and that the Salmoxian religion was actually an instance of an indigenous bear cult.

For Carpenter, Salmoxis's descent into the underground chamber and his emergence as a deified hero parallels death/resurrection and hibernation myths found throughout the northern hemisphere in which the "bear, who sleeps as though dead, belongs among the dead and thereby becomes one of the lords of the underworld" (pp.128-9). As interesting an interpretation as it may be, Carpenter really only casually lists references to A. I. Hallowell's *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere* (1926) and James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1926) with no further inquiry into their analyses. Moreover, like Frazer, Carpenter's perspective on "primitive ceremonials" assumes too widely universal a stance. Nevertheless, Carpenter raises an impetuous question concerning the reanalysis of Salmoxis in terms of the chthonic symbolism of underworld travel and death/rebirth, which has been noted in bear cults (see Germonpré and Hämmäläinen 2007). That being said, no further proof exists that Salmoxis was a mythic, totemic bear-deity.

Carpenter's interpretation did, however, inspire the revision of Salmoxis as a shaman archetype. Dodds (1951:140-4) considers Salmoxis a "heroised shaman of the distant past," and he provides similar interpretations of two other legendary barbarians of Greek lore whom we will discuss below—Abaris and Orpheus. The idea of Salmoxis as a Thracian shaman also intrigued

the primitivist populizer of shamanism, Mircea Eliade. In 1972 Eliade challenged Dodd's interpretation of Salmoxis as an Asiatic shaman, but he did support the idea that the Salmoxis cult was in fact typical for the religious traditions of most of the ancient Thracian tribes and their nearby relatives including the Dacians. Salmoxis reemerged in 1990, championed by Donald Lateiner as a northern shaman whom the Pontic Greeks misunderstood as a sham of a "savage messiah" (p.245). Lateiner eschews Herodotus's doubts and instead highlights the Thracian's shamanic attributes: "the long sleep, often the mimicry of an underworld journey; occultation or sudden disappearance and reappearance, usually the shaman's novitiate; the uncertainty of status as mortal or immortal being; the attempt to reestablish communication with the spirit world; the description of an everlasting life of bliss" (pp.243-4). This laundry-list of attributes, which are indeed common to Eurasian shamanic traditions, especially the chthonic underworld motif, do a fine job placing Salmoxis in a shamanic light. However, the Herodotean Salmoxis lacks the spiritual connection to or mastery over the animal-spirit world (or simply, the natural world) necessary to Northern Eurasian shamanism. One might assume Herodotus, preoccupied with presenting the tale in Pythagorean terms, simply ignored things the modern observer might consider totemic or shamanic. For all we know, the Salmoxis narrative might have been culturally bound-up with the widespread Thracian traditions of the Hero-God and the chthonic, mythic stag. Furthermore, Herodotus may simply have been using a report of a native Thracian tradition as a tongue-in-cheek satire of Pythagoras, whom we will also cover towards the end of this chapter. Nevertheless, Salmoxis the shaman remains mysteriously conjectural despite Lateiner's certainty that Herodotus accidentally preserved "genuine characteristics of Dacian and Scythian religion."



Herodotus's report on Salmoxis does tell us something of the exchange or transmission of ideas and religious traditions across the Greek-Pontic frontier, namely that the traditions of the northern barbarians had a profound influence on the development of Greek mystery cults. However, the cultural-borrowing, as will be demonstrated, was rather lop-sided. The Scythians in particular remained culturally conservative in the face of Greek colonialism and rejected most Greek religion with zeal. The only potential exceptions are the hero cults of Herakles, Ares, and Achilles, each of which, as discussed above, may simply have been an adaptation or Hellenic misinterpretation of indigenous Pontic totemic-ancestor traditions.

The cross-diffusion of religious traditions across the Pontic frontier between nomad and *polis* met resistance on the part of the barbarians. Braund (2007:47-52) describes a situation of rising "religious polemics" between native Scythians and Greek colonists in the colony of Olbia between the seventh and second centuries BC. In one case, a Greek priest of Apollo wrote of "hunters of horses" who desecrated the Olbian altars to Apollo. The phraseology of "horse-hunters," of course, implies a derogatory slight towards the nomadic Scythians in Hellenic Greek vernacular. Though the causes for this raid are unclear, given that Olbia was the cultural and economic hub of the Greek colonies where countless marginalized barbarians were sold into slavery to the Greeks by their rulers and shipped south the Mediterranean world, the incident is hardly surprising. Ironically, Apollo was a deity whom the Greek mystics associated with the "noble" barbarism of the fanciful Hyperboreans (see below).

Two short narratives in Herodotus further highlight Scythian attitudes towards Greek culture, particularly religion—the stories of Anacharsis and Scyles. Anacharsis, according to Herodotus, was a Scythian sage who became immersed in Greek life (Hdt. 4.76-7). He learned to practice Greek religion, and when he brought those rites back to his people, King Saulios of the

Scythians personally shot and killed Anacharsis with an arrow. Herodotus wraps up this lesson about Scythian aversion of foreign religions with the claim that Scythians deny knowing the sage altogether because he abandoned the old ways. Simply put, Anacharsis adopted the traditions of the colonialists in lieu of his ancestral religion. Braund views this story as conveying “a sense of the uneasy interaction of Olbiopolitans and their Scythian pastoralist neighbors.”

Like Anacharsis, the story of Scyles highlights this theme of Scythian conservatism and antipathy towards Greek religion, and Herodotus even remarks that Scyles “suffered nearly the same fate” as Anacharsis (Hdt. 4.78). As the story goes, Scyles was the son of the Scythian King Ariapeithes and an Istrian woman. When Scyles became king after his father, “he was by no means satisfied with the Scythian manner of life, but was much more inclined towards Hellenic ways because of his training.” Thus Scyles would frequently travel to Olbia, leave his men outside the city-walls, and change into Greek attire once he was inside and out of his men’s sight. During his month-long stay in Olbia, Scyles would participate in Hellenic customs, especially religious customs. At some point he apparently decided to join the Cult of Bacchus-Dionysos, and according to Herodotus this was his fated downfall (Hdt. 4.79).

The Scythians, Herodotus says, had been disgusted with the Cult because they did not approve of a god who drove men to frenzy. During the initiation rite, some of Scyles’s men sneaked inside with the help of a local citizen, saw their king in a Bacchic fury, and, dismayed, informed the rest of their compatriots outside of Scyles’s abominations that they witnessed. The Scythians then conspired against their king, put his brother on the throne, and exiled Scyles to Thrace (Hdt. 4.80). Eventually, Scyles’s brother, the new king, received Scyles as a prisoner from the Thracians and subsequently had him beheaded. As a conclusion to these two morality tales, Herodotus states: “Thus do the Scythians carefully guard their own customary observances,

and such are the penalties which they inflict upon those who acquire foreign customs beside their own.” The stories might cause us to wonder how many other such instances of religious polemics occurred on the Greco-Pontic frontier.

Finally, Herodotus discusses at length the ethnogenesis of the Scythians through two myths, one native and one colonial Hellenic, as well as one historical anecdote. The first, the native Scythian myth of their origin (Hdt. 4.5-7), describes their descent from a hero named Targitaos, the son of Zeus (Papaios) and the daughter of the River Borysthenes (Dnieper). In this story, Targitaos begat three sons to an unspecified woman—Lipoxaïs, Arpoxaïs, and Colaxaïs. Four golden items descended from heaven to these brothers—a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a cup. The elder brothers approached the items to seize them, but the items repelled them with blazing fire. The youngest brother, Colaxaïs, alone was able to seize the powerful golden items and thus acquired his kingship. Following Lévi-Strauss’ (1967) and Burridge’s (1967) discussion of the structural study of myth, we might identify various aspects of Scythian steppe ontology in this myth. First, the union of Zeus=Daughter of Borysthenes lays out a vertical axis of Sky-Father/Chthonic-Mother, where the river (i.e., water) signifies life springing from the earth. Second, the golden items from above descend along that same axis from heaven to earth. Thus, we might hypothesize that the Scythians understood life as coming from the earth and river but royal power from above.

Herodotus, in the same passage, describes an annual cultic festival in which the Scythians sacrifice to the golden relics which might have reiterated, through myth and ritual, Scythian verticalized social order. Was this how the Royal Scythians dictated tribal or clan social (perhaps totemic) roles for subservient groups? As Herodotus describes a number of agrarian and semi-nomadic tribes associated with the Scythians (4.17-20), might the plough and yoke have justified

the establishment of submissive provider groups for the Royal Scythians to whom the battle-axe and drinking-vessel represent power? Such a juxtaposition of socio-economic roles, as the previous chapter discussed, is historically typical to large pastoralist societies.

The colonial Hellenic myth of the Scythian ethnogenesis bears some semblance to the native myth but also demonstrates how the Greek colonists incorporated Anatolian and Mesopotamian mythology into their understanding of barbarism (Hdt. 4.8-10). This second myth traces the origin of the Scythians to the union of a snake-goddess with a hero-god, whom Herodotus interprets as Herakles:

Thence Herakles came to the land now called Scythia; and as a storm came upon him together with icy cold, he drew over him his lion's skin and went to sleep. Meanwhile the mares harnessed in his chariot disappeared by miraculous chance, as they were feeding. Then when Herakles woke he sought for them; and having gone over the whole land, and at last he came to the region which is called Hylaia; and there he found in a cave a kind of twofold creature formed by the union of a maiden and a serpent, whose upper parts from the buttocks upwards were those of a woman, but her lower parts were those of a snake. Having seen her and marveled at her, he asked her then whether she had seen any straying anywhere; and she said that she had them herself and would not give them up until he lay with her.

In the end, the snake-woman bears three sons to Herakles—Agarthyrsos, Gelonos, and Skythes—and in exchange for his horses, Herakles offers his bow, his belt, and his drinking-cup which hangs on his belt as heirlooms for whichever of his sons is strong enough to pull his bow. As with the native myth, the youngest son—here Skythes—out-performs his older brothers and earns royal power over them.

Both the native and the colonial myths describe a verticalized order to Scythian society with a genealogical origin in the union of a Sky-Father and Chthonic-Mother. In the native myth, Zeus begat the hero, Targitaos, by the daughter of the River-Mother, as rivers symbolize the chthonic forces of fertility and the Dnieper River (which the Greeks called Borysthenes) was situated in the Scythian heartland. In the colonial myth, the son of Zeus is Herakles, the famous

Greek hero, rather than Scythian Targitaos. Moreover, whereas the native myth provides no known wife for the son of the Sky-Father, the colonial myth focuses on the hero's union with another chthonic force of fertility, the half-snake, half-woman who dwells in the cave, symbolic of the netherworld and the womb of the earth. Structurally, both myths trace Scythian origin to the verticalized union of masculine-sky and feminine-earth, and both myths describe a justification for the stratification of Scythian society. One might also note in each myth the roles of a wandering father (or grandfather) juxtaposed with a localized mother (or grandmother), which might offer a small sherd of evidence for a native tradition of matrilocality. However, each myth assigns different cultural meaning to the observable social axis of these ancient barbarians, and as both myths agree on patrilineal inheritance, the meaning revolves around the order of Scythian society as both observed by Greeks and ritualized by Scythians.

The native myth, as Herodotus has reported it, utilizes the symbols of royal power given to the "Son of Heaven," a title which is historically attestable throughout Northern Eurasian nomadic empires, and associated strata of submission to royal nomadic power. From the royal nomadic perspective, the agrarian world (i.e., the descendants of the mythic older brothers) is subservient to the ruling warrior class (i.e., the descendants of the youngest brother), and the golden relics symbolized this vertical axis in Scythian culture. From the colonial perspective, the ruling Scythians are the barbarians par excellence, symbolized in Skythes's bow and his drinking-vessel hung from his belt, accoutrements typical to both Hellenic artistic renditions of Pontic barbarians and Scythian artistic self-depiction. The other brothers, Gelonos and Agarthyrsos, are likewise, linked in name to two other Pontic groups submissive to the Royal Scythians—the Agarthyrsians and the Gelonians, the latter of whom Herodotus describes explicitly as tillers of the soil (Hdt. 4.104,108 respectively). Whereas the colonists viewed the

Royal Scythians as barbaric archetypes, the myth made sense of the observable fact that groups with atypical economies or mixed Hellenic and Thracian customs were subservient to Scythian power. Thus the colonial myth illustrates popular Hellenic discussions and beliefs about barbaric social order on their northern colonial frontier, and Herodotus's attempt to ethnographically map and correct said discussion.

The colonial myth also injects other non-Greek (i.e., barbarian), yet non-Scythian mythic material into their understanding of the multitudinous tribes of the Pontic-Caspian Steppe. The snake-woman, typically an ancient Mediterranean-Near Eastern figure, has been the subject of erroneous discussions of Greek Shamanism. Very early on, Karl Meuli (1935:127-30) considered the snake-goddess story a motif of Asiatic shamanism, especially the human-animal transformation. However, Meuli also reads into the passage aspects of ambiguous gender as further proof of shamanism, despite the fact that nothing in the story suggests anything of that sort, whereas human-animal liminality might (i.e., human/snake). Psarras notes the Scythian goddess *Api* appears in the archaeological records as a woman flanked by two serpents, similar to motifs of goddesses surrounded by animals across Eurasia (2003:110). Although Herodotus does describe the Scythian goddess, *Api*, as analogous to the Earth-Mother, *Gaia*, the artifact Psarras refers to (a fourth century BC gold plaque from Kul-Oba) actually appears later in the Scythian archaeological record, well after colonial contact, and might well indicate cultural transmission from the Hellenic world rather than native mythology. Hančar (1952) also finds that the Hero-God/Snake-Goddess motif actually appears quite late in Pontic Scythian archaeology and in conjunction with increased social complexity.

Despite this fact, Ustinova (2005) favors the interpretation of the snake-goddess story as shamanic mythology, which she claims was part of a widespread motif of snake-limbed and

tendrillimbed goddesses throughout the southern Pontic, namely Anatolia. Although the Anatolian archaeological record does show a deep tradition of snake-goddess worship with plausible connections to the city-state cults of Mesopotamia, the connection Ustinova draws with Scythian Api-worship is much weaker. These goddesses, she asserts, were part of a pre-Indo-European mother-goddess mythology, echoing Marija Gimbutas's hypothesis. The scheme of history (or prehistory) which she uses, however, relies upon evolutionary conjecture and an imagined tradition of primordial shamanism. For the Scythians, the daughter of the river-goddess was the chthonic progenitor deity, but the Greek analogue of the *echidna*, the snake-woman, was rather a transmission of Hellenic tradition into the Pontic. Ustinova seems to have forgotten that Herodotus lists the snake-woman myth as a colonial Hellenic myth of Scythian ethnogenesis which differs from the native myth. Might the motif have emerged as an adaptation of Greek and Pontic mythologies within a colonial context? The hero-god paired in mythic dialectic with the chthonic serpent appears in other Hellenic traditions as well. The cultic traditions which surround Apollo, especially in his defeat of the Python in the cave at Delphi, utilize similar mythic structures overlaid with cultic meaning central to Hellenic mysticism.

### **The Mystery Cults: Survivals of the Greeks' Shamanic Past or Invented Tradition?**

Thus far we have examined the issue of "northern shamanism" in the historical and archaeological records of indigenous Pontic cultures. Many aspects of the religious traditions of the Pontic peoples, particularly the Scythians and Thracians, could be described as forms or variants of shamanism, or perhaps traditions ancestral to more recent Siberian shamanism,

especially given the relationship between Eurasian Steppe cultures and the cultures of Northern Asia. More importantly, however, the barbarian religions of the ancient Pontic-Caspian Steppe signified for the Ancient Greeks something akin to the concept of shamanism in the modern, global sense—symbolic of a primordial, perhaps mythic, past. One can find this connection in the process through which the Hellenic mystery religions developed and in the significance that barbarian culture and specifically spirituality held in the mysteries, or at least how the Ancient Greeks understood those foreign cultures.

A number of scholars (Dodds 1951; LaBarre 1970; Ruck 1986; Littleton 1986; Ustinova 2009) have attempted to extend the category of shamanism to Ancient Greece with most of the attention focused on mystery religion and a near unhealthy obsession with Altered States of Consciousness (ASC) and ritual intoxication as means of obtaining mystical, chthonic knowledge. ASC and ritual intoxication did in fact typify many of the rites of the Greek mystery religions. However, although Greek religion in general contained some mythic elements of their Indo-European heritage shared with Celtic, Germanic, Latin, Indo-Iranian groups and others, as well as elements of Mediterranean and Near Eastern religions, these Hellenic mystery traditions were not relics of the Greeks' nomadic Proto-Indo-European past and "primordial shamanism," but rather invented traditions built upon the dichotomies of Greek/barbarian and cultivated/wild. They were, in fact, products of the sedentary, agrarian city-state cultures of the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds.

Invented traditions often give the illusion of antiquity while obscuring their contemporary origins in the politics of power and control over narratives. In other words, the mystery cults in many ways imitated Pontic traditions of "northern shamanism" but reconstructed those traditions within the context of the Hellenic pantheon and priestly, social hierarchies. The mystery cults



claimed a heritage which stretched back to the Golden Age of Greek mythic ontology, an age which supposedly still existed at the time geographically at the edges of the world among the Hyperboreans. The ideological system in which the cultic imitation occurred thrived upon and perpetuated the mythic Hyperborean motif in which barbarians were a source of untainted Golden Age wisdom. Thus the more proximal Thracians and Scythians became the ignorant purveyors of Hyperborean tradition for “enlightened” Hellenes initiated into certain cults. Finally, this system of exploitation might also account in part for the cultural antagonism between Pontic barbarians and Greeks, such as between the Hellenic cults in Olbia and the Scythians, despite the supposed similarities between “Greek shamanism” and “northern shamanism.” Thus the Greek mystery religions are full of paradoxes which reflect Hellenic idealizing of barbarian noble savages off afar but also chauvinism towards those illiterate and ignorant savages at hand.

What exactly is a mystery religion? The Hellenic μυστήριον, *mysterion*, refers to secret or hidden knowledge, that which is shut, from the Greek μύεω, *mueó*, to compress the lips, which is revealed only to the initiated, μύστης, *mystos*. The Greek mysteries were religious orders, cults which developed hierarchies of knowledge about the deep secrets of Greek mythology and the relationships between Hellenic civilization and the world of gods and beasts (See Appendix A, Figure 5). Admittedly, much about the mysteries, aside from their central role in public religious ceremonies, is unknown today due to their secrecy. What we can glean from various ancient sources demonstrates the various mystery cults utilized ASC, usually through ritual intoxication, and layers of primitivist Hyperborean ideology in their interpretations of the Greek *mythos*. The cults had varying degrees of initiation, rank, revealed knowledge, and associated social power. Although mystery cults existed and exist cross-culturally, from Ancient

Egypt and Sumeria to modern Masonic Lodges, Greek mystery religion in particular emerged with a special relationship with the Greek/barbarian ideology. Here we will examine a few notable cults.

## Orphism

Our first case in point, the Cult of Orpheus, also known as the Orphics and Orphism, exemplifies Hellenic invented tradition as a product of Greco-Thracian interrelations. The Orphic mystery tradition first appears in Herodotus (2.81) as bearing resemblance to Pythagoreanism and Egyptian religion, and we also read of the Orphics in Plato (*Symposium* 179d) and in Apollodorus (1.3.2). The structure of the Orphic mythological traditions generally relates a story of the death of the wife of the Thracian character Orpheus, who subsequently descends into the underworld in pursuit of his wife. Orphism, the cultic tradition constructed around this myth, involved beliefs in the transmigration of souls and reincarnation, descent/ascent cycles, as well as ritual soul-travel and communication with the chthonic underworld. Although Platonism bears some parallels to Orphism, most markedly in Plato's Myth of Er in the *Republic*, Plato criticizes the Orphic tradition, as well as the related Musaeics, concerning their belief in "eternal drunkenness" as a virtuous reward for the initiated upon their arrival in Hades (*Rep.* 2.363a-365b).

M. L. West (1982:5, 144-5; 1998:26) connects Orphism to the "northern shamanism" of Thrace and Scythia and also finds that the Orphic cult had a strong presence in Olbian Greek culture from the mid-sixth century BC onward. Similarly, Fol and Marazov (1977:59) note that

both “Orpheus and Zalmoxis had a pronounced chthonian character,” that is, mythic and ritual connections to the spiritual underworld. However, Orpheus and Orphism, though associated symbolically with Thrace, do not seem to have originated there or to have been practiced by native Thracians. Rather, the Orphics likely emerged among Greek colonists and explorers in imitation of Thracian traditions, like Salmoxism, hence the chthonic parallels. Given that the Greeks identified Orpheus as a Thracian barbarian born to a Thracian king (Skinner 2012:84), the Orphic mystery religion likely developed as a Hellenic invented tradition and reinterpretation of barbarian beliefs and customs likely unrelated to the Hellenic character of Orpheus. As such, Orpheus is the archetypal noble savage of Hyperborean stature whose path to chthonic wisdom is ritually emulated by the cultic initiates. Nevertheless, Orphism is a product of Hellenic cultural imperialism. As the Thracians loved excessive drinking, including in the context of funerary ritual (Hdt. 5.8), and held beliefs about underworld soul-travel and the afterlife in the examples of the mythic stag and Salmoxism, so did the Orphic mysteries arise as a Hellenic culturally-alternative way to exercise and utilize otherwise barbaric ritual and wisdom.

### **Cult of Dionysus**

Like Orphism, the Dionysian mystery religion also exhibits characteristics of traditions constructed upon the Hellenic noble savage barbarian template. Although the figure of Dionysus appeared early in Greek history in the Mycenaean Linear-B tablets from the isle of Pylos, the Dionysian mystery cult did not develop until the period of Greek-Pontic colonialism in the Late Archaic. As a mystery religion, the Cult of Dionysus typically involved ritual intoxication,

animal handling and sacrifice, and beliefs about reconnecting the civilized human soul with the primitive world of beasts and the chthonic underworld. Centuries later, in the Roman period, Plutarch, himself an initiate in the Cult of Apollo, reported that the wife of Philip of Macedonia was known for her wild, divinely inspired participations in the orgiastic rites of the Dionysian religion in addition to the ritual use of snakes (Plut. *Alex.* 2). As such, the cult operated on the same noble savage premise as the Orphic mysteries with the added flair of primitivist ideology. Like Rousseau's imagining of himself as an ancient Greek or Roman while reading Plutarch (Lowenthal 1985:374), or like Lewis Henry Morgan's "Iroquoian" fraternity (Deloria 1998:218), the Dionysian cult likely emerged as a sentimental reenactment of an invented Hellenic past in noble barbarism. Rousseau and Morgan held Romantic notions about the distant past of human history, and as such they incorporated those views into the construction of their own ideologies. Likewise, the Dionysian cult may very well have originated as a Hellenic emulation of observed Thracian and Scythian funerary customs. If so, this may explain the Scythian abhorrence of the Dionysians in Herodotus's story of Scyles as a colonialistic profanation of their native customs.

Within Hellenic culture, Dionysus was associated with the tragic dramas in that, thematically, the tragedies evoke the dialectic of what Carl A. P. Ruck calls the "Wild and the Cultivated." Beyond mere drunken revelry and entertainment, the tragedies celebrated a reconciliation between agrarian-viticultural (i.e., grain and grape agriculture) Greek civilization and a constructed Jungian shadow of what the Hellenes believed represented their primordial past. Hence Dionysus represents, in Ruck's model, the paradox of Greek culture as cultivated/wild, the synthesis of the *polis*-civilization in the present and the primitive otherness of the past bound up in one cultic-mythic tradition of Greek selfness struggling and overcoming the shadow of primitive otherness. Drama itself becomes a mystery ritual in which the daemon

Dionysus, “in this celebration of his evolution to culture, transports and reunites his people with primordial times of the Golden Age” (Ruck 1986:222). For example, Euripides’s *Bacchai* (Eu. *Bacc.* 677-747) depicts the maenads, female initiates in the Dionysian mysteries, as entering a drunken frenzy in the wilderness and engaging in cattle raids like a pack of wolves. The drama here might have represented to the Greeks the reconciliation of the Wild (i.e., hunter society) with the Cultivated (i.e., sedentary society) through the reenactment of mythic conflict.

To draw an example from Ruck, Dionysus himself was a deity of dialectical dualism in that he was lord of both the Cultivated grape and the Wild ivy, which the Greeks believed was the primordial form of the grape vine. In this system of belief, the primordial form is the more intoxicating but also the more dangerous form from which the cultivated form was believed to have “evolved.” Additionally, Ruck (1986:185) notes that the “fermented juice of the cultivated grape, as well as the pre-viticultural magical plants, induces a kind of spiritual communion with deity.” Ruck’s “magical plants,” which included wild ivy, flowers such as opium, and fungi such as amanita mushrooms and LSD-producing ergot mold, all inhabit the space of Wild intoxicants which are reconciled to Hellenic civilization via the Cultivated processes of fermentation in wine-making and bread-baking. Moreover, Ruck understands these Dionysian domains as underlined by the chthonic themes of death (e.g., rotting, decay associated with mold, and the “tomb” of the wine cellar) and resurrection with the spring planting and the opening of new wine.

Despite Ruck’s rather colorful and creative analysis of the Dionysian mysteries as celebrations of the “primitive” and “civilized” elements and paradoxes in Hellenic culture, he takes the mystery religions too seriously and tries in earnest, like his associate V. G. Wasson with the Vedic traditions of the Ancient Aryans, to historicize the Greek mystery traditions as

cultural relics of “primordial shamanism.” The Cultivated/Wild dichotomy stands as an explanation of Dionysian symbolism and some of the Hellenic beliefs from the time period, but the tradition is, like Orphism, built upon the noble savage premise. The Wild of the Dionysians was not historically primordial, nor is it evidence of the survival of any sort of Proto-Indo-European “shamanism” ancestral to both Vedic and Hellenic traditions. Rather, the cult was the Hellenic delight in aspects of barbarian cultures they believed were virtuous or necessary to celebrate as part of their own worldview. The Dionysian mysteries, in essence, were reflections of the barbarian as Hyperborean and as a source of natural wisdom to be coupled with the sedentary wisdom of cultivated discussion in symposium or out in the *agora*. Alternatively, the Dionysian mysteries could also have represented a celebration of both the divine and bestial dimensions of barbarism in a dramatic and ritualistic recapturing of the Hesiodic Ages of Man from Hyperborean Golden Age to the cultivated Iron Age. In other words, the Dionysian rituals attempted to recapture the primitive state of virtue and reconcile it with the Greek age of colonialism. Nevertheless, the initiates of the cult were doing nothing more than playing at being barbarians. Small wonder the Scythians hated the Dionysians.

### **The Cult of Artemis, Mother Goddess**

Though the shamanizers and revisionists give less attention to the Cult of Artemis than to other cults, this Late-Archaic/Early-Classical mystery tradition exhibits some astounding evidence of Greek-Pontic cultural transmission, or more accurately, appropriation. Pausanias (second century AD) relates a Spartan account of a temple dedicated to a “Savior Maid,” which

they claim had been founded by either Orpheus the Thracian or Abaris the Hyperborean (*Description of Greece* 3.13.2). The ambiguous identity of the goddess of this cult may refer to either Artemis or Kore-Persephone. Nonetheless, the Spartan attribution of a cult of the “Savior Maid” to two legendary northern barbarians might indicate the incorporation of native Pontic religion into the construction of Greek mystery tradition. After all, archaeology reveals the great importance the Thracian and Dacian cultures gave “Mother” and “Lady” goddesses alongside the Hero-god archetype (Fol & Marazov 1977; Farkas 1981). Goddess cults with similar iconographical motifs of matron power occurred throughout the ancient Eastern Mediterranean and Near East with associated mystery cults and mythologies, such as Ishtar, Isis, Ianna, Astarte, and others, with potentially widespread prehistoric antecedents.

Feminist scholars such as Marija Gimbutas attribute goddess-cults to a supposedly pre-patriarchal period of matriarchy in primitive human culture, at the center of which was the worship of a Mother Goddess (Gimbutas 1974; Bevan 1987; Ustinova 2005; Rountree 2007). Artemis-Demeter, according to such scholars, is a culturally-specific representation of a universal earth-mother-goddess ideology which stretches back to at least the Upper Paleolithic with the Venus of Willendorf. Mother Goddess worship was in fact an important facet of ancient European societies, and even the Roman historian Tacitus notes the immense cultic reverence the ancient Germans had for the Earth Mother (Tac. *Ger.* 40, 45). Although the archaeological discussion of “Mother” artifacts is beyond the scope of this paper, and the sweeping amalgamation of goddess mythologies into one essential category rivals the efforts of Sir James Frazer, a strong link exists between modern feminist mythologizing of a matriarchal past and the Ancient Greek mythologizing of the barbarian. Some of it is based on hard, empirical evidence, whereas the rest is the product of fanciful ideology. If anything, like the Amazons in Hellenic

consciousness, Mother Goddess cults like Artemis-Demeter represent the primitive otherness of womanhood regulated within a cultic social space in the masculine Hellenic mind. Recall the discussion of barbarian women in the previous chapter. Amazonian motifs become realized in the sacred mystery context whereas they cannot in the profane context of everyday life in the *polis*.

Furthermore, Greek Artemis echoes the symbolism of her barbaric counterparts and moreover, is evidently associated with mythic traditions of northern origin. Artemis, in her mystery tradition, was goddess of life/death cycles, particularly in the hunt and in childbirth. She was associated with bears and deer, among other animals, and simultaneously acted as both the caressing mother-protector of animals and children and the fearsome life-taking and justice-serving predator. For instance, Bevan (1987) describes a number of archaeological finds and classical literary references which suggest Artemis's mysteries and mythic role revolved around the protection of sacred game animals, the sacrifice of sacred animals, and symbolic, ritualistic metamorphosis of human to sacred animal.

Typically, Artemis's subject beast in her rites was the bear. As such, the female initiates of the Artemis cult at Brauron, for instance, were known as *arktoi*, or simply "bears" (Cole 1984:241; Bevan 1987:19). In one of Artemis's initiation rituals called the *Arkteia*, the initiates reenact scenes of maiden/bear encounters from the goddess' mythos. In the *Arkteia*, initiates transform into bears via costume. Furthermore, Cole (1984) suggests that the *Arkteia* and the human-bear transformation was also a womanhood rite-of-passage for certain Athenian girls whom the cult chose. Bevan (1987) suggests the metamorphosis to be of the "divine will" of Artemis, at least in terms of mythology, in the protection of her flocks of bears and deer as she rears them into motherhood, both in Athens and in the wilderness, something which might echo



the Wild/Cultivated dialectic of the Dionysians. Bevan thus deduces a symbolic relationship between womanhood and the mythic bear of Artemis as the “emblem and supreme pattern” of motherhood, and she resurrects observations similar to those that J. J. Bachoffen made in 1863.

Whereas Bevan supposes the mother bear tradition evident in the Artemis mysteries was part of an earlier, local tradition of a mother-goddess which preceded Artemis, the cult may also have integrated ideas about animal transformation from the northern barbarians. It is during the colonial period that the evidence for ritual metamorphosis appears in the cult. For instance, Bevan remarks that a fifth century BC Attic krater which depicts a naked man wearing a bear mask is the iconographic remains of the “sacred bear cult” (Bevan 1987:18). A number of sites devoted to Artemis also have yielded possible evidence of bear sacrifice (Laphria), offerings of bear teeth (Lousoi), and bear figurines (Athenian Acropolis, Spartan Orthia, Thasian Artemesion, Argive Heraion, Tegea). Tegea in particular yielded a human figurine with a bear’s head dated to the seventh century BC, possibly the oldest artifact associated with the cult. During the Roman period, Philostratus (*Imagines* I.28.6) described a custom in which hunters stopped at Artemis’s sanctuaries to pray for success on the hunt or to offer the spoils of a successful one.

Recall our discussion of totemism, animal-human metamorphosis, and the mythic stag in Northern Eurasian archaeology. Could it be possible that the rites of the Artemis mysteries exhibit cultural borrowings from the Pontic-Caspian Steppe? Superficial likenesses to shamanism aside, Artemis does have one more connection to the north in the various myths surrounding her cherished Cerynitian Hind, a mythic female deer with golden antlers whom Herakles pursued from Greece to Hyperborea in his legendary hunt (Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.81; Callimachus, *Hymn 3 to Artemis* 98ff). Ruck (1986:230) seems convinced that these myths are cultural memories of the reindeers (whose females and males both regularly

grow antlers) to the north of the Indo-European homeland and far to the north of Greece. However, given the historical context for the emergence of the cult, the myths of the stags were more likely influenced by traveler's tales via the Hellenic filter of the port of Olbia and reflect the ontologies of indigenous Pontic groups and others further north whose own mythologies involve the stag (and possibly the reindeer if we include the more northerly groups).

### **The Eleusinian Mysteries**

The Eleusinian Mysteries and the Panhellenic cult of another mother-goddess, Demeter, were perhaps the most prestigious of the Greek mystery traditions. Cults dedicated to Demeter appeared throughout the Greek world, even as far as the Greek colonies in Scythia, Italy, and Sicily. However, the cult at Eleusis earned the most renowned position in Greek culture as a Pan-Hellenic cult in which Greeks from all the *poleis* participated in her seasonal festivals. Thus Eleusis, once a small village outside of Athens, became an integral religious center in the Greek world and in Greek identity. Although the festivals grew into a public spectacle, the cult itself reserved the rituals of the mysteries for the initiated, the *mystae* of Demeter, "the chosen few who were properly initiated following the ritual prescribed by Demeter herself" (Mylonas 1947:131). Extremely hierarchical, the Eleusinian mystery cult was organized into Lesser and Greater degrees of initiation which corresponded to both the seasons and the esoteric knowledge to which the initiates were exposed. Of this esoteric knowledge itself, little is known.

The rituals went through three phases: first, the *dromena*, that is, "enacted," where Mylonas (1947:143) and Ruck (1986:160) suppose the sacred *kykeon* potion was ingested to

induce a vision; second, the *deiknymena*, or “shown,” in which the Light of Apollo is revealed in a vision to the initiates; and third, the *legomena*, or “explained,” where the hierophant, the highest level of initiation, lectures the initiates on the secret meaning of the vision. Pausanias, who himself may have been an initiate, describes how he was forbidden to divulge the sacred secrets of the mysteries: “After I had intended to go further into this story, and to describe the contents of the sanctuary at Athens, called the Eleusinium, I was stayed by a vision in a dream. I shall therefore turn to those things it is lawful to write of to all men” (1.14.3). In reference to a related cult of Demeter at Thebes, Pausanias reiterates the forbidden nature of the secrets:

Advancing from here twenty-five stades you come to a grove of Cabeirean Demeter and the Maid. The initiated are permitted to enter it. The sanctuary of the Cabeiri is some seven stades distant from this grove. I must ask the curious to forgive me if I keep silence as to who the Cabeiri are, and what is the nature of the ritual performed in honor of them and of the Mother (9.25.5).

As mentioned above, the cult divided its festivals seasonally into the Lesser and Greater mysteries, each of which had specific ritual functions in reenacting the mythic narrative of Demeter and Persephone for the public and initiating new members into the hierarchy of the cult. The Lesser Mystery took place in the autumn of the year in the Swamp of Dionysus in Athens. The swamp, which the Greeks believed was an entrance to the underworld and the abode of the spirits of the dead, represented the scene of Persephone’s abduction to Hades. Within the swamp was a temple, the doors of which were open for one day only every year during this festival. Thus the entire swamp was sacred ground and forbidden to mortal use except during the prescribed annual ritual. The Greater Mystery took place at the neighboring village of Eleusis and involved a great procession of torch-bearers towards the Eleusinian Temple for the initiation into the higher mysteries through the ingestion of the *kykeon* potion. Thematically, Ruck notes the symbolism of rebirth or ascension from the underworld and the transmutation from the

mortal maiden into the mother goddess (1986:165). Thus Ruck finds the Eleusinian Mysteries composed of Wild/Cultivated aspects of Dionysian life/death cycles and Apollonian wisdom.

The Eleusinian Mysteries of Ancient Greece parallel the far more ancient traditions of Sacred Marriage Ceremonialism in Mesopotamia. This cultic mytho-ritual tradition is first attested in the Early Dynastic Period of Ancient Sumer (ca. 3000-2330 BC) and could potentially have originated even earlier with the rise of sedentary urban centers in the region. These traditions, in various forms, endured throughout Ancient Near Eastern history well into Herodotus's time and beyond. A few concise examples should illustrate our point. Stiebing (2009:52-53) describes the Sacred Marriage Ceremony as a tradition documented among the Ancient Akkadian, Babylonian, and Sumerian city-states in which state cults dedicated to a patron-deity held spring and autumn festivals to ensure fertility for their agrarian economy. The mythological systems revolved around patterns of a Hero-God (e.g., Dumuzi in Sumerian, Tammuz in Semitic) who ventures into the netherworld to rescue his goddess-lover (e.g., Inanna in Sumerian, Ishtar in Semitic); in exchange for her life, the hero agrees to take her place for one half of the year and leave his sister there for the other half. The Sacred Marriage Ceremony celebrated the union between the lovers upon their ascension from the netherworld, and associated cultic rituals reenacted the union in a variety of ways. In general, the mythological themes of overcoming chthonic forces to ensure fertility coalesced with seasonal planting and harvesting, similar to the Eleusinian ceremonies and myths surrounding Persephone's quest. Even the Sumerian Geshtinanna, sister of the hero Dumuzi, was considered the goddess of grape vines, and her role in remaining in the netherworld appears again in the form of Dionysus in the Eleusinian Mysteries (Recall Ruck's discussion of the wine laid in the "tomb" of the cellar in the "Wild and the Cultivated").

As with the Eleusinian rites, the Sacred Marriage tradition was supposed to secure fertility for plant and animal husbandry in the spring and for the fermentation of alcohol in the harvest. Like the Greek Dionysus, the dialectics of these Mesopotamian myths created in the ancient mind a synthesis of opposing forces in their worldview, forces which needed to be appeased to maintain order—Man, the cultivator, and his wife, the primordial birther—*polis-law/abzu-chaos*. The same dialectic of appears in Mesopotamian creation myths. The Babylonian *Enuma Elish* reiterates the Hero-God/Chthonic-Goddess dialectic in a story of creation out of conflict: Marduk-Enlil defeats Tiamat and the Abyss (*Abzu*), out of which the world is created. This Marduk/Tiamat opposition is comparable to the myth of Apollo defeating the chthonic Python, and order emerges out of chaos. Thus it is probable that the Greek Mystery Religions had more in common with the Mesopotamian cultic traditions than with Pontic barbarian religion.

As mentioned with some of the other mysteries such as the Orphics and Dionysiacs, the ASC was an important part of the sacred path of primordial knowledge in the Eleusinian Mysteries. In his exploration of some of the comic representations of Socrates, Ruck focuses on Socrates as profaner of the mysteries in that he was popularly believed to have used entheogens outside of their socially prescribed contexts (i.e., the mysteries). Ruck is correct in noting that Aristophanes's *Birds*, a comedic satire of Socrates, contains a hidden gem of insight into this controversy and into the Eleusinian Mysteries themselves that has gone previously unnoticed. However, the issue here pertains to necromancy rather than mushrooms. Entheogens, namely wild mushrooms, probably played an important role in the Mysteries in ritual intoxication and ASC. Wild amanitas or other psychoactive wild fungi probably were used in the Lesser Mysteries, which reflected Persephone's folly of imbibing narcotic plants and consequently

falling into Hades; whereas the *kykeon* potion, which likely contained the psychoactive chemicals (i.e., ergot fungus on grain) Ruck, Hoffman, and Wasson hypothesized, reflected the cultivated side of Demeter. These altered states of consciousness were probably part of the Eleusinian Mysteries, namely the revelation of Light and knowledge. However, so was necromancy. After all, Socrates, whom the Pythia dubbed the wisest of all men, was the object of comedic mockery and degradation for supposedly entering the forbidden swamp to commune with the dead. “How else could he have become wise?” his fellow Athenian may have wondered. Wisdom came from the dead, who were only to be contacted safely in the proper ritual context, or so the Athenians and other Greeks believed (Ustinova 2009).

### **Cults of Apollo, the Oracle at Delphi, and the Hyperboreans**

Although not described specifically as a mystery cult, the order of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi stands out as an exemplary tradition of Hellenic mystery-initiation, altered states of consciousness, sacred secrecy, and chthonic, often cryptic knowledge drawn up from the abyssal “Navel of the World,” as the poet Pindar dubbed the Delphic sacred site. Unsurprisingly, Delphi and its Oracle, the Pythian Priestess, attracts those shamanizing scholars who would view the Apollonian cult as the epitome of “Greek shamanism” (Dodds 1951; Ruck 1986; Littleton 1986; Ustinova 2009). For example, Littleton (1986:84) explores what he calls the “fundamentally shamanic character of the institution and high probability that the Pythia was under the influence of a drug when she performed.” The Oracle, of course, was always a female whom an order of Apollonian priests chose from a young age to serve as a prophetess to the god Apollo. The

Temple was located on the side of the mountain of Parnassos, in Greek mythology the site where Apollo slew the Python-dragon, the chthonic, primordial owner of the mountain. The Pythian Priestess was named after this serpent, and like other Hellenic and Near Eastern traditions illustrates yet another chthonic snake tradition. Contained within the Temple was a natural fissure in the earth around which was constructed a basement chamber called the *adyton*. The *adyton* sat beneath the prophetic chamber, called the *manteion*, and a small shaft ran from *adyton* to *manteion* and served as a flue for the mysteriously intoxicating vapors.

According to a number of Hellenistic and Roman authors, such as Strabo and Plutarch, the latter of whom was actually an initiated priest, the Oracle sat upon a tripod over the vented flue and breathed in the intoxicating vapors from the depths of the earth. She would subsequently become ecstatic or frenzied by the *pneuma enthusiastikon*, or “inspirational exhalation” (Fontenrose 1978:198). It was this chthonic spirit, the breath of the netherworld, which ascended up from the earth-womb (recall that Delphi was the earth’s “navel”), and by which the ancients believed the Pythian Priestess became ritually possessed by Apollo himself. In light of Hesiod’s description of the Golden Age folk having gone into the earth, into the bosom of Gaia at the end of the age, one might even postulate that the breath of the underworld was in fact the voices of those Hyperborean spirits, or at least the cultists thus might have understood the ritual. Farnell (1907:189) suggests the “divine afflatus” rose from a natural geological source, but Dodds (1951:73-4) argues that no geological explanation was necessary, that the Oracle was simply naturally adept at spirit mediumship and possession, as found throughout human cultures, and especially in shamanism. Like Dodds, Littleton favors the shamanic explanation of the Oracle, but he conversely maintains the element of ritual intoxication as an integral part of the ASC.

Amusingly, Littleton shamanizes nearly every aspect of the Delphic cult: Apollo is the shaman-god of light and healing, the tripod symbolizes spiritual ascension under the possession of Apollo, and the “female shaman,” the Pythian Priestess, serves as Apollo’s mouthpiece in an ecstatic state “closely resembling those characteristics of shamanic performances observed by anthropologists in contemporary folk societies” (p.77). Littleton then attempts to identify the exact substance of the intoxicating vapors. Because the vent of the Navel Stone beneath the tripod is charred even today, some scholars (Holland 1933; Littleton 1986) have suggested the priests stoked man-made fires in the *adyton*, the smoke from which would funnel upward through the flue and engulf the seated Pythia and fill the *manteion* chamber with the fumes which Plutarch described as sweet. According to Littleton, this suggests the priests may have burned plants which contain mind-altering chemicals responsible for the Pythia’s archaic ecstasy. Among the possibilities, scholars have cited solanoids such as henbane and jimsonweed (Stefanis et al. 1975), opium poppies (Latimer & Goldberg 1981), darnel weed (Renfrew 1973:176-7), and *Amanita muscaria*, or fly-agaric mushrooms, which, according to Ruck (1986), may have been associated with Apollo’s cult at the Isle of Delos. However, as Littleton notes with each of these examples, they are ingested rather than burned, and moreover the ancients may not even have been aware of the psychoactive properties of some of these plants. Alternately, Littleton maintains that the Pythians at Delphi smoked *Cannabis sativa*, more commonly known today as marijuana.

Cannabis was in fact known in the ancient world, and it certainly grew wild over much of the Eurasian Steppe. However, among the Hellenes its mind-altering properties were supposedly known only to “a few esoteric circles,” namely the cultic hierophants (Littleton 1986:82). Accordingly, the shamanizing scholars believe the high-ranking cult leaders not only possessed



intimate knowledge of the religious traditions of their northern neighbors but that they also imported these traditions to Greece and incorporated them into the mysteries (Littleton 1986; Ruck 1986). Educated Greeks, whether or not they were members of mystery cults, expressed knowledge of barbaric ritual cannabis use. Herodotus, for instance, reports two observances of cannabis-smoking:

After the burial the Scythians cleanse themselves as follows: they anoint and wash their heads and, for their bodies, set up three poles leaning together to a point and cover these over with wool mats; then, in the space so enclosed to the best of their ability, they make a pit in the center beneath the poles and the mats and throw red-hot stones into it. The Scythians then take the seed of this hemp and, crawling in under the mats, throw it on the red-hot stones, where it smolders and sends forth such fumes that no Greek vapor-bath could surpass it. The Scythians howl in their joy at the vapor-bath. This serves them instead of bathing, for they never wash their bodies with water (Hdt. 4.73-75).

Here Herodotus gives an accurate account of the practice of cannabis smoking, common throughout Eurasia among nomadic cultures, which corresponds with the archaeological record and appears, at least superficially, very similar to the sweat lodge of many North American indigenous traditions with the substitution of cannabis for sage. M. D. Merlin (2003:213) verifies Herodotus's account with archaeological remains found in the Altai Mountains. Merlin argues that use of cannabis plants, especially as a ritual intoxicant, originates among Eurasian Steppe cultures perhaps as early as the fifth millennium BC. By the period of the Scytho-Sarmatian cultures, cannabis use had become an organized ritual complete with an associated material culture. It is uncertain whether indigenous groups on the steppe cultivated it or simply harvested it from the wild, but it was widespread through that part of the world. On cue with Herodotus's ethnography of ritual cannabis use, the Pazyryk burial mounds in the Altai region yield a tent frame and bronze vessels filled with stones and cannabis seeds.

We can also compare this account in Herodotus on the Scythians to his earlier account of an unnamed group near the Caspian:

...and they know (it is said) of trees bearing a fruit whose effect is this: gathering in groups and kindling a fire, the people sit around it and throw the fruit into the flames; then the fumes of it as it burns make them drunk as the Greeks are with wine, and more and more drunk as more fruit is thrown on the fire, until at last they rise up to dance and even sing. Such is said to be their way of life (Hdt. 1.202).

Here we find a passage nearly parallel to the Scythian account in Book 4. The fruit these barbarians throw in the fire, the fumes of which intoxicate them, could have come from the cannabis plant, although opium could also fit the description of this mysterious plant.

The Scythian cannabis passage especially describes ritual cleansing and intoxication as part of the funeral ceremony, and the occurrence of cannabis remains in grave sites indicates a funerary ritual importance. Though we could assume that Scythians and other steppe-dwelling peoples used cannabis recreationally, the fact that they included the plant in their funeral customs strongly suggests that it held a special status in these societies, perhaps as a ritual link between the physical and spiritual realms. Furthermore, a study conducted by botanist Ethan B. Russo and colleagues on cannabis remains from a 2200-2400 year old Central Asian (Turpan, Tarim Basin) tomb comes to the same conclusion (2008:4179-80). The study determines that the culture associated with the cannabis from the grave site grew the plant specifically for psychoactive purposes including divination.

Littleton supposes that the ritual use of cannabis traditional to the northern barbarians of the Pontic and beyond diffused into the Hellenic world in the latter half of the first millennium BC as part of the Greek colonial system, possibly via Thrace, which Littleton (1986:87) calls “the source of the Dionysiac cult and other esoteric beliefs and practices.” Although other scholars remained unconvinced that ritual cannabis use passed from the barbarians to the Greeks (Stefanis et al. 1975), Littleton adamantly wanted the opposite to be true. As entertaining as Littleton’s exposé of Greek cultic drug-use might be, more recent geological and archaeological

surveys have discovered a number of fault lines in the region which contain noxious gases, specifically ethylene, and that in the past the chasms which ran beneath Mount Parnassos possessed the geologic potential to release pockets of such vapors (de Boer et al. 2001; Piccardi et al. 2008). Evidence for a natural, local source of an intoxicating *pneuma* might undermine Littleton's cannabis mission. Nonetheless, a natural source of the *pneuma enthusiastikon* from the depths of the underworld fits the chthonic symbolism of earthen spirits better than any man-made fire. If cannabis was a part of the Delphic mysteries at all, it was not the chief intoxicant. It does not, however, rule out the possibility that the hierophants were privy to the ethnobotanical and ethnomycological knowledge of the native Pontic cultures. After all, Herodotus observed such traditions and recorded them for a Hellenic audience.

This could prove especially true if Ruck's hypothesis that the Delphi's sister cult, the Cult of Apollo at Delos, imported entheogenic plants and fungi from the north as part of a "Hyperborean" tradition which reenacted the Indo-European migration into Greece is correct (Ruck 1986: 250-6; cf. Hdt. 4.32-5). Nevertheless, can the Oracle at Delphi and the Cult of Apollo be described as "Greek shamanism?" To describe it and related cults such as Dodona and Delos as such, as Littleton does, implies the mysteries were in fact part of a primeval religious tradition. Some scholars have noted a dialectical origin of the Apollonian cultic traditions, that the mythology which celebrates Apollo's victory over the Python (sky-god/chthonic beast) might have derived from the synthesis of northern Indo-European and eastern Anatolian traditions (Fontenrose 1959, 1978; Ruck 1986). If this is true, then the cultic traditions would indeed have to be ancient. However, the Temple of Apollo at Delphi dates back to the fourth century BC with earlier foundations which stretch back to the ninth century—certainly archaic, but not primeval or primordial, and long after the "coming of the Greeks" (Drews 1988). Moreover, we cannot

assume the Oracular traditions of the fourth century were the same as in the ninth, and with the patterns of cultural borrowing from the Pontic evident in the other mystery religions in mind between the seventh and first centuries BC, one might suppose Pontic traditions influenced the Delphic and Delian mysteries as well.

Alternatively, consider the dialectical traditions of Apollo exoterically and esoterically. Esoterically, the myths celebrate Hyperborean-Apollonian virtue and order over chthonic chaos. Exoterically, the mythic dialect is the completion of a seasonal cycle in which Apollo travels from his favored abode in Hyperborea to the place of his Hellenic oracles in Greece, in union with sky and earth. Ruck (1986:250-6), who is also convinced that the Hyperboreans were the Hellenic interpretation of the cultures of the distant Altai, also holds that the Delian offerings from the Hyperboreans (Hdt. 4.33) were actually imported amanita mushrooms. These offerings, Ruck believes, the Delian cultists of Apollo imported for the preservation of a sacred tradition of Hyperborean overland trade, the offerings' symbolic importance in the seasonal transmutation of the god Apollo from primordial other to civilized self, and their potential use as entheogens in the mystic oracular context.

While Ruck does a fine job explaining the mytho-cultic significance of the Hyperboreans in the Apollonian cults, his use of the evidence for “two strains of shamanism” is a bit misguided. In fact, he, Wasson, and Hoffman let their obsession with mind-altering substances guide their research while they miss what really might have been going on in the context of Greek-Pontic colonialism. That being said, Ruck has, perhaps accidentally, revealed that the mystery cults regularly imported ritual goods from the north under the pretense of Hyperborean mythology. Though the mysterious offerings may or may not have come all the way from the Altai, depending on one's interpretation of the inspiration for the Hyperboreans in Herodotus

(Bolton 1962; Romm 1993; Mallory & Mair 2000; Bridgman 2005), the offerings did originate somewhere in barbarian lands. Given the location in Herodotus (4.33) of the first destination of the offerings, the lesser known oracle at Dodona, the Thracians, Dacians, or the Celts beyond them might have been a source. If the offerings did come from much further north and east, the Argippaians might also be a good candidate for the “Hyperborean” source of ritual goods and material. This could be especially true if we consider Herodotus’s ethnographic description of their culture and customs as fairly peaceful, that their neighboring tribes considered them holy, and the frequency of Greek trade among them (Hdt. 4.23). In any case, Delian and Delphic cults illustrate the construction of traditions out of the economic exploits of colonialism. Consequently, the Hyperborean mythos grew among the mystery traditions within this same cyclical process.

Ustinova (2009:4,153) suggests that the chthonic importance of Delphi as the “Navel of the Earth” indicates its importance as a nexus between the worlds of the living and the dead: “Since the dead were believed to know more than the living about earthly affairs, it would only seem natural for their consultation to be carried out close to their abode, in a cave or subterranean chamber, and thus, for Gaia’s oracles to be located in grottoes inside the earth.” In Homer’s *Odyssey*, for example, Odysseus encounters the shade of the dead prophet Tiresias who shares secrets with the Greek wayfarer that only the dead could learn in the netherworld (Hom. *Od.* 11). The Apollonian cultists at Delphi believed not only that the chasm beneath the Delphic Temple was one such entrance to the chthonic underworld, but that the nearby Corycian Cave on the slopes of Mount Parnassos was another. The cave, just as the formal cult temple which Littleton (1986) describes, played a symbolic role in the ritual ecstasy of the mysteries of Apollo. Strabo (*Geo.* 9.3.1) mentions the Corycian Cave as the abode of the nymph by the same name

and as part of the greater mythic complex of the mountain sacred to Apollo. In the preceding chapter we discussed the importance of the Hyperboreans as geo-mythological *eschatiai* in the Hellenic worldview. More precisely, recall that the Hyperboreans represented Hesiodic Golden Age humanity in Greek cultic lore. The Delphic and Delian cults of Apollo esteemed the Hyperboreans for the favor they believed Apollo held for these mythic people. Moreover, the Apollonian cults reputedly communicated with Hyperborean entities through chthonic ritual and believed these noble savages travelled primarily through the underworld (Fontenrose 1959:431; Ruck 1986:250). Thus, the cultic tradition held that Hyperborean spirits could appear to the ecstatic mystics of Apollo in the cave and impart wisdom. As mentioned above and in the previous chapter, Hesiod claimed that the close of the Golden Age brought the noble savages into the bosom of Gaia where they continued to dwell as spirit guardians, and even Plato supposed that those Golden Age phantoms inhabited the souls of all wise men. In a fragment (fr. 24) of *On Oracles*, the Greek philosopher Mnaseas relates how the Apollonian cultists self-identified as Hyperboreans, at least in a spiritual sense. One might suppose, given the context of ritual ASC and possession, that the mystics of Apollo could believe themselves possessed by Hyperborean “ancestors” in addition to possession by Apollo himself. Another possible explanation is that, like the Orphics, reincarnation was part of their belief system.

Ontologically, the Ancient Greeks believed the underworld, composed of a complex network of tunnels and passages rooted in Hades, was also connected to the surface world through sacred caves such as those at Mount Parnassos. Hyperboreans, being the chthonic children of Gaia, the Earth, were naturally inclined to utilize the underworld for travel to the sacred places of their god, Apollo. Nevertheless, we do find a few instances of Hyperborean overland travel in Greek lore. Herodotus mentions in passing an individual named Abaris, “who

is reported to have been a Hyperborean, I do not tell, how he carried the arrow about over all the earth, eating no food” (4.36). This Abaris of Hyperborea apparently earned renown among the Greeks for his healing abilities, wisdom, and virtue, although little more about this man has survived the ages (Strab. 7.3.8; Plutarch *Adolescens*. 1; Ovid *Met.* 5.86). Plato considered Abaris, alongside Salmoxis, skilled in healing magic (*Charm.* 158b), and Pausanias attributes the founding of a Spartan temple of the Savior Maid to Abaris or Orpheus (3.13.2). *Suidas*, a tenth century medieval Byzantine encyclopedia, describes Abaris as the producer of Scythian oracles, none of which are known to exist today if they ever did.

Despite the obscurity of this Hyperborean Abaris, Dodds and others have reconstructed the legendary figure within the framework of shamanism (Meuli 1935; Dodds 1951; Lateiner 1990). Lateiner, who had described Salmoxis as evidence of a Greek misunderstanding of “Asiatic Shamanism,” takes a more reserved stance towards Abaris and notes rather his asceticism as an Apollonian “pilgrim” (1990:237). Dodds, however, attributes Abaris’s arrow to Siberian Buriat healing traditions in which the arrow is the shaman’s soul-vehicle, a divining rod of sorts, in the retrieval and restoration of sick souls from the underworld. Dodds also cites Tartar shamans’ divination of arrows in flight and shamanic spirit-flights upon a “horse-staff” among an unnamed group (1951:161, n.34). Bremmer (1983:44, n. 84) disagrees with Dodds’s interpretation of Abaris on the basis that arrow-divination has not been necessarily bound or limited to Eurasian shamanism. Nevertheless, Dodds uses the healing context of the arrow among the Buriat as his main ethnographic point. Regardless, there is little to suggest that Abaris was a shaman figure, as the ancient sources have not provided a clear context for his carrying the arrow or that he could “fly” upon it like a witch’s broom. Abaris’s “fast” could also be interpreted as shamanic, as Northern Eurasian shamans, such as among the Chukchi, have been

documented fasting for divination (DuBois 2009:63-4). However, like arrow-divination, spiritual fasting occurs too universally to be bound up as purely shamanic. Although Abaris attained legendary status in both the ancient and modern worlds for his rigorous fasting, skills with healing, and generally spiritual character, we can infer something different from him than the interpretations Dodds and others provide. I suggest Abaris illustrates the Greek characterization and personification of mythic Hyperborean virtue and wisdom. His mythic journey, furthermore, represents the Greek mystery belief of receiving Apollonian wisdom from the north, the traditional land of the barbarians. In other words, Abaris was a model of virtuous living for mystics to emulate. Whether or not they based his legend on any real, historical figure is beyond our capacity to reason with what little information we have.

Another legendary figure in Greek lore, Aristeas of Proconnesus, falls into the bracket of Apollo-inspired Hyperborean adventure and incidentally sparked discussion of “Greek shamanism” among modern scholars. Unlike the foreigners Abaris and Orpheus, however, Aristeas was a Greek who purportedly journeyed among the barbarians of the steppe en route to the land of the Hyperboreans. Herodotus (4.14-16) relates that this Aristeas mysteriously vanished from his hometown after he fell into a trance or seizure and reappeared seven years later with wild tales of the exotic lands which he compiled into an epic poem, the *Arimaspeia*, which now exists only in a few fragments cited in Pseudo-Longinus (in Romm 1992:72-3). Fortunately, Herodotus provides a synopsis of the *Arimaspeia* as part of his ethnographic section on the Issedonians and their neighbors. Accordingly, Aristeas, possessed by Apollo, found himself among the Issedonians from whom he learned stories of the one-eyed, horse-riding Arimaspians and their wars against the griffins. According to Athenaeus (13.83), Aristeas also claimed to have gone beyond the Issedonians and Arimaspians under the guidance of Apollo to



the blessed Hyperboreans in an inversion of the pilgrimage of Abaris. Finally, Herodotus reports an account that Aristeas also travelled to Metapontion, Italy where he claimed Apollo transformed him into a raven and commanded him to establish a shrine in Italy. The Metapontines communicated with the Delphic oracle, and after they received affirmation from the cult did as Aristeas and Apollo commanded and built a shrine to Apollo complete with a secondary statue to Aristeas. Strabo (13.1) outright calls Aristeas a “charlatan,” and Pausanias (5.7) suggests that Aristeas did not actually visit the Hyperboreans but learned about them from his Issedonian hosts. Herodotus, too, has his doubts about the veracity of Aristeas’s stories.

Given the episode of Aristeas’s trance or epileptic seizure, his sudden disappearance and reappearance, time-travelling bilocation, the spirit possession by Apollo, animal metamorphosis, his Hyperborean quest, and his inspired poetic vision, a number of scholars, unsurprisingly, have revised the legendary figure as a Greek shaman. As with Abaris, Meuli (1935) and Dodds (1951) pioneered this hypothesis, and Carpenter (1946:162-2) associates the Apollo-inspired Aristeas with Aristaïos, the “rustic divinity,” assistant to Apollo, “the honey-eater, the disappearing dweller on the mountains, the Thracian Salmoxis,” as yet another mythological relic of bear totemism. As Mallory and Mair (2000) note, J. D. P. Bolton (1962) raised the first serious assault on the view that Aristeas was a “Greek shaman.” Lateiner (1990:240) reopens the debate with his assertion that the stories of Aristeas “clearly exhibit characteristics of Asiatic shamanism,” and that his character traits “connect Aristeas with genuine aspects of Siberian ‘medicine men’ or ecstatic prophets, not to mention isomorphic figures of Greek legend such as Pythagoras and adjacent peoples’ reincarnation myths.” These “aspects” that Lateiner refers to do in fact find parallels throughout the indigenous traditions of the world which academia has deemed

shamanic, but in terms of cherry-picking parts of various unrelated traditions. Thus, they go well beyond the constructed category of shamanism.

That being said, Aristeas likely does represent some very real elements of Eurasian Steppe mythological traditions. Because the Greek colonists, traders, and Hellenic frontiersmen found themselves in a liminal social frontier of sedentary/nomadic interaction, it was inevitable that aspects of nomadic steppe culture found their way into the Archaic-Classical Greek consciousness. Aristeas is representative of this cultural interaction. He was inspired by Apollo—a god whose cults at Delos and Delphi were obsessed with northern barbarians—and suddenly left Greece on a holy mission to reach the Hyperboreans. His return brought tales of death/resurrection, animal transformation, visions which transcended time and space, and inspired epic poetry, the subject matter of which revolved around the nomadic barbarians of the Eurasian Steppe. Aristeas's *Arimaspeia* was therefore a mythological product of and ideological contributor to the Hyperborean template of barbarism. Aristeas might also very well infer some of the cultural exchange which was occurring in the Greco-Pontic frontier zone where Greeks perceived nomadic barbarian religious traditions through the mytho-cultural lens of Hyperboreanism. Greeks such as Aristeas may have been inspired by the myths of Apollo and the Hyperboreans to seek out the northern religions for themselves. Whether or not Aristeas was a historical person, the legend explains much about how the educated Greeks viewed their place in the mix of cultures on the frontier.

## Ancient Greek Philosophy as Mystery Religion

The chthonic aspects of indigenous Pontic traditions including underworld soul-travel and the transmigration of the immortal soul may have influenced some of the emergent philosophies of the Late-Archaic and Classical eras, especially those which were alternative to the accepted public mysteries like Eleusis. Among these, Pythagoreanism garners attention as a mystical philosophy with striking similarities to Orphism and Salmoxism, at least as Herodotus presents it. Dodds (1951:167) claims that he does not suggest Pythagoras was entirely a “development from shamanism,” but he does remain open to the possibility of northern barbarian influence in the development of Pythagorean doctrines. The Pythagorean cult began under Pythagoras of Samos in the sixth century BC and thrived in the Greek colony of Croton in Italy until persecutors killed Pythagoras and scattered his followers (Ring 1987:43-5; Zhmud 2012). Herodotus, in his report on the Thracians described above, claimed that Salmoxis was reportedly a former slave to Pythagoras and owed his philosophy, mainly the idea of the immortal soul, or *psyche*, to him. Herodotus, however, believed that Salmoxis very likely preceded Pythagoras historically and that the Samian’s philosophy instead should be attributed to the Egyptians (see Hdt. 2.123, 4.96). Lateiner (1990:243, n.35), however, argues that Herodotus wrongly attributed the concept of metempsychosis, that is the transmigration of souls, to the Egyptians when in fact Ancient Egyptian religion described no such belief and Pontic religions did. According to third century historian Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (8.1.1-50), Pythagoras was “initiated into all the mysteries and rites not only of Greece but also foreign countries,” and he journeyed in search of wisdom among the Cretans, Egyptians, Chaldeans, and the Magi (of either the Medes or Persians), much like a modern New Age enthusiast.

In addition, Pythagoras supposedly claimed to have traveled through Hades, although Diogenes presents alternate narratives in which Pythagoras built a secret subterranean chamber in Italy in which he meditated for a long period of time. When he ascended from the chamber “looking like a skeleton” he declared he had been to Hades, and hence his followers believed he was Apollo himself come down to them from the Hyperborean north. The parallels with Salmoxis are more than uncanny, and Lateiner understands Herodotus’s treatment of Salmoxis as an attempt to render native Thracian mythology intelligible to a Greek audience through the template of Pythagorean “strangeness.” However, with the prominence of mystery traditions like Orphism in Greece, would this rendering have even been necessary for Herodotus? Thus it is more likely that Herodotus had used the Thracian Salmoxis story as a lampoon of the culturally deviant Pythagorean cultic and philosophic tradition.

In spite of the unpopularity of Pythagoreanism, the chthonic symbolism in the movement’s ontology, as evident in Pythagoras’s spiritual underworld adventure, was utilized in the works of Plato as well. The Myth of Er in *The Republic* (10.614b-621c) reiterates the same pattern of soul-travelling through Tartarus and Hades as well as the doctrine of metempsychosis. Plato’s nearly Pythagorean understanding of the soul is also evident in *Phaedo*, where the reincarnated soul “recollects” past knowledge, as his theory of human epistemology, and more so in *Meno*, where he describes the soul as having often travelled through the underworld where it receives true knowledge (*Meno* 81b-d). One might even note the vertical ontological symbolism of the Allegory of the Cave (*Rep.* 7) which describes epistemology as the process of ascension out of the chthonic realm, that one finds knowledge on a journey upward from the depths of the underworld to the upper realms of light. Michael Harner (1980) describes similar patterns in so-called shamanic paths to wisdom, but the shamanizing of Plato is perhaps a bit far-reaching.

Dodds (1951:151) connects Plato's and Pythagoras's doctrines with shamanism and claims, unsurprisingly, that their philosophies represent the "original Greek point of view" on the soul. Specifically, Dodds associates Pythagoras's advances in musical theory with shamanism: "Music is used by modern shamans to summon or banish spirits...and it seems likely that the Pythagorean use of it derives in part at least from shamanistic tradition" (p.175).

However, Platonic and Pythagorean thought actually have more in common with Hellenic mystery religions than with Dodds's concept of shamanism, and we might more accurately describe them as mystery religions. The Pythagoreans had a rigorous initiation in which the initiate must sit outside of the cult's gathering place in silence, listening to Pythagoras's lectures without physically seeing him. This continues for five years when the initiate is finally tested on what he or she learned. The Platonic tradition, conversely, despite its use of chthonic symbolism and seemingly esoteric knowledge, had no mystical initiation until the emergence of Neo-Platonism much later in the Hellenistic period. Thus Platonism in Hellenic Greece could not be accurately described as a mystery cult. Nevertheless, Ruck (1986) views Socrates as a "profaner of the mysteries" and an Eleusinian do-it-yourselfer who democratized the otherwise esoteric pursuit of wisdom. Ruck claims that Socrates transgressed the sacred initiations and conducted the mysteries (including imbibing the sacred Eleusinian potion, which Ruck surmises is a primitive form of LSD made from ergot fungus) outside the hierarchies of the Temple. Ruck, however, bases this observation on the comedies of Aristophanes and, hence, might reveal more about public opinions about what Socrates was doing than the philosopher's actual activities.

### **Concluding Remarks on Chapter 3**

The superficial parallels between Hellenic and Pontic religious traditions have tempted Romanticist scholars of religion to “shamanize” Greek traditions and place them within a scheme of cultural evolution in which “civilized” Greek culture supposedly preserved elements of a shamanic past. Scholars typically identify these elements in terms of chthonic symbolism in both myth and ritual, ritual intoxication or altered states of consciousness, and human/non-human (e.g., spirit, ancestor, or animal) socialization. Additionally, these scholars cite a plethora of ethnographic analogues from which they choose ritual elements and mythic archetypes that suit their agendas. Almost uniformly, the scholars focus on Greek mystery cults as exhibitors par excellence of “Greek shamanism.” In other words, they believe the Greek mysteries were survivals of pre-agrarian steppe shamanism which became transformed with the development of Archaic Greek civilization but also preserved crucial elements of a primordial Proto-Indo-European shadow.

In reality, the historical interactions between Greeks and barbarians in the Pontic region generated the conditions for the construction of the mystery traditions in Late Archaic and Classical Greece. Though the mystery cults certainly exhibit some elements of Northern Eurasian shamanism, those traditions were constructed as the result of cultural borrowing from the colonized indigenous folk of the Pontic. The constructed Greek/barbarian dichotomy, and especially the idea of the Hyperborean noble savage, fueled the process of cultural borrowing in that the Hyperboreans represented, to the Hellenic Greeks, an idealized primordial purity and a wealth of wisdom and virtue associated with gods such as Apollo. Thus the Greeks, operating under this paradigm, maintained a reconciliation between the Wild and the Cultivated through

the cultural appropriation of foreign traditions which fit their own narratives of cultural evolution where indigenous was equated with the primordial shadow of the Hellenes's invented past.

Finally, the constructed traditions of the mysteries revolved around obtaining and preserving esoteric knowledge. Divine wisdom, believed to come from altered states of consciousness and communication with the chthonic otherworld, was reserved for a worthy, privileged few who then mitigated that wisdom through a rigid hierarchy to the masses through a well-layered mythos and initiation through ASC. The purpose was quite clear: to perpetuate the ideology of the Greek/barbarian dichotomy and guarantee their own social space and access to esoteric knowledge of the past. It was the politics of culture manifested in an ancient context. First, this reinforced social order both within Greek society and in the Hellenic worldview, at the periphery of which were both phantasmal, mythical noble savages and tangible and exploitable indigenous peoples. Secondly, the constructed system allowed the higher classes of hierophants to preserve both their cultural authority and their access to divine knowledge. In the end, it was all based upon the imagined otherness of the barbarian. Even if the Pontic barbarian religions were technically not shamanic in the modern sense, those religions occupied a space in which they operated for the Ancient Greeks in a way very similar to the way indigenous religions today operate for us. As Harry Levin described the transfer of ancient primitivist ideas into Early Modern European consciousness, "The golden age, a fiction of the Old World, is realized in the New" (1969:68).

## Chapter 4

### The Indigenous Barbarian and His Religion

One might wonder how the discussion of Greeks and barbarians relates to shamanism beyond a few scholars' attempts to inject a modern construct into ancient contexts. It very well may have seemed a long digression away from anthropology and into the realms of classical history, philosophy, and philology. However, good history is anthropological, and anthropology has a wealth of history at its disposal. Particularly, the Greek/barbarian discussion illustrates that the structuralist problem of the self/other contradistinction that has been a persistent one in human history, not just the twentieth or twenty-first centuries. Moreover, the contradistinction, though universal, varies in the relationship between the twain, rather than in form, as things good to think with. Although the barbarian reflected Hellenic notions about human virtue and vice more than actual native Pontic characteristics, it emerged out of the relationship between Greek colonists and native Pontic groups and shaped the future of those relationships. Thus Thracians and Scythians made good slaves for Greek politicians like Speusis (see Ch. 2), and their religious traditions made good source material for budding philosophers and cultists like Pythagoras (see Ch. 3).

The barbarians were utterly other because of their social position in relation to the *polis* system, from the perspective of the *polis*, that is. In the Hellenic worldview, the barbarians were by nature free of Hellenic *nomos* yet could only integrate into the *nomos* of the *polis* through the institution of slavery. They were by nature also relics of the past stages of the Hellenes' own



history and cultural evolution as they believed it. This is why Herodotus described the Scythians as a “young” people, because the Greeks believed the barbarians were in a much earlier stage of social maturation. Moreover, the barbarians, being outside the *polis*, were a constant threat to the order of the *polis* in which the cultural characterization of the other represented both Hellenic insecurities and real dialectics of power. For example, Amazonomachy as a motif in art and mythology represented Greek understandings of exotic Pontic-Caspian non-patriarchal societies and also Greek fears of foreign threats to the patriarchal order of the polis (Tarbell 1920).

Thus the discussion of Greeks and barbarians is anthropological due to the persistent occurrence of social analogues of this dichotomy throughout history, especially between sedentary and nomadic societies, and in light of the effects of globalization today, the category of indigenous other. However, in order to put to rest such reservations, we will depart in this chapter from the distant past for the present and examine the discussion of shamanism in the contemporary context. Nonetheless, the previous chapters on Greeks and barbarians should demonstrate the processes of history in which socio-cultural systems inevitably generate ontologically marginal space from which they draw the material for the construction of otherness. Shamanism is one such construction of otherness in the historical context of globalization.

In this chapter, we will connect the Ancient Barbarian with the Barbarian of the New Age and reveal the mental structures which have imagined both. First, we will summarize some of the important points this thesis has already made about the ancient relationship between *polis* core and periphery. We will then examine the issues of how shamanism is constructed, and what it means in a global consciousness, and how it manifests in various forms of new traditions in the

political mire of voice, agency, and narrative. Finally, we will examine the construction of the barbarian of the new, global age and challenges to the field.

### **The Ontological Space of the Other**

I call this space ontological in that, from the perspective of the proverbial *polis*, the outer zones of existence, of time and space, contain the good and bad attributes of the past, or the primitive state of man, a form of ancient evolutionary anthropology with a Romantic flavor. Although the ontological vista from the *polis* walls may have integrated *a priori* mythological presumptions about the wilds beyond the civilized lands, it was still anthropological in that it encompassed sedentary cultural attempts to make sense of the human condition within and without the polis. For some, such as Hesiod and Homer, it was a poetic endeavor. For others like Herodotus and Aristotle, the pursuit was a classically rational investigation. Though we might not consider these works good science today, they still have ethnographic value (Thomas 2000; Skinner 2012). Siep Stuurman (2008) calls this the “anthropological turn” in the history of civilizations, and he notes this pattern cross-culturally in both Ancient Greek and Ancient Chinese perspectives on the frontier zones beyond their sedentary centers. The steppe and taiga lands at times appeared to be a chaotic wilderness in conflict with the cultivated lands and at other times the pure domain of the “prehistoric” past untainted by the march of time. The human condition, from this ancient perspective as “invented other,” reflected these natural states.

The space outside the *polis* is marginal in that its inhabitants occupy an exploitable peripheral zone relative to the polis-core. As a number of scholars of Central Asian history and

anthropology have noted (Saunders 1971; Lattimore 1979; Khazanov 1984; DiCosmo 1994; Liu 2001; Kradin 2002, 2006; Skaff 2004; Frachetti 2012), the age-old cultural dialectic that emerges between the sedentary core and the nomad further generates 1) varying ideas, from the perspective of the sedentary core, about the supposed lawlessness or irrationality of the cultures of the periphery with associated injections of discussions of morality and human nature; and 2) a tangible, exploitable semi-periphery which both the sedentary core and the nomadic periphery might take advantage of and in which the dialectical twain might even come into conflict.

This dialectic is not as black and white as it seems. Rather the semiperiphery, or “frontier zone” of Skaff (2004), becomes its own marginal space within marginal space, a fluid, liminal zone in which marital alliances are built, slaves and goods are exchanged, barbarian kings find Bacchus, golden artifacts fall from heaven, and conflicts of all sorts occur. Peripheral groups become dependent, to a degree, upon goods produced in the core, and the semi-periphery becomes the zone in which they most frequently obtain those goods through either trading or raiding, and, when the opportunities present themselves, the creation of large kingdoms or empires. Likewise, the core utilizes the semi-periphery zone as its own means of obtaining raw goods from the hinterlands and beyond, as well as supporting its own centralized system through the exercise of its power, both politically and technologically. Moreover, the self/other dichotomy becomes bracketed in the complex power structure and framework of *polis/nomad* interactions. The history of interactions between native Pontic and Ancient Greek colonial cultural systems further illustrates this historical process.

As the Ancient Greeks departed from their own historical Dark Age and entered a period of expansion into the larger Pontic-Mediterranean world, the “barbarian” came to occupy the space of “indigenous other” in the Greek worldview. At the same time curiosity about a

constructed past that was, even at that time, ancient led to the investigation of the religious traditions of so-called barbarian cultures on the part of educated Greek thinkers and mystagogues. The result: the collective of various sources on foreign, “barbarian” religions gradually fed into the construction of the Hellenic cultic traditions under the pedigree of Hyperborean Golden Age antiquity. One possible explanation I offer notes a Romanticist-type of ideology in the mytho-religious ontology of the Ancient Greeks which 1) fostered feelings of sorrow for leaving the past behind, as they imagined it, for the progress of seemingly more complex eras, and 2) grief for subjecting more “primitive” peoples to the yoke of *polis*-civilization and thus polluting their Hyperborean virtue. These may have been popular sentiments which myths about Hyperboreans and the Golden Age perpetuated via elite cultic traditions. Moreover, they paradoxically coincided with bigoted notions of barbarians as exploitable, lawless savages incapable of cultural progress. Finally, these sentiments did not typify all of Hellenic society but did typify the ideologies of mystery societies.

The Enlightenment recapitulated this entire process with a different set of variables. Primitives of the global periphery inevitably represent in the Western mind what once was, despite ethnology to the contrary. As the Scythians were to the Greeks, and as the Germans were to the Romans, the “Indians” were to the Europeans of the colonial period and beyond, an observation which Kehoe (1996, 2007), Romm (1992), and Feest (2007) also make. Given the Enlightenment thinkers’ obsession with Ancient Greek and Roman literature, in addition to Renaissance geographers’ utilization of Classical sources, the construction of the otherness of indigenous peoples in newly colonized lands, especially the Native American peoples, essentially emerged out of the same Classical understanding of human nature as did the barbarian. They inevitably tried to understand indigenous groups through their own

preconceived, Eurocentric notions about human nature. Was there any way around this however? As Feest notes (2007:328), “all academic approaches, no matter how politically detached and theoretically innovative, are ultimately part of a European and not an indigenous American tradition of looking at the world.”

Colonialism inevitably marginalized the “savages,” no matter how “noble” armchair scholars thought the world’s natives were. Now, in a globalized era, voices from the otherized groups grow in volume, and the perspectives from the fringes are entering the main stream of discussion (e.g., the Trask-Keesing debate, dealt with below). As Western consciousness is made to feel collective guilt over the effects of colonialism and globalism (despite globalization being an urban-industrialism problem, not just a “Western” problem), as well as industrialism, consumerism, etc., the “indigenous other” has become the Hyperborean analogue in its construction. Consequently, Kehoe (2007:194) remarks that “thousands of Americans and Europeans believe...that American Indians retain a primordial wisdom that could heal our troubled world.” As good-natured as such beliefs are, they unfortunately originate in a long historical context of colonialism. In reality, the same problems which plague marginal sectors of Appalachian and Rust Belt America plague many of the Indian Reservations. Yet, many people revere the archetypal Indian as somehow spiritually untainted by history. I posit that this Eurocentric, Hyperborean view incorporates not only the aboriginal cultures of the Americas but the entire category of “indigenous” culture as a whole globally into a tradition in which their identities have already been invented or prepared for them as “indigenous other.”

The current emergent esoteric religions, which this chapter addresses, seek to return to a Golden Age that-never-was, a Romantic, evolutionary myth about the root of all religions in “primitive man.” Almost laughably, the indigenous other becomes, from the urban perspective of

the modern *polis*, a vestige of simplistic paradise and closeness to Mother Earth. Movements such as neo-shamanism, neo-paganism, witchcraft, and theosophy claim both ancient, primordial origins and access to pre-modern wisdom that has been lost over time. However, movements such as these originate not in the distant past but in a very contemporary, educated context. They are among the many products of Enlightenment-era discussions about ancient civilizations and primitive man, and more accurately, part of the school of thought which became Romanticism. The context of the times always determines the subject matter of the Modern esoteric, occult traditions—Classicism for T. K. Oesterreich, Orientalism for Aleister Crowley, Nordicism for Helena Blavatsky, and primitivism for Mircea Eliade—but the object always revolved around access to so-called forgotten knowledge of the ancients. Subsequently, the real issues were: who were these ancients? What is the source material of the knowledge base for these esoteric traditions? And what was the context, social and historical, in which that knowledge was acquired? The problem emerges as one of the politics of culture. The “ancients” become a Romanticized or exoticized other, and the knowledge, if it has any authenticity whatsoever, is disembedded and reinvented to fit the new paradigm. Ancient European religions like Greek, Celtic, and Roman mysticism, long dead, are resurrected through Classical literature and a philosopher’s drive to emulate the glorified ancients. Orientalistic mysticism is invented from the conflation of modern Islamic civilization, as if an unchanging body of culture, with Ancient Egyptian and Akkadian imagery and reconstructed mythologies for an English eccentric. Nordicism blends Indo-European research with the Romanticization of the Germanic barbarians, politically charged ideas about race, and seemingly pure fantasy in the mind of a Russian spirit medium. Has Mircea Eliade followed in the footsteps of his mystic predecessors rather than the footsteps of his beloved prehistoric forebears?

## The Invention of Shamanism

This thesis thus far has examined the socio-cultural context in which the Ancient Greeks invented the traditions of barbarian identity and religion within their own mythopoeic ontology of Hyperboreanism and the mystery cults which emerged from that process. All the while the issue of shamanism persists throughout the discussion, as some scholars claim it relates to both to Greek mystery religion and native Pontic religion. The latter category might have a stronger claim to that assertion than the former given its connection to trans-Eurasian steppe-taiga cultural groups we discussed in the last chapter. Nevertheless, the fact remains that shamanism, in a contemporary sense, is the product of Western thought, much like the barbarian was a product of Ancient Greek thought. However wide-sweeping, shamanism is based upon real empirical observations and literary/oral traditions of extant indigenous groups, archaeological assemblages, and historical literature, whether or not those groups have any substantial relationship to one another.

Despite those scholarly efforts, shamanism is pieced together as a composite category in which the components represent supposed links to a remote past, a mythic phase of human evolution. As such, in a global age shamanism has become a culturally recognizable tradition that draws its authority from its supposed antiquity as the primordial root religion of all humanity. Like the Ancient Greek mystery cults, shamanism fantasizes about the primitive purity of the past and glorifies the indigenous other as manifestations of that purity with little or no grounding in the real conditions of the non-indigenous/indigenous relationship which brought indigenous traditions into the non-indigenous *episteme*. Thus shamanism is an invented tradition

borne not out of the great depths of history but out of relatively recent socio-cultural circumstances which the modern, globalized world has shaped. This process is nothing new in history (e.g., Greeks and barbarians); it occurs now under a new name and with a different cast of characters.

Let us better clarify what an invented tradition is, since I have liberally applied this term throughout my research. E. J. Hobsbawm describes an invented tradition as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1983:1). This is precisely what shamanism is, at least as a category of Western thought. Although Hobsbawm and other members of his camp apply this concept to history at large, I do not. And although history is certainly bound to the cultural context in which it is recorded and is often hence a “foreign country” to the modern reader (see Lowenthal 1985), not all history is pure fantasy, nor does “tradition” automatically imply “invented.” That being said, traditions do run the risk of alteration at the hands of those who control the narrative, and some narratives, though not all, can become entirely concocted. Thus, I do find the concept of the “invention of tradition” useful for describing specific instances of tradition-inventing, and I find that shamanism is one such case. Thanks to Eliade, Hultkrantz, Harner, and others, the narrative of shamanism as universally “indigenous” and “ancient” is repeated in popular culture and to an extent in academia. Because it is associated with the vague, usually homogenized category of indigenous other, the myth that shamanism represents pre-colonial religious traditions around the world persists.

The obvious problem with shamanism, even as an analytic tool is the sheer volume of multifarious cultural traditions which scholars and enthusiasts include within the shamanic



bracket, so much that some scholars have called for discussion of “shamanisms” in the plural rather than the unified singular (Atkinson 1992). Moreover, from one end to another the multitude of traditions contrast with and contradict one another so that one can discern no unified body of rituals, beliefs, etc., which one could accurately call “shamanism.” For the sake of illustration, one might face some difficulty linking the spiritual traditions of the modern Yukaghir (Pedersen 2001) with those of the medieval Altai Turks (Saunders 1971). One would face insurmountably more difficulty linking Kwaio ancestor worship in twentieth-century Solomon Islands (Keesing 1982) to Upper Paleolithic bear ceremonialism in Northern Europe (Germonpré & Hämäläinen 1997). In each of these arbitrarily chosen examples, the respective scholar sparingly, critically, and carefully uses the term “shamanism” in the discussion of their respective topics. However, the only supposed link between each of these traditions is their origin as indigenous or primitive. From the Western-global perspective, shamanism is the religion of a newly constructed category of barbarians.

The unified shamanism of Eliade et al. would include each of the cultural examples above among countless others as evidence of the wide distribution of the most ancient of religions. The prerequisite for shamanism, in the Eliadic mind, is not necessarily any parallel in cosmology, mythology, ritual, social structure, etc., but rather that the subject tradition is either indigenous, ancient, or both. Most often the two have been conflated. Pan-Shamanism has thus essentially constructed itself as the catchall of supposedly pre-Modern or prehistoric religion. In a Jungian sense, the emergence of urban or neo-shamanism and related traditions among contemporary Westerners signifies a cultural encounter with the primordial shadow of humanity’s savage past, albeit a past which never really was. It chases a fantasy, a patchwork myth, in search of wisdom which the progress of history allegedly left behind and aboriginals of

the world have carefully guarded for countless millennia. Whisker (2013:359) scoffs at such “naïve and romantic conservatism” which neo-shamanism becomes: “To suggest that contemporary modes of ‘spirituality,’ including ‘neo-shamanism,’ are a ‘rediscovery’ of ancient truths offers a circular justification of the post-Jungian framework which the anthropological archive does not support.” Atkinson (1992:322-3) holds similar reservations, especially with the emergence of “urban shamanism,” which “aligns its adherents at once with Nature and the primordial Other, in opposition to institutionalized Western religions and indeed Western political and economic orders.” As such, many Western neo-shaman enthusiasts would find it problematic that many so-called indigenous groups around the world have chosen the religions of the colonialists, that they would be Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists rather than follow their primitive root religion of shamanism. How dare those indigenous peoples! Don’t they know any better?

Atkinson and Whisker thus agree that the current construction of shamanism is based upon Jung’s psychological shadow, the primitive other. In the shamanic paradigm, self-actualization occurs as the dialectical synthesis of the Cultivated, modern-Western self with the prehistoric, Wild other. For neo-shamanists like Michael Harner and followers of the New Age philosophy, shamanism is a critique of Western culture through contradistinction with a constructed noble other. Recall our discussion of *paradeigmata* as an Ancient Greek literary trope (Hartog 1988; Romm 1992). Hartog especially favors the interpretation of the barbarian-other as a “mirror” of the Greek-self rather than as ethnographically accurate depictions of Pontic-Caspian Steppe lifeways. Basically, Hartog argues that the Ancient Greeks embedded their own societal deficiencies into the construction of otherness, that the barbarian merely shadowed the Greek, at times criticizing the complexities and hypocrisies of *polis*-lifeways, at

other times representing the darker, chaotic past of the Hellenic *mythos* (see Shaw 1982-3 for a similar examination of pastoral nomadism and barbarian otherness). The indigenous shaman, as a modern trope of sorts, operates in like fashion. Abstracted as other, the shaman is subject to the context of the *polis*-self and becomes both a criticism of the shortcomings of modernity and the idealized spiritualist of modernity's forgotten past. In reality, shamanism has about as much basis in reality as Hyperboreanism and Abaris. That the shamanism construct bears so much resemblance to the Greek construction of the barbarian cultural traditions should come with little surprise. Rather, one can find more surprise in the history of the theory of shamanism, that is, in the origins of the construct as it stands today as an emergent religious movement.

Shamanism's own origins are relatively recent. Enlightenment thinkers, and the Romanticists who followed them, steeped in classical literature and inevitably confronted with the ancient idea of the noble savage, thus interpreted their own worlds through a privileged classicist's lens. Their Enlightenment theories were put to the test as colonialism and imperialism ever expanded the frontiers of knowledge beyond even the exotic Orient to the apparent simplicity of primitive cultures on every fringe of the map. One only needs to read *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* to see how the peoples at the ends of the earth represented the primitive state of man for Late Medieval and Early Modern Europeans in the same way Herodotus and other ancient scholars and artists described distant foreigners from Hyperboreans to Pygmies.

As Znamenski (2007) notes, the Romanticist thinkers tried to fit the primitives into their own notions of cultural evolution and origins of traditions, and the term shaman itself originates in the context of Russian imperial expansion into inner Asia. Encounters with native spiritualists of various sorts, especially among the widespread Tungus people, fashioned a niche in the minds of the European explorers which they came to call "shaman." Through the nineteenth and the

first half of the twentieth century, shamanism has expanded to include the native religious traditions of just about every conceivable geographic and chronological space. Even after cultural evolution fell out of style in ethnology, shamanism remained, and very well remains, the last bastion of the evolutionary paradigm. Even as the theoretical frameworks changed, shamanism maintained a distinction as the religion(s) of the savage, which left the theorizing to the discussions of sorcery, totemism, animism, magic, etc. All the while, few scholars attempted to dissect what shamanism really was beyond its use in qualitative descriptions of various “primitive” or “indigenous” religions. Thus it remained a putative scholarly category up through its popularization beyond anthropology in the mid-twentieth century. Sidky’s recent ethnography of the native religious traditions of Nepal offers a better criterion for describing shamanism as spirit-mastery, but the analysis still lacks a more careful consideration of indigenous-ness as the essence of the larger conception of shamanism within academia and beyond. However, I still applaud Sidky’s efforts for his rejection of Eliade’s paradigm and the maintenance of the Central Eurasian context for understanding the shaman.

As for shamanism’s resiliency as a topic of discussion, Atkinson (1992:308) remarks that, rather than perpetuate an evolutionary model of shamanism, recent psychological research on altered states of consciousness has sought alternate explanations for shamanism in supposed “universal human proclivities.” Although Atkinson criticizes the psychological perspective of shamanism for its reliance upon neurophysiology and lack of regard for “associated structures of ritual, knowledge, and society,” she notes the strength of the psychological perspective in that it stresses the epistemological dimension of the category (pp.311-12). The object of studying shamanism at this point aimed to uncover the ways in which shamanism describes indigenous modes of knowing the world which separate them from the Western modes of thought. In this

way, the Altered State of Consciousness (ASC) makes shamanic epistemology “revelatory” within its own cultural framework. In the words of Pedersen, shamanism here might refer to indigenous ontology as relying upon ASC as a path to knowledge offering an alternative to Western rationalism. I still find this an overgeneralized understanding of indigenous religions, indicating more about Westerners, in bouts of postmodern nihilism, looking to the spiritual in response to a supposedly unspiritual society in which Westerners find themselves.

Postmodern criticism of scientific empiricism fueled the serious reexamination of shamanism as a reputable and reliable epistemological alternative to Western knowledge in the late twentieth century. The detrimental socio-economic and environmental effects of industrialism, urban-sprawl, and post-colonialism further prompted this reexamination. Thus modern consciousness began to view the primitive other as a source of prelapsarian wisdom, and shamanism began to take on eschatological tones of salvation in an age of rapid globalization. Those who take Eliade seriously would view shamanism as the only route back to Eden and the answer to our supposed “yearning for paradise” (see Eliade 1959). Consequently, Michael Harner (1980) provides the “how-to” with his step-by-step instructions and ethnographic tidbits for the fledgling shamanist on her or his way back to the Hyperborean bliss of the Paleolithic Golden Age.

The emphasis on the need for healing, both physical and spiritual, in the modern human condition has also attracted medical anthropology and alternative medicine to the study of shamanism. As Atkinson (1992) relates, psychological theories of shamanism have contributed to this trend through their focus on ASC and healing. Porterfield (1987) and McClenon (1997) agree with the interpretation that shamanism represents the most ancient form of healing and psychotherapy in human cultures. Medical anthropology offers reconsiderations of indigenous

healing systems as alternative medicine, and neo-shamanism makes ample use of such traditions (Fotiou 2016). Again, Michael Harner (1980) even becomes a DIY self-healing manual in this context. Harner also advocates the anthropologist as a sort of shamanic savior to the ills of indigenous people (Harner 1996). While the global social and environmental ills are real, does the study of shamanism offer any real solution for those in the most marginal of space in the globe? Or are we, the anthros, to become Salmoxian charlatans and deceivers? This remains to be seen, but we should also consider the context in which information on indigenous traditions of spirituality and healing is absorbed into the conglomerated category of shamanism.

It is out of these workings that the emergent religions of neo-paganism and the New Age appeared alongside and, more precisely, as a part of the developing world religion of shamanism, or to use the more precise terminology of recent literature, neo-shamanism. Because of their origins as Western invented traditions which glorify the constructed “primitive other,” as the Greeks did the mythic Hyperboreans, neo-paganism, New Ageism, and urban or neo-shamanism are really variations of the same cultural phenomenon. They exist in opposition to the accepted dominant paradigms and ideology and claim primitive or pan-indigenous origins. Although these movements boast respect for indigenous cultures, spirituality, and nature, they ultimately originate in Euro-American, educated, urban culture-centers. The world of the indigenous, of the spiritual, of the natural is alien and other, outside the *polis*, from the comfortable perspectives of the urban shamans and initiated mystagogues. Thus, as these shamanic movements utilize an ethnographic grab-bag of traditions, politics of voice and narrative determine what is shamanic and what is not rather than allow the indigenous their own agency.

## **The New Age and the Politics of Culture**

The New Age movement, like shamanism, is difficult to define because it more accurately refers not to a unified religious tradition but to a wide variety of modern cultural phenomena amalgamated under a post-globalized, post-Western ideology. The term originated in the twentieth century as the culmination of esoteric thought and Eliade's concept of pan-shamanism. Esoteric mysticism, also known as theosophy, was popularized in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries with figures such as Helena Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley. Theosophy itself is somewhat of an amalgamation of Eastern philosophies, European mythology, and Enlightenment-Orientalist ideals, such as the noble savage. Though theosophy fell out of style by the middle of the twentieth century, its emphasis on religious universalism and Romanticized roots influenced the writings of Mircea Eliade, who posited shamanism as the root of all spirituality. Consequently, the New Age movements of the latter half of the century essentially combined theosophy and shamanism into a new world religion in preparation for a purportedly utopian, global age of human evolutionary history.

Early criticisms of this New Age movement began in the 1970s with direct scholarly opposition to Eliade's shamanism (see Ch. 1). However, most anthropologists of shamanism have and continue to use modified versions of pan-shamanism, if for nothing more than the concept's categorical convenience. Some, such as Michael Harner, popularized shamanism outside of academia to a public, having emerged from the cultural revolution of the 1960s into an expanded global self-awareness. The industrial world of the West retreated to the Third World in

the decades to follow, and the world economy grew into a complex web and hierarchy of socialization more powerful than anything the human race has seen before. Finally, the arrival and expansion of the internet all but completed this socio-economic labyrinth. The world suddenly found itself in a maelstrom of communication, and aboriginals, whose worldviews would otherwise go unseen by Western viewers, are now posting statuses on corporate social media outlets and contributing to this process. More importantly, they see the worldviews of Westerners through social media, and they have access to many of the same sources of information (e.g., YouTube, blogs, news sites, encyclopedias, and scholarly literature). Western New Age traditions capitalize on the wealth of indigenous information and worldviews they find through various global media; yet indigenous groups with access to the same media have fared differently. Has the information boom affected indigenous views of themselves and of their religious traditions? Does the concept of shamanism, information on which is available all over the internet, alter localized native traditions? This remains to be seen.

Their inclusion in the global socio-economic system has turned indigenous traditions of art, religion, and identity into commodities, mostly for New Age consumers, however. These New Age consumers of tradition may be in search of wisdom, but they miss the fact that the very system upon which they rely to discover this wisdom also exploits, both culturally and socio-economically, indigenous peoples on a global scale. Very few, if any, cultures have escaped the impact of this growth of global imperialism which emanated from the Western world centuries ago, despite recurrent legends of “uncontacted” tribes in this or that place. Furthermore, New Agers are guilty of disembedding the material for their philosophies from indigenous sources with little attention to context. Rather, they cherry-pick elements of various traditions and combine them into entirely individualistic and personalized ontologies. So-called Eastern



traditions, like Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, and Ancient Mesopotamian/Egyptian religions, have long been a part of theosophy and other occult ideologies and practices via Orientalism, and they are fundamentally important to New Age philosophy. However, it is the inclusion of shamanic indigenous religions into Western consciousness that makes the New Age what it is—a global ontology created, like the rest of the global socio-economic system, through imperialism.

Still, few anthropologists have methodically criticized the New Age, and most have either dismissed the movement as a fad, like the hippie movement, or ignored the issue altogether. A minority actually show some support for New Age and Neo-Pagan groups, perhaps with the intention of providing a contextual basis for the ideologies of these groups. For example, Ruth Prince and David Riches understand the Glastonbury New Age community in the United Kingdom “as endeavouring to reestablish the fundamentals of human social life and as attempting to put such fundamentals into daily practice” (1999:119). Though the authors are critical of New Age interpretations of hunter/gatherer social systems, Prince and Riches gleefully contribute academically to their “genuine and conscious social experiment devoted to social first principles,” yet without dissecting what these supposed first principles really are. Nevertheless, the authors either ignore or have not realized that, in spite of New Age ideology’s denouncement of materialism, followers of New Age ideology are still part of the consumer system as consumers and purveyors of indigenous traditions.

In another study, Daniel P. Mears and Christopher G. Ellison (2000) surveyed the Austin, Texas area on the issue of the consumption of New Age materials and paraphernalia, and they found it is widespread, yet they make no major theoretical claim about this trend beyond the study’s scope in central Texas. Similarly, Arthur A. Dole’s survey noted the lack of systematic perspectives on the New Age movement, yet he offered little more than the suggestion that

critics should take a closer look at the socio-cultural forces behind the movement (1993:275). More recently, Maria Julia Carozzi demonstrates her support for the New Age communities in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and like Prince and Riches she contributes ideologically with her discussion of some of the more esoteric areas of New Age philosophy (2004:607). More importantly, she identifies a socio-cultural dichotomy in Buenos Aires, particularly concerning the class division between lower-class Pentecostal Christians and upper-middle class New Agers. This gives the reader some insight into the kind of privilege New Age enthusiasts enjoy.

Scholars have brought up similar criticisms in discussion of European Neo-Pagan movements, namely due to their reliance upon reinventions of an era of European culture which has long since passed. Marija Gimbutas's research on a supposedly pre-Indo-European, "Old Europe" Mother Goddess cult, for instance, has inspired some feminist scholars and Neo-Pagan groups to adopt a pan-goddess tradition which contends with the academic mainstream (Bevan 1987; Rountree 2007). Goddess Feminists, for example, operate cultic tours and ceremonies at the Çatalhöyük site in Turkey, supposedly the location of a Neolithic Mother Goddess cult. The Goddess tours draw pilgrims from around the world, but typically from a milieu of college-educated Westerners. Rountree (2007) admits that the movement is based more in the politics of discourse and multivocality than in tradition.

In non-feminist discussions of Neo-Paganism, Michael York (1999) describes Neo-Pagan movements, such as Wicca in England, as "invented traditions," and Adrian Ivakhiv (2005) contextualizes post-Soviet Ukrainian Neopaganism in terms of its ethno-nationalistic political leanings. Michael Strmiska (2000), on the other hand, praises the Asatru movement of Iceland for its openness, in contrast to the xenophobic and racially-driven Neo-Pagan movements of mainland Scandinavia. These Neo-Pagan movements began with the Theosophy movement of

Helena Blavatsky, whose ideology of Nordicism (i.e., the belief in the spiritual-evolutionary supremacy of the Nordic race) influenced the ideology of the Nazi party. However, Scandinavian Neo-Paganism did not gain popularity until the 1980s, decades after the Wiccan and Druidic movements of the British Isles had been well established. When it did, it emerged as the byproduct of the subversive, underground metal music scenes.

Musicians such as Quorthon (deceased) of Bathory and Gaahl of Gorgoroth and Wardruna, among countless others, draw upon Norse mythology and imagery in a revival of cultural pride in pre-modern/pre-Christian European culture and in environmental purity, what might together be called “pagan purity.” Moreover, Wardruna’s message of “sowing new seeds and strengthening old roots” summarizes their primitivist outlook. The Viking and Black metal scenes are ideologically rooted in anti-Christian ideology and satanic and pagan imagery, staples in heavy metal music since the late 1960s for their counter-cultural potency. Scandinavian Neo-Paganism grew out of this trend in music history as the interests of “metalheads” turned towards their own Northern European heritage for inspiration. Kennet Granholm, in “‘Sons of Northern Darkness:’ Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music,” examines this overlap and the reinvention of tradition in Scandinavia as a turning to “European pre-Christian Traditions”.

The crux of his argument is that the

key characteristic of Traditionalism, as well as the later Radical Traditionalist movement, is the rejection of dominant Western cultural and societal values and norms. Instead, the attention is shifted away from the modern West, and to what is considered to be more authentic culture and uncorrupted expressions of eternal wisdom (2011:537-38).

This translates to Scandinavian musicians looking to past folkloric traditions in their homeland for lyrical source materials and often a folkish arrangement of style and instrumentation.

By the 1990s, extremists in the Neo-Pagan scene, notably Varg Vikernes of Burzum, turned ideological opposition into “lone wolf” acts of terrorism. Although the majority of

Scandinavian Neo-Pagans view themselves as outside of a corrupted cultural system and attempt to return to their cultural roots, they do not burn churches or stockpile weapons and explosives. Only a small minority commits these acts; and yet, even Vikernes enjoys the privilege of disseminating his Neo-Pagan ideology via his website (ancestralcult) and Youtube page (ThuleanPerspective) for consumers of both black metal music and Neo-Pagan literature and ideology. He lives today with his wife and children “off the grid” on a farm in rural France conducting a social experiment of his own by supposedly getting back to his roots.

Vikernes and the various European Neo-Pagan groups have in common the opinion that their traditions are in fact traditional and, therefore, of a nobler virtue than modern scientific and Christian traditions. However, like neo-shamanism, these traditions are invented upon the premise that they represent the indigenous traditions of Europe before the advance of history silenced them long ago. In reality Neo-Paganism is something more like fantasy and Romanticism mixed with scant primary texts, ethnographic literature on unrelated cultures, and political narratives regarding claims to “holy sites” like Stonehenge. For Neo-Pagans, the pre-Christian barbarians of Europe represent something like the Hyperboreans of Hellenic lore. In other words, they are creating the past to affirm their own new identity. As such this assumes a political stance in the authority of the narrative about the past. Combine this with the current situation of seemingly unbridled immigration of Eastern “others” and a supposedly leftist Christian culture doing nothing to resist it in most European countries, it is not hard to see at least why far-right neo-paganism is gaining more and more strength. Vikernes is happy to disseminate his views on this topic on ThuleanPerspective. Like neo-shamanism, neo-paganism also carries eschatological tones in an age of increasing chaos and rising “tribalism,” whereas Christianity becomes an easy scapegoat for neo-pagans and European black metal fans.

Roger Keesing (1989) notes this same process at work in many native Pacific Island groups who reinvent the narrative of their histories in a post-colonial context. Like his contemporaries, Handler and Linnekin (1984), Keesing claims that indigenous Pacific writers have managed to integrate Western noble savage ideas into their own historical identities, redact those aspects of their past which contradict that image, such as human sacrifice, and that the natives thus “are creating pasts, myths of ancestral ways of life that serve as powerful political symbols” (1989:19). The mythic past, in essence, becomes the idyllic solution to the socio-political problem of self-identity in the present context of decolonization. Keesing raises the question, are these indigenous traditions actually traditional after centuries of integration into the Western global system? Or, like the shortcomings of Eliade’s shamanism, are they merely part of a Romantic attempt to return to a Golden Age?

This sparked a heated debate with native Hawaiian activist and scholar Haunani-Kay Trask (1991) who contended that indigenous peoples should be given the dignity of determining their own histories however they want, and any criticism from an outsider is a recapitulation of the colonialist mentality. It is an issue of power over the narrative and over the actualization of self-identity over other-identity:

For Hawaiians, anthropologists in general (and Keesing in particular) are part of the colonizing horde because they seek to take away from us the power to define who and what we are, and how we should behave politically and culturally (Trask 1991:162).

Keesing (1991) retorted that the politics of the narrative do not change the historical facts about the natives’ identity before colonization and how the process of colonization has altered their perceptions of that history. Trask herself is educated in the American school system with a PhD in political science from Wisconsin-Madison. Does this fact ultimately devalue or strengthen her position? Keesing treats her as a peer in the academic arena, but Trask’s identity as indigenous

also plays into the politics of the narrative. Does Keesing have the right to criticize her stance? Or does his position as a privileged, white, male scholar deny him that right? Who does have the right to determine the facts of the narrative? Similar indigenous criticisms have been laid against the European Orientalist school in the twentieth century, with Edward Said leading the charge against the antiquated and inaccurate view that the “Orient” was “timeless and unchanging” (Said 1978; Gershoni et al. 2006:32). Indigenous cultures are no more timeless than the Orient, despite the Romantic-primitivist notion that they are. Rather, contemporary indigenous cultures are as embedded in historical contexts as the rest of the world, particularly in a globalized age.

This issue of the politics of narrative and tradition is widespread throughout the discussion of indigenous religions, shamanism, and the emergent Western “primitivist” traditions. This is now especially true as more and more people from marginalized cultures and indigenous backgrounds enter the discussion of traditions. This gives the voiceless the political clout to determine the narratives of their traditions, but it also runs the risk of amalgamating and re-colonizing local traditions into a global consciousness of traditions, as is the case with the New Age. Before the approach of the popularly anticipated year 2012, Robert K. Sitler (2006) criticizes the consensus among “millennial” New Age enthusiasts for their misappropriation of Mayan tradition concerning the “Long Count” calendar. According to Sitler, the Mayan calendar was merely a small part in the traditional Mayan ontology in which time occurs infinitely in cycles which each span several millennia. As with theosophist Helena Blavatsky’s ontology of cyclical ages, New Age philosophy understands the universe in terms of cycles. Mayan civilization’s non-Western and ancient origins further legitimate Mayan status as primordial wisdom. Thus it is unsurprising that the Mayan calendar became fodder for New Age consumers.

Sitler describes how José Argüelles, “the Mexican-American spiritual teacher responsible for the so-called Harmonic Convergence that took place in mid-August 1987,” brought the Mayan calendar into New Age, Western consciousness through the internet (2006:25). Argüelles even sells Mayan calendar merchandise on his official website. However convenient this might be for New Age enthusiasts and ideologues—and profitable for the latter—it consequently does little to present accurate information on the indigenous Mayan culture today. Rather, it masks the reality of the position of indigenous traditions in the world system—a raw good to be exploited and processed for consumption in the First World. In the instance of the 2012 hype, Silter explains the impact of globalism on Maya tradition:

Many of the self-proclaimed [New Age] leaders of the 2012 movement have successfully appropriated this date from an ancient Mayan calendar by explicitly linking themselves to the living Mayan world. They have done so with the help of a small group of Maya men who lend an air of indigenous authenticity to their 2012 teachings but who lack a substantial base in their own cultural heritage. In doing so, 2012 proponents have transformed belief in the global significance of the December 21 date into a snowballing phenomenon that no amount of evidence can constrain (p.34).

Carreño (2014) examines the interface of indigenous Peruvian traditions and New Age enthusiasts, and he finds a rather drastic contrast between the worldviews of the participants in a certain annual pilgrimage and festival. Basically, whereas the locals came from impoverished marginal space and went on the pilgrimage in hopes of alleviating the pain of their poverty, the Euro-American New Agers, he reports, expressed disappointment at the locals’ lack of focus on spiritual enlightenment. Here, the politics of culture could not be more pronounced as the New Agers exercise imperialistic power through attending such exotic spiritual retreats:

Their return to nature is launched from particularly privileged positions within the lifeworlds that have emerged from the modern ways of objectification implicated in the work of purification. Having taken for granted benefits of being US or European middle classes, New Age pilgrims seem to be able to disassociate the material means that allow

them to be comfortably present in the pilgrimage from their spiritual task of reconnecting with the spirits of nature (pp.198-99).

Consequently, the New Age domination of the symbolic meaning of the pilgrimage in this case wrests the narrative from the hands of the indigenous and brushes them off to the side as fossil tokens whose only purpose is to add to the “authentic” aesthetic for the Westerners. The pilgrimage symbolizes much more to the locals than a privileged eco/ethno-tourist could ever know. Similar issues occur with the emergent ayahuasca-tourism in the Amazon in which traditions of healing and rites of passage of immense importance to the people who occupy the marginal space of the Amazon, have gradually experienced an increasingly problematic influx Western tourism since the days of Michael Harner, where educated Westerners make the expensive journey to the Amazon to have a supposedly authentic experience of the exotic other (Fotiou 2016).

The salient issue with the neo-shamanic movements under the banners of the New Age, neo-paganism, and the like, is their origin as “Western” phenomena. They are traditions reinvented in the confluence of contemporary narratives about pre-Christian, pre-Modern European culture and, in the wake of globalization, the Western-self looking at a constructed global indigenous-other. Thus a plethora of local mythologies, folk medicines, healing traditions, and anything that remotely appears to tap into a nexus of the spiritual and natural worlds, have found their ways into reconstructed New Age philosophies, Pagan rituals, and the personal worldviews of educated urbanites. Schnurbein (2003), for example, notes how the Norse neo-pagans rely upon literature on shamanism to fill in the cracks, so to speak, of a resurrected religious tradition.

Thus contemporary, globalized shamanism originated in and thrives in the deeper pool of the politics of culture, the great dialectic of narratives which dictate tradition. In many ways, the



evolution of the narrative has turned the noble savage archetype of the indigenous other into the dominant popular construct of the other. Revisionist history has certainly contributed to the wide acceptance of the noble indigenous other through the rejection of the noble savage's Jungian shadow, the bestial savage, despite sources in history, archaeology, or ethnology which contradict any binary paradigm. For instance, in North America, the history of scalping has proven problematic for Western advocates of the "Indian" other as noble savage as well as American aboriginals' trying to establish their own voice in the general narrative (Axtell & Sturtevant 1980). It is true that colonialists offered bounties for scalps, as Axtell and Sturtevant (1980) make clear. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the practice was introduced from Europe, as no evidence exists of scalping as a practice in Europe at the same time. Despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary, those who wish to abjure the native origin of scalping rather put forward an alternate narrative which paints scalping as a barbaric European practice given to the Indians, who essentially lost their innocence to European invasion. Oddly enough, Herodotus provides the lone source for this revisionist history of scalping, as he mentions the Scythian nomads, hardly a European group in the modern Western sense, as having practiced this custom of trophy-taking in war thousands of years before the Age of Colonialism (see Hdt. 4.64-66 for Scythian trophy-taking).

Trophy-taking in warfare was hardly anything novel in the Old or New Worlds (see Rosaldo 1980; Seeman 2007). The problem lies not in who started scalping first but the politics of the narrative. If you dig up enough dirt, you could accuse any group of being barbaric, savage, crude, etc. Instead, look at the ideology any accusation upholds. In the revisionist histories of indigenous traditions, the ideology usually posits an exotic other constructed as noble savage, just as colonialist histories justified their own injustices through the dehumanizing of natives.

The persistent Rousseau/Hobbes dialectic is thus manifest in the historical process of globalization. Furthermore, the template of otherness emerges in reaction to the cultural hegemony (e.g., Westernism, Colonialism, Modernity, etc.) but also as an ideological product of that same hegemony rather than as a product of the other. Such is the case in the Keesing-Trask debate (Keesing 1989, 1991; Trask 1991). Feinberg (1994, 1995) notes that the political issues of tradition, narrative, and indigenous identity have plagued the discipline of anthropology since at least the 1980s.

As the world has become more intricately connected over the past three decades since the internet exploded, and since more and more “natives” have become educated and even contributors to anthropology, critics have questioned anthropologists’ authority in representing the indigenous other. Moreover, anthropologists’ works are now almost always accessible to the subject culture, which allows for a new type of ethnographic “peer review.” Thus there is more native/anthropologist interaction than ever before in the discussion of culture. This has not always run smoothly, but it does allow for greater indigenous agency and vocalization. The Keesing-Trask debate is nearly a textbook classic example of this trend currently, yet it is only one instance and a negative one at that.

Either way, the object of the Trask narrative is to vocalize a constructed other using the Western template of noble savage. Ironically, in the attempt to convey the perspective of the pre-contact indigenous group, this silences the indigenous as-self in favor of as-other. This was Keesing’s main concern with the trend in the Pacific, that the historical context of Western cultural influence could not be redacted from the current indigenous voice. Rather, native writers and activists needed to find a way to come to terms with the historical context in the vocalization of their traditions. Herodotus faced the same postmodern dilemma in his *Histories*, as classical

scholars have noted (Chamberlain 2001). In his attempt to vocalize whole groups of others (i.e., barbarians), he ultimately constructs characterizations of otherness which offer uniform, first-person narratives and paint images of the barbarians as static “we the others.” The barbarian existed in the minds of the writer and of his Hellenic audience as a pre-constructed mouthpiece through which Herodotus dictated his histories. The indigenous other operates much the same today in the invention of shamanism as a world religion. Native subjects, accurately portrayed or not, add authenticity to tradition in the eyes of Western readers, unfortunately.

As scholarly and popular literature both currently hold, shamanism refers to (or perhaps symbolizes) the pre-contact religion of the indigenous minority of the world, whether or not the writers believe it is imaginary or hypothetical at best to an outright literalist interpretation that shamanism is indeed the universally primordial human religion. Either way, it exists, as of now, purely in the minds of those educated in Western style schools, whereas the indigenous subjects of the theory exist independently of the paradigm as self with their own localized contexts and histories. It is only a very recent development, perhaps towards the end of the twentieth century, that the indigenous “others” have come to adopt and contribute to the ideological evolution of the theoretical category of shamanism. Have natives had any voice historically, or have individuals become idealized? A number of American Indian chiefs have appeared in the form of half legendary, half historical vocalized characters in the histories of the American Frontier such as Pontiac in Robert Rogers’s play *Ponteach: or the Savages of America* (1765). Other monumental native leaders could be listed for the American region of the globe alone—Tecumseh, Cornplanter, Bluejacket, Joseph. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Lame Deer and Vine Deloria, Jr. became the powerful spokesmen of American indigenous traditions.

The figure of the indigenous leader as a spiritual and charismatic individual has been established. The chaos of the early modern frontier of the globe generated a drama in which heroic figures could appear and unite others towards the action of seizing every advantage in survival in the unexpected social, environmental, and geopolitical upheaval that was colonialism. This was nothing new on the globe, only new in scale. It was a process that had been occurring around the world on smaller scales for millennia. The domestication of the horse on the Eurasian Steppe had similar consequences in a different set of circumstances (Anthony 2007). The manifold indigenous culture groups of the prehistoric Americas experienced similar historical cycles, such as Ohio Valley civilizations in the phases of the Woodland Period (Seeman 2007; Cook 2012), or the unforeseen consequences of an unintended social experiment that was the introduction of the horse to historic North American aboriginals (Hämäläinen 2003). The development of cultural power centers such as cult life and politics of tradition, in addition to organized martial activities, creates and utilizes chaos for the sake of survival, whether Midewiwin (Howey & O’Shea 2006) or Sun-Dance (Stover 2001). We will deal with this further below in the next section, but it is worth mentioning that the cycle also enters a spiritual dimension in the resulting politics of culture, especially for control over the narrative and for self-actualization on the part of the indigenous other. Either way, the narrative at times paints a picture of a spiritual native in the face of an oppressive, unspiritual cultural power.

The occasional token indigenous spiritualist makes his (almost always male) way into the fore of the scholarly discussion with full authoritative vocalization of his perspective—Black Elk, Lame Deer, Dorji Banzarov to name a few—in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The end of the twentieth century brought the indigenous into the cultural power structure of academia where the politics of culture are played out ideologically. The Keesing-Trask debate

demonstrates the democratic vocalization the indigenous scholars can wield in the field which once helped create the ideology of indigenous otherness, especially concerning the invention of shamanism. Moreover, contemporary indigenous spiritualists are embracing the concept of neo-shamanism. Thomas DuBois notes that a student of his, a Hmong, was enthused with the prospect of learning about the supposedly similar shamanism of the Saami people (DuBois 2009:292). That a native of Laos perceived underlying similarities with the religion of European Arctic natives could say just as much about the globalization of shamanism as it does about any inherent universal between unrelated traditions. Similarly, in the summer of 2014 I visited a Curve-Lake Anishinabe elder and keeper of the local lore at Petroglyph Provincial Park, outside Peterborough, Ontario. A humble man, yet keenly aware of geo-political and environmental issues, he informed me that a number of indigenous spiritualists from South America had recently visited and paid homage at his sacred site. I also met a Lakota spiritualist in Kent, Ohio who not only was educated in psychology but also claimed to be a reincarnated Tibetan.

Nothing is necessarily wrong with these individuals' views. Rather, these instances demonstrate the globalization of indigenous identity and tradition. However, these men are also not fossils of prehistoric culture. They are just as much products of the times as I am. They are also players in a much larger game in which shamanism has become the proverbial snowball. We are witnessing a global paradigm shift in which shamanism, as a constructed product of globalist imperialism, becomes a world religion. What will become of the countless local traditions of cultural groups around the world bracketed as "indigenous" is unknown. Many will likely profit from the Western attention given to the exotic other. Many more, as with numerous lost languages for example, will likely transpire and disappear, or at least become absorbed into the larger categorical entity of global shamanism. Consequently, as indigenous groups accept the

Western-originating idea of shamanism, they also accept as self-identity the Western idea of otherness, the very thing Keesing criticized native Pacific histories for.

### **The Indigenous Other**

The other is nothing new in human experience, although it appears within different ontological frameworks cross-culturally. The division between one's self and the non-self world outside of self is perhaps the most basic first principle in human epistemology, what Martin Heidegger calls *dasein*, or "being-here" (1964:96-7). However, this first-principle of human consciousness, as Heidegger explains, varies due to one's own specific experiential contexts. This becomes manifest in terms of the relationship between the ideology of one's culture cultural and social relationships between selves and others. As such, the self/other dichotomy bisects culturally specific understandings of different groupings from gender to ethnicity. Consequently, self/other contradistinction has fueled anthropological and philosophical inquiry and perhaps lies at the very root of anthropology as a discipline which too often studies the interaction between the academic self and exotic other. Yet is this drive also universally human? If one accepts the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as viable, one can see how even linguistically the distinction between first and second-third persons is a psychological and cultural universal, yet it is also malleable to culturally relative contexts. For example, both a Yukaghir reindeer herder and a German philosopher view the world in terms of a distinction between self and other, but it is the nature of that distinction in the relationship between the categories which varies.

Ethnographically, and also relevant to the discussion of the people who have served as subjects of shamanic studies, this is demonstrable in the ontological principles of animism, totemism, and perspectivism among various indigenous groups, as discussed in the previous chapter. According to Morten A. Pedersen, totemism among Northern Asian nomadic groups such as the Halx and the Darxad exhibits a type of structuralistic ontology of binary categories, or “homologous differentiation” between self and other (2001:417). Following the Lévi-Straussian distinction between “identities in content” and “identities in form,” Pedersen essentially proposes that totemism is the mental mapping of formal categories of binary differences on a bounded grid, i.e., “the difference between Species A and Species B is similar to the difference between Clan 1 and Clan 2.” Self and other thus fall somewhere within opposing categories within the ontological grid work and operate on the terms of that specific culture. Self and other also inhabit fundamental space in animist ontologies albeit in terms of categorical spaces between which identity is fluid and transient and whose relationships might not be as structured as totemic categories (Bird-David 1999; Pedersen 2001).

In animistic worldviews, the other and self both exist, but the identities of either might be swapped depending on the social context between specific instances of self/other interactions. For instance, Rane Willerslev (2007) demonstrates the sociality of hunting among the Yukaghir where the categories of self/other meet at and cross the liminal space between hunter and prey. Although self and other are distinct categories, their meaning depends in this case on the specific cultural context of hunting in Yukaghir animist ontology. As we discussed in my third chapter, the supposed division between animism and totemism is one in theory rather than reality, as elements of both can occur simultaneously within the same culture group. Pedersen finds that animism and totemism are found throughout North Asia and are not mutually exclusive

categories but rather “governing principles” of culturally specific social contexts. Rather, the division is in the context of socialization between individuals, whether between humans, non-humans, or human-non-human interactions.

As the social relationship changes, the meaning of self/other does as well. As Pedersen (2001) and Willerslev (2007) have noted, a Yukaghir hunter’s encounter with the otherness of the prey incorporates a different sense of self/other interaction in which the perspectives of hunter and hunted are temporarily swapped until the pull of the hunter’s trigger. Viveiros de Castro (1998) calls this perspectivism. The relationship of self/other might change depending on the context, as in the mediation of a Yukaghir healing ceremony for the sick or in funerary customs. Self/other for the Yukaghir people also means something quite different from the self/other concept of the Ancient Greeks. Whereas the relationship between a Yukaghir hunter and a deer as self and other emerges out of immediate subsistence, the relationship between Hellenic-self and barbarian-other grew out of the complex colonial economies of the Ancient Greek *polis*-systems. Pedersen’s theory of the horizontal-versus-vertical social systems of animism/totemism posits a correlation between self/other ontological categories and the social context of a particular cultural system. Northern North Asian groups might tend more towards animistic principles in their socialization of self/other, whereas Southern North Asian groups tend more towards the totem.

This difference is further intensified as one examines the social relationships between complex sedentary core civilizations, like the Greek *poleis*, and peripheral nomadic groups, such as the Scythians. Outside of the *polis*, the domain of gods and beasts, the Hellenes imagined man existed in various degrees of primitive states. The Hyperboreans were the most geographically removed from the *polis* and the closest to the gods and the virtues of the Golden Age. Mythical



and semi-legendary races of Arimaspians, Pygmies, and Amazons represented the impiety and strife of the matriarchal Silver Age which followed the fall from the Golden Age. The feral and warlike peoples near to and often homogenized with the Scythians and other nomadic barbarians who were quite near to yet outside of the world of the *polis* represented with variation the chaos of the Bronze Age and the virtues of the Heroic Age. One might also include the Near Eastern and Egyptian civilizations connected to but outside of the Greek world as part of the Hellenic idea of the Bronze and Heroic Ages of man, and even the northern Greeks, especially the groups who tended towards equestrian traditions such as the Macedonians and Thessalians, often appeared in ancient art and literature almost as living fossils of the Homeric heroes.

Essentially, otherness in the Greek perspective was constructed upon the *polis*-premise, that is, from the perspective of the cultural hegemony of sedentary-agrarian cultural centers and through a colonial socio-economic system. Barbarians are other because they are outside of the *polis* domain. The other is a space which socio-economic and ideological centers generate systematically. The other is also fictive, a phantasmal product of the civilizational imagination. Paradoxically, the other is also a concrete reality. In this way, other is a space, a slot, a category—a hole in Pedersen's animistic Swiss Cheese—which the interaction of culture-structure and ecological parameters creates, and which certain individuals or groups occupy or are pushed into. The exotic barbarian-indigenous-other therefore becomes real through the structure of civilization.

Despite the ideology of binary difference, however, between Greek and barbarian, the socio-economic reality was a complex frontier zone, typical of semi-peripheries, the liminal space between imagined categories where literal exchanges between cultures occurred. Semi-peripheries themselves become microcosms of the larger core-periphery relationship, and local

individuals and groups often find opportunities for growth in power as well as threats from both core and periphery powers. As Khazanov and DiCosmo have both noted about historical Central Asian societies, the semi-periphery is an exploitable, volatile frontier. The Chinese civilizations viewed the fierce nomad cultures on their northern and western frontiers in much the same way the Greeks viewed the Pontic nomads. Yet it was the semi-peripheral zones where sedentary protectorate kingdoms emerged to take advantage of increasingly complex systems of trade with other more distant core cultures, but also where conflicts between Chinese powers and nomadic confederations took place (e.g., see V. Bartold 1958 on the multitude of small city-states and kingdoms of Central Asia, such as those of the Tarim Basin, which at times were powers in their own rights and at other times mere pawns to both core and peripheral powers).

The lands in which Greek colonies flourished were no different. Joseph Skinner makes clear that the Greek colonies themselves emerged and thrived in regions which were, in antiquity, fertile and wealthy in agricultural and other natural resources,

...the colonialist assumptions that have at times underpinned narratives of Hellenization have been countered by recent research stressing both the agency of local indigenous populations and the extent to which trends in urbanization were already in evidence long before Greek settlers became firmly established in the region (Skinner 2012:185-6).

Furthermore, I find that this fact fosters a dynamic of power in the relationship between colonist/indigenous with countless historical analogues. Like the nomads of Central Asia mentioned above, or the various tribal confederations of Ancient Northern Europe (Haywood 2007) and of Early Historic Eastern Woodlands (Fenton 1998; Bailyn 2012), the Scythians and Thracians became powerful middlemen who took advantage of the volatile situation that arose out of the spread of foreign civilizations into their native lands. As demand for northern goods and slaves grew among the sedentary civilizations of the Near East and Mediterranean, Greek colonialism and powerful barbarian kingdoms emerged in response to the demand. Perhaps more

than any other Pontic tribe at the time, the Scythians seized the advantage of 1) a wealth of natural resources, 2) political chaos or fluidity among neighboring nomadic and semi-sedentary groups, and 3) the demand for resources in the south via colonialism. Thus the Scythians dominated the Pontic scene as barbarians par excellence and at times were able to pose a real threat to the southern urban centers and colonies. So who is really exploiting whom?

As Skinner (2012:236) notes, ethnographic information in various forms appears in the Hellenic cultural system along with the rise of colonialism abroad. It is no coincidence that a dominant ideological template of barbarism with clear Northern-Pontic attributes developed simultaneously with the rise of colonialism. The idea of the barbarian-other, though malleable to the political narrative of the Greek-self, perpetuated the demand in the south for the exports of northern culture, both practically in terms of socio-economic relations of center/periphery and ideotechnically as self-actualization and domination over a constructed other. Skinner (p.243) also describes this process as both “self-fashioning” and legitimate curiosity about an exotic other. This was due to emergent ideological power structures within the political power structure of the *polis* which controlled the evolution and flow of the narrative and imagining of the other. Prominent mystery cults with their own esoteric hierarchies such as Delphi and Eleusis dominated the politics of narrative therein, although occasional influential individuals generated rival, vocal “cult” followings as well (e.g., Socrates, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, and perhaps even Herodotus). Thus the Greek/barbarian construct was the product of the politics of culture.

The indigenous Pontic groups had no voice in the narrative of their barbaric identities, and any barbarian vocalization was filtered through the Hellenic medium. There was no Haunani-Kay Trask for the Pontic barbarians to criticize Herodotus’s descriptions of Pontic cultures, at least to the point that Herodotus and his colleagues would take that person seriously.

Herodotus's descriptive digressions on individual native groups, such as the Massagetai, may have been more ethnologically sound than Aristeas's cryptic *Arimaspeia*, but both operated from a position of colonial power of Greek-self over barbarian-other. The space of other really is constructed as a social space and reinforced ideologically through any power structure.

The Roman Empire, for example, emerged as arguably the most dominant socio-political and socio-economic power structure of the ancient Mediterranean world. Consequently, Roman civilization created barbarian-other space on its frontiers as it expanded through conquest, colonialism, and an ever more complex system of trade. As it built upon preexisting sedentary systems of the European, Mediterranean, North African, Near Eastern, and Pontic-Caspian worlds, it integrated their cultural systems into a unified system of power with rigid ideas about the contradistinction between Roman and barbarian societies. Barbarians integrated into the core as they always have—as slaves—or they were alternately driven to marginal space as the poor on the fringe or beyond in the realm of gods and beasts.

The mystery cults were the driving ideological producers of barbarian characterizations through which the power structures understood their encounters with the other. Today shamanism, in *zeitgeist*, creates the idea of other-space as the archetypal noble savage, but it also creates an eschatological goal of returning to the virtues of the primitive as an escape from the ills of the global power structure. Mystery religions offered the same return to the primitive, but the “primitive” returned to Rome in the form of barbarian power. The Germans may have at times appeared as Hyperborean-type groups in Roman traditions at times (See Tacitus's *Germania*), but the Roman civilization, in moral and socio-economic decay, ultimately fell into the hands of opportunistic barbarian conquests.

The nature of the categorical other-slot is dependent on the socio-political agenda and socio-economic relations of the component dialectical categories of the core/periphery. What this boils down to is the simple, yet erroneous, idea that native peoples are static fossils of a remote, imagined past. This was the case with the Hellenic invention of the barbarian and carried over into the Roman worldview. It was the case with the Orientalist understanding of Islamic and East Asian civilizations. It was the case with Enlightenment views of colonized natives. It is also persistent today in a multitude of descriptions of cultures bracketed within the category of indigenous.

Like shamanism, the category of indigenous is problematic in its lack of clear definition and politically-charged connotations. A study conducted by Chris Cunningham and Fiona Stanley basically claims that the term indigenous refers to people around the world who are or were once in touch with nature and have been negatively impacted by globalization (2003:403). While they highlight the important fact of the negative effects of globalization, they (almost laughably) adhere to the idea of the noble savage. The model they present—"the dislocation of most indigenous peoples from their lands through colonisation has contributed to the effects of newly introduced diseases on their health"—is problematic in that it is simply misleading. Yes, countless so-called indigenous groups have been impoverished and alienated through the spread of colonialism, industrialization, and urbanization, and nowhere is this more evident than in the field of health. However, following this model, one could make the argument that Appalachia represents an indigenous culture or cultures, or any of the economically-wrecked old Soviet bloc countries like Ukraine, Estonia, and Belarus. How about populations in post-colonial Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey? Cunningham and Stanley unfortunately present a solution to the indigenous questions which silences numerous other world cultures affected by the same problems.

As indigenous identity is a heated political issue, and given the fact that the United Nations still cannot agree on a viable definition of the term in their discourse, Jan Hoffman French (2011) examines the case of indigenous identity in Brazilian law. The main dilemma in Brazil is whether or not the indigenous category should include groups which claim to have once been “forest-dwellers,” but through domination by the Catholic Church left their original lifeways. The politics of the narrative parallel the issue of the Mashpee group in Massachusetts who have been trying to gain federal recognition as Native Americans for decades. French also notes the problem of identifying diasporic groups as indigenous. Under the UN understanding of the term, many African culture groups are excluded, especially those in diaspora. “Diaspora” implies that certain groups have been geographically transplanted due to socio-economic and political forces beyond their control. If this is the case, many immigrant groups in the United States could potentially fall under the category of indigenous. Do we include, for example, people of Irish and Scotch-Irish descent in the category of indigenous diaspora? Their histories are similar to other culture groups dispersed throughout the world as a result of colonialism and globalization. Or do their historical oppressions, which preceded the oppressions of modern indigenous groups, not carry the same meaning as post-colonial groups in the twenty-first century? As you can see, the topic of indigenous is entrenched in the politics of culture. Nevertheless, it should rather be considered in light of how groups are treated as other.

Today, the barbarian-other slot has been made global. Shamanism is certainly not the cause of the imperialisms of the past centuries, but it has recently effected a global understanding or consciousness of other-space typified by the category of indigenous peoples. With the way things are lining up in terms of environmental, socio-economic, and geo-political tensions in a global age, shamanism might play a role in the next great power and paradigm shift. Indigenous

spirituality has already been inspiring political activism among American aboriginal groups, such as the Anishinabe (Willow 2011). Shamanism as a unified concept of indigenous religion holds immense political potential to unite indigenous groups worldwide, to rally native groups from every marginal space under the common identity of otherness in the wake of globalization. Otherness as alienation has the potential energy to invigorate resistance or reaction to that alienation. For example, Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn (2011) note that radical Islam often gains its momentum through the pent-up frustration and feelings of socio-economic alienation as other that many Muslims experience in post-colonial countries and as immigrants. The authors call this theory the “Fanonian Impulse,” that is, “the psychological impact of insurgence and resistance on the native Self, and the translation of that impact into political currency, tactics, and strategy” (2011:56). As a world religion, Islam has the ideological clout to unite followers whose post-colonial experiences are similar, not necessarily through any inherent design in the ideology itself, but through the macro-context of marginalization and resistance to marginalization which inspired individuals or groups realize in local, micro-contexts or through corporate, globalist-sponsored organizations like Al-Qa’ida and ISIL.

Indigenous groups have experienced similar phases of resistance in smaller contexts. During the multiple Soviet attempts to silence and disempower the indigenous traditions of the numerous Siberian groups in their country, groups such as the Khanty, for example, rallied behind individual shaman-figures whose legacies elevated them to hero-status (Leete 2005). Their reaction to high-handed Soviet policies towards their religions involved unprecedented mass-sacrifice of animals and captured Bolsheviks. Despite the eventual victory and establishment of Soviet hegemony over the indigenous populations, shamanism survived among the Siberian groups and revitalized indigenous populations towards the end of the USSR. After

the collapse of the Soviet Union, various Turkic groups of Central Eurasia even successfully created their own political space in the form of nation-states, and shamanic traditions gave these groups much of their rallying momentum (although, mineral excavation, especially oil and natural gas, has also been a significant boon to nations such as Kazakhstan).

In the United States, the issue of indigenous rights gained little ground over the past century, and groups like the Lakota Sioux have suffered plagues of drug and alcohol addiction and suicides as they have been brushed off to the fringes of American society. That is not to say they do not want a voice or are content with their situation. Although the American Indian Movement (AIM) failed to meet its goals a few decades ago, the cultural pride and longing for nationhood is alive and well “on the rez” to anyone who has visited (My own visit to Pine Ridge in 2014 coincided with a *waicipi* festival which focused on environmental issues and Lakota identity). The Lakota are but one tiny example of the marginalization of the indigenous other globally. To illustrate their current dilemma beyond depression, substance abuse, and suicide, water rights are historically bound up with the politics of culture and attempts of reservation self-determination.

In 2012, the US department of Agriculture issued a report on the state of a diminishing aquifer, one of the largest and most important to the agricultural industry. According to this report, the High Plains Aquifer, which extends into Lakota Sioux territory including Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, continues to decrease in overall volume due to overdraw for agricultural irrigation (McGuire et al. 2012). However, the study also shows that in spite of overdraw, specific parts of the aquifer show an increase in volume. These areas of increase, small though they are, stand in Lakota territories throughout Bennett, Gregory, Jackson, Shannon, Todd, and Tripp counties, South Dakota. The authors of this report fail to mention the



crucial fact that this is native land. It is true that some of these counties, namely Bennett, Mellette, Tripp, and Gregory, have technically been disputed territories since 1910. Nevertheless, the authors of this report have not disclosed exactly where their test wells were located. What we can glean from their findings, however, is the fact that although the overall volume of the High Plains Aquifer is diminishing, certain parts of it which fall on Sioux territory are not, and in fact those parts are actually increasing in volume. That the authors write for a number of government agencies concerned with the availability of natural resources should say something about their motives, especially since those agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, are concerned first and foremost with the maintenance of the corporate agricultural system. Therefore, I do not think it is too far-reaching to suggest that the corporate agricultural system will use, or perhaps already have begun to use, the evidence provided in this report with the intent of utilizing wells of increasing-volume for irrigation in a world of otherwise diminishing aqua-resources.

Collins (1986:51) shows that Federal policies towards reservation water rights were constructed out of the narrow prediction that reservations would utilize their watersheds for agricultural irrigation. This becomes problematic in two ways. First, as Collins points out, the federal allocation of water rights only takes agricultural irrigation into their calculations and does not take into account increased water use for economic development for reservations (e.g., mining, industry, recreation). Secondly, the federal plan did not take ground water into account in the legal definitions of reservation water rights. Thus a new battle began to develop with the tapping of the Oglalla Water Table, which puts further pressure on reservation natural resource disputes in an already arid region in which “there are politically powerful interests competing with those of the Indians” (Collins 1986:51). Walker and Williams (1991) and McCool (1993) demonstrate that American tribes do have the ability to negotiate water rights in the judicial

arena when state, federal, and tribal governments are willing to cooperate. If they are not cooperative, or if the corporate agro-industry manages to gain judicial favor over the rights of the indigenous, the courts may decide the Ogalla Water Table falls outside the definitions of tribal water rights.

Furthermore, I predict that this will bring the corporate-state agricultural complex into conflict with the Lakota Sioux. The Lakota are in danger of falling victim to corporate and state subterfuge and imperialism as they have historically since their first encounters with Western expansion. Simply put, the Lakota have been in a marginalized socio-economic position as the exploited indigenous other. They are victims of the system, both historically and currently. Not only does the globalist system encroach upon the sacred natural resources the Lakota believe the Creator gave to them and are, therefore, *wakan*; the New Age movement encroaches on their traditions for their own consumption. The globalists monetize the natural world both for agro-economic and ideo-economic consumption. In this system, the Lakota are typified as the indigenous other whose resources the hegemon claims. If we are to take anything away from Strindberg and Warn (2012), especially concerning the role of the Fanonian Impulse theory in violence as a reaction to marginalization for radical Islamists, we should not rule out the possibility of a reemergence of armed Lakota resistance to the globalist system, especially given the history of the Sioux as a warrior-culture. If you throw a pan-indigenous level of organization like the American Indian Movement into the equation, the localized conflict could find support with the involvement of other tribes (i.e., AIM) and sympathizers on a national and even global scale. Could shamanism and the rise in global self-awareness of indigenous peoples provide a unifying paradigm for indigenous peoples globally? If so, what would spark such unification? Could the issue of Lakota Sioux water rights do so?

Finally, I will add a comment about the politics of academia in light of this issue. The scientists behind the McGuire report present their findings in a manner which appears objective in its tone yet knowing quite well the impact this would have on the current discussion of diminishing resources, especially potable water. Corporate agricultural conglomerates like Monsanto can read the McGuire report and know that they will have the backing of governmental policies against the Indians. This current system threatens the Lakota, and the indigenous category in general, in two ways. First, the system ideologically has advanced the idea of indigenous peoples as noble savages and exotic others. Whether deliberately or unintentionally, this ideology has turned the traditions, especially traditions of thought and religion, into a cultural resource for the First World consumers with little to no attention paid to the suffering of indigenous peoples. In a way, New Age ideology has opiated the masses to the second prong of the attack in which the policies of governments in various parts of the world (including the US) and hegemonic corporate entities economically exploit indigenous groups for their resources. In some circumstances the indigenous groups are pushed to the farthest peripheral zones of the world economy, whereas other indigenous groups have been incorporated into the semi-periphery as laborers of the lowest class in the emerging industrial quarters of the world system.

In light of the recent events of the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline which began in the spring of 2016, indigenous groups of North America have begun to band together in cultural resistance to yet another example of consumer-industrialism exploitation of indigenous resources. The pipeline, proposed to bisect a tract of the headwaters of the Missouri watershed at Lake Oahe in North Dakota, risks damaging traditional Lakota Sioux burial grounds as well as the *wakan*, or sacred, water of the Missouri River. In light of the discussion of Native Water

Rights above, the predictions I made concerning indigenous reactions to the fight over water have the potential to come true. The protests at Standing Rock have drawn together diverse tribes in indigenous unity as well as a few New Age supporters. As of yet, little violence has occurred in the faceoff between protestors and “the Man.” If it does, will there be an “Indigenous Spring” worldwide? As anthropologists, we should also pay very close attention to the rhetoric of both sides of the debate and what sort of political narratives emerge. Will the Rousseau/Hobbes debate manifest in this historical occurrence? Will shamanism feature in the discussion? If Standing Rock amounts to nothing else, which it has not as of the writing of this thesis, it at least contributes to indigenous self-awareness on a global stage. There will likely be another Standing Rock elsewhere on this planet eventually. (As of the completion of this thesis, the Standing Rock protests ended with a few arrests, no major opposition, and little more than media hype and convenient “hashtags” for college students. The Dakota Access Pipeline is fully operational)

## **Conclusion**

All of anthropology is the study of human history, including history up to the present. We should tread carefully, however, as we contribute to the discussion of our distant past, so that we do not perpetuate the ideology of the barbarian other in our discourse, that we do not project the problems of the present into the past. I agree with David Lowenthal’s assertion that the “past is the foreign country,” that the politics of the present affect, and at times outright concoct, the narrative of the past (Lowenthal 1985). Rather than produce any substantial theory on prehistoric human cultures, scholarship which recapitulates the Rousseau/Hobbes dialectic does an injustice to both the past and the present. Anthropology may never know what the religious traditions of

truly primitive man were. Nonetheless, some scholarship on indigenous religions today, as discussed in this thesis, have opened a Pandora's box in that it has projected Enlightenment views about the "savage," born out of colonialism ancient and modern, into the discussion of the past and in turn used those interpretations to further discuss the present.

There may very well have been elements of past cultures which resembled aspects of Rousseau's and Hobbes's envisioned human pasts, but this does not mean that prehistoric humans were either essentially noble or brutish. Likewise, prehistoric religions, in all their unknown variations, may have contained elements which Mircea Eliade or R. G. Wasson would consider shamanic, but the elements of non-shamanic world religions may have been there as well. We simply cannot know for sure based upon archaeology, ethnology, or history. The point is, rather, that such scholars use present cultures as static others to explain human history and then use human history to explain those present cultures. This circular reasoning is a major part of the problem inherent in the categories of shamanism and indigenous. They are inescapably other in the present understanding of them.

So where do we go from here? Can academia come to any sort of consensus on what shamanism is? On what it means to be indigenous? Or have we let the proverbial horse out of the barn with neo-shamanic movements like the New Age? Can anthropology climb out of the trenches of the politics of culture which the Keesing-Trask debate illustrates so well? Things remain to be seen, but I think we should continue paying close attention to the forces at play in the construction of otherness on a global scale. Serious scholars of the so-called shamanic traditions, in an effort to attain deeper emic contexts may find themselves lost in the semiotic and esoteric details of rather dark realms. The line between research and praxis will inevitably become blurred if it has not already. Are we to become Pythagoras of the New Age?

If we should learn anything from the relationship between the barbarian and Hellenic mystery religion, I would offer a definition of shamanism similar to my description of the mystery religions. Shamanism (i.e., the Western construct) is really just a modern, urban delight in imagined aspects of barbarian-indigenous-other cultures which people popularly believe are virtuous and necessary to celebrate as part of their post-globalized worldview. Like the mysteries, shamanism is invented based upon the urban perspective of the primitive other. However, we should also pay close attention to how those other-communities receive this new colonialist mystery as globalization finishes its course. The end might not be pretty for the colonialists.

Appendix A – Maps (List of Figures)



Figure 1: Northern Pontic

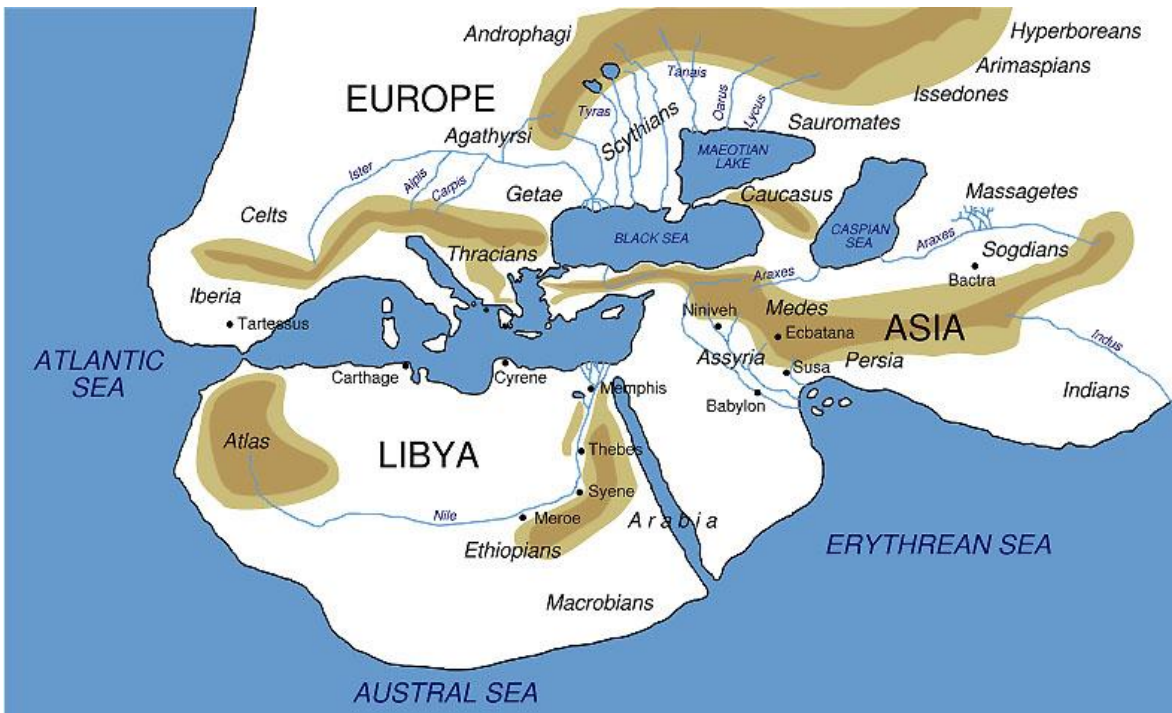


Figure 2: Herodotus's geography (reconstruction)





Figure 3: Scythian world and associated funerary sites

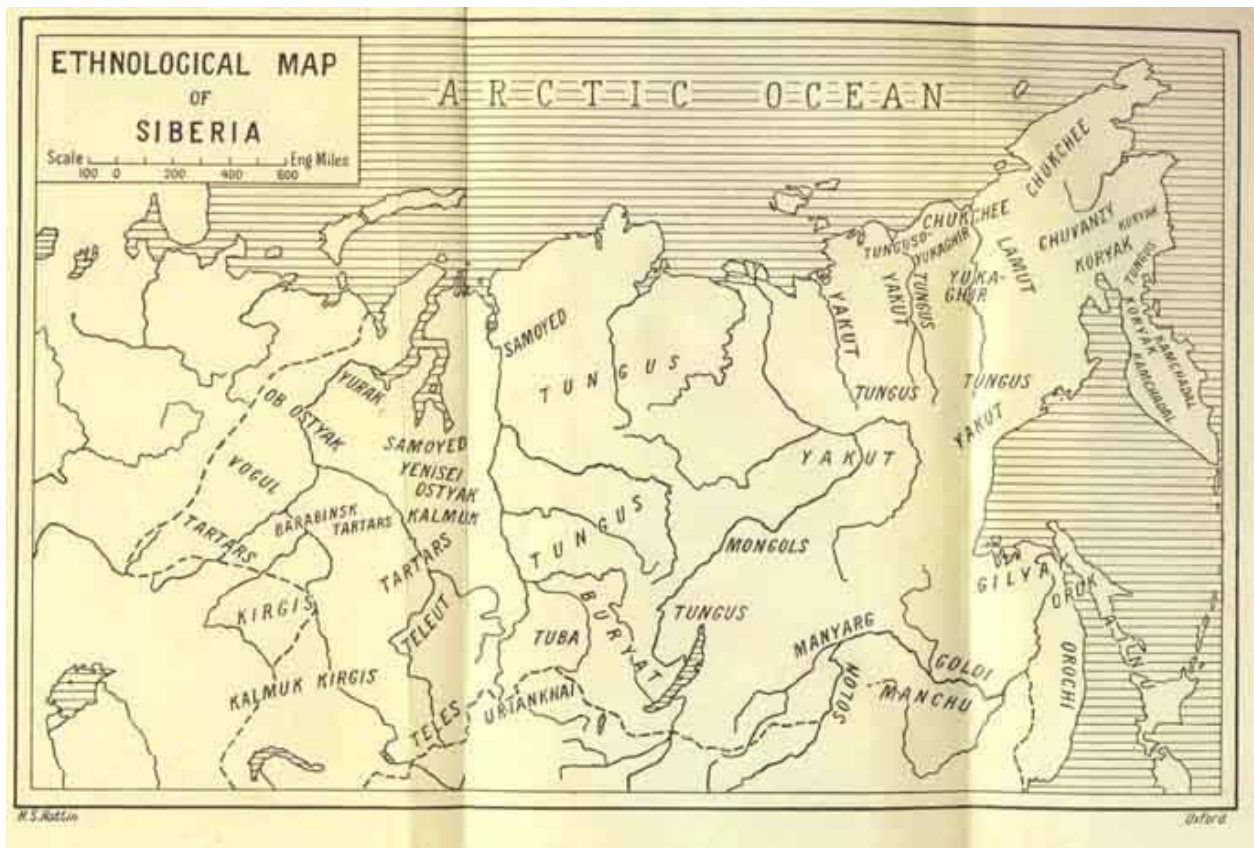


Figure 4: Ethnological map of modern Siberian cultures





Figure 5: Hellenic sacred sites and cult centers

Note on Appendix A: All maps with the exception of Figure 4 obtained from public domain, Wikimedia Commons. Figure 4 comes from M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia: a Study in Social Anthropology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (1914). Accessed online at (<https://archive.org/details/aboriginalsiberi00czap>).

## Appendix B – Glossary

**Archaic Greece:** Between the eighth and fifth centuries BC, Greek culture expanded in maritime exploration, trade, and colonization, as well as urban planning and literary and artistic achievements. Due to increased interconnection with the Near East and other parts of the ancient world, Greek culture went through what some scholars have called a Greek Renaissance due to the influx of foreign influences. This period comes to a close with Xerxes's invasion of Greece in 480

**Chthonic:** From the Greek *khthonios*, which refers to the netherworld beneath the surface world. It is connected with primordial chaos and the Near Eastern mythological concept of the *abzu*, rendered in Greek as *abyss*.

**Classical Greece:** The period following the Persian Wars of the early fifth century and before the rise of Alexander the Great at the end of the fourth century BC, a brief epoch of Greek history but well remembered for the growth in power of the Greek city states, namely Athens and Sparta, but also for the scholarship, artwork, and plays this period produced.

**Cult:** A specific type of religious institution which is layered in rigid hierarchies through which members are initiated through varying degrees of power and obscured knowledge. Cults can take many forms in different societies which range from official state religions dedicated to a patron deity, as in Ancient Mesopotamia, to secret societies dedicated to hidden purposes, such as the Assassins of the Medieval Islamic world. In popular vernacular, "cult" often connotes counter-culture, strangeness, and controversial charismatic personalities, when in fact most religious traditions have some aspects of cult-ness.

**Cultural Evolution:** An anthropological paradigm of human history in which cultures are supposed to have gone through various stages of development. The standard of measure is usually the cumulative achievements of the observer's group, and all other culture groups are contrasted with that standard. Consequently, the observer supposes that other societies which fall short of the established standard are living fossils of evolutionary stages which the observer's groups already passed through.

**Dark Age Greece:** A transitional period of Greek history from Bronze Age to Iron Age technology between the thirteenth and late ninth centuries BC. This period is typified by the collapse of Mycenaean civilization alongside numerous Near Eastern civilizations, massive human migrations, and the slow rise of urban centers and reestablishment of maritime trade networks towards the tenth and ninth centuries.

**Enlightenment:** a philosophic epistemological theory of the pinnacle of knowledge, Plato's ascension out of the Cave. In the period of European history between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries AD, the Enlightenment refers to the culmination of humanist philosophies which viewed rationality as the pinnacle of civilization.

**Entheogen:** R. G. Wasson, Carl A. P. Ruck, and others coined this term as a collaborative effort in the study of mind-altering substances and altered states of consciousness in religious traditions worldwide and throughout history. It is derived from the Greek phrases, ἔνθεος *éntheos*, and γενέσθαι, *genésthai*, and could be translated to a concept along the lines of “the god coming into being within,” with clear reference to the religious context for ritual intoxication.

**Epistemology:** A field of philosophy which seeks to establish a theory of knowledge, that is, how we know what we know, the process of learning.

**Esoteric:** Obscured, arcane, or otherwise secret symbolism, the meaning of which can only be accessed through initiation or revealed knowledge. The esoteric symbols, often hidden in plain sight, are obscured to the uninitiated public through exoteric symbolism.

**Ethnobotany:** The study of the folklore and cultural uses of local plants including classification, what is good and not good to eat, what is medicine and what is poison, other utilitarian uses for different plants, and stories and songs about certain plants.

**Ethnomycology:** An anthropological field of study similar to ethnobotany but which focuses on fungi instead of plants.

**Exoteric:** The converse of esoteric symbolism where the immediate meaning is available to the uninitiated public. When multiple layers of meaning are involved, the exoteric masks the esoteric.

**Grave Goods:** A technical archaeological term that refers to material culture interred in a funerary context with the dead. These kinds of artifacts can tell archaeologists much about a given culture from economic and social systems to mortuary myth-religious beliefs.

**Historiography:** A technical historian’s term that refers to the method and process of delineating the genealogy of discussion and theories about a specific historical topic or question in order to explain how the scholarship has arrived at its current state on said issue, what the strengths and weaknesses are of the various arguments and paradigms, and the direction the investigator hopes his or her study will take in the field.

**Ionia:** The area of the Ancient Greek world in Western Anatolia which was often thought of as semi-Orientalized due to its close ties to the various Near Eastern cultures, which began the first major phase of colonization in Greek history, and which produced a wealth of art and scholarship to rival that of Athens.

**Khan, khanate:** A Turkic word which referred to the concept of ruling power among various nomadic kingdoms of the Eurasian Steppe, most famously the Mongols. Although the term itself is Turkic in origin, this type of ruling power was typical among most of the equestrian nomadic groups of this vast region well before the ethnogenesis of the Turks, and the Royal Scythians likely had their own colloquial word to describe the same phenomenon. Khanate refers to the realm which the Khan rules over.

**Marxism:** A widely variant paradigm or group of loosely associated paradigms which theorize human history as driven not by ideology but by the modes of production and social structure of a given society. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels later borrowed much of their presuppositions about history and civilization from the cultural evolution school of thought and the work of Lewis Henry Morgan.

**Mycenaean Greece:** The period of Greek history from roughly the seventeenth to the thirteenth centuries BC in which Indo-European Greek-speakers from the north settled in Greece. Given that the later Archaic poets and artists Romanticized the Mycenaean period and used it as the setting for the epics, some have referred to this as Hesiod's Heroic Age.

**Mystery religion:** A specific type of cultic religious tradition typified by a rigid hierarchy and access to power and hidden knowledge. Mysteries themselves were dedicated to specific cultural functions in a given society, such as agricultural or pastoral fertility, motherhood, divine oracles, rites of passage, or the balance of order between civilized and uncivilized. Given the levels of initiation coupled with their role in public ritual, mystery religions monopolized the allocation of esoteric and exoteric meanings in ritually prescribed myths and ceremonies. Mysticism, although given the popular definition of direct spiritual experiences with the divine, refers to the mysteries, as the initiate receives the spiritual revelation of what was hidden.

**Mythology and myth:** A specific type of story which is entirely enmeshed with the cultural dimension in that it provides the rational framework for one or more parts of a cultural structure, schema such as geography, cosmology, kinship and marriage systems, economy, and so forth, and explains their origin. Myths also occur (or occurred) in conjunction with culturally specific traditions of ceremony, magic, and ritual, to which they give meaning within the rationale.

**Mythopoeic:** Descriptive of cultures whose dominant ontology is provided through the generation of traditions of myth, as described above.

**Ontology:** Philosophic concept which refers to the human understanding of what exists. Although this propensity of the human mind is universal, the world-which-exists assumes culturally-specific shapes, often radically different from tradition to tradition.

**Orientalism:** A particular flavor of Romanticism which forms a narrow, essentialist view of the vaguely-defined "Orient" or "East" in which the ancient civilizations are glorified and the modern inhabitants cast as living artifacts or fossils of the once great cultures.

**Other:** The binary opposite of Self. In the field of anthropology, the Other is typically the inhabitant of any kind of marginal space (geographic, social, or otherwise), and is phenomenally constructed as such from the perspective of the "civilized" Self. Consequently, the Other is often the subject of ethnographic investigation where the anthropologist is Self.

**Pontic-Caspian:** A geographic region of the Eurasian Steppe and outlying woodland, coastal, and mountain zones between the Black and Caspian Seas to the south and the Ural Mountains to the North which roughly covers modern Ukraine, parts of Southern Russia, and Western Kazakhstan.

**Prelapsarian:** A romantic term which refers to “before the fall,” the supposed era of grace before the rise of civilization, often coupled with the concept of the noble savage.

**Primitivism:** A Romantic school of thought which places the utmost value on the noble savage as the primordial state of humankind.

**Religion:** A general cultural phenomenon which encompasses the belief in the spiritual and the specific tradition(s) a particular group attaches to a shared spiritual experience.

**Romanticism:** A nineteenth century reactionary school of thought which emphasized the essence of something, such as national identity, as in its origin with the emphasis of any inquiry or meditation placed in the deepest of antiquity, real or imagined.

## Appendix C: List of Classical Literary References with Associated Abbreviations

Archilochus

Fragments (*Arch. Fr.*).

Aristophanes

Acharnians (*Aristoph. Ach.*).

Birds (*Aristoph. Birds.*).

Ecclesiazusae (*Aristoph. Eccl.*).

Knights (*Aristoph. Kn.*).

Thesmophoriazusae (*Aristoph. Thes.*).

Aristotle

Politics (*Aristot. Pol.*).

Athenaeus

(*Ath.*).

Callimachus

Hymn 3 to Artemis (*Call. H. 3.*).

Diogenes Laertius

Lives of Eminent Philosophers (*D. L.*).

Euripides

Bacchae (*Eur. Ba.*).

Herodotus

Histories (*Hdt.*).

Hesiod

Catalogues of Women (*Hes. CW.*).

Works and Days (*Hes. WD.*).

Homer.

Homeric Hymn 7 to Dionysos (*HH 7.*).

Illiad (*Hom. Il.*).

Odyssey (*Hom. Od.*).

Inscriptiones Graecae I3 421, col. I (*Inscr. Gr. I3 421.1.*).

Mnaseas

Fragment 24 (*Mn. Fr.*)

Ovid

Metamorphoses (*Ov. Met.*).

Pausanias

Description of Greece (*Paus.*).

Philostratus

Imagines (*Philostr. Maj. Im.*).

Pindar

Olympian Ode (*Pind. O.*).

Pythian Ode (*Pind. P.*).

Plato

Charmides (*Plat. Charm.*).

Cratylus (*Plat. Crat.*).

Laws (*Plat. Laws*).

Phaedo (*Plat. Phaedo*).

Republic (*Plat. Rep.*).

Plutarch

De Defectu Oraculorum (*Plut. De Defect.*).

Life of Alexander (*Plut. Alex.*).

Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat (*Plut. Adolescens*).

Pseudo-Apollodorus

Bibliotheca (*Apollod.*).

Strabo

Geography (*Strab.*).

Suidas

(*Suidas*)

Tacitus

Acricola (*Tac. Ag.*)

Germania (*Tac. Ger.*).

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