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**IMRA, PENTADS AND
 CATASTROPHES¹**

Ach ! Das waren fromme Leute !
 Goethe, *Faust II*, Act 5

1 Imra was the sovereign god of the Kafirs, those pagan peoples of North-East Afghanistan who, after forcible Islamisation in the mid 1890s, were renamed Nuristanis. Though he knew them only from the literature, Dumézil had a special affection for those bellicose mountaineers. He deliberately chose them as the subject of his final lecture at the Collège de France in January 1968, and by chance was revising that very lecture when he died in October 1986². He hoped that others would carry forward his comparative approach to them³, and I was delighted when Jacques-Henri Michel and Claude Sterckx invited me to try and do just that.

The catastrophes of my title include a little-known Kafir myth which tells how a wicked humanity is wiped out by their angry creator Imra, all except for one virtuous couple, who survive the disaster and regenerate mankind. Such a story invites comparison with better-known catastrophe myths, for instance the deluge survived by Deucalion, ancestor of the Greeks and, from Iran, the Avestan story of Yima and the Great Snowfall.

Apart from their intrinsic interest, catastrophe myths could well relate to one of the big questions that confront Indo-European comparativism. It is not enough to recognise manifestations of the abstract functional framework within which Indo-Europeans organised their thinking, and to match up individual narratives and agents from different areas. We also need to compare the global organisation of the different mythologies. Dumézil envisaged a mythology as *l'ensemble plus ou moins cohérent, dénombrable des mythes*⁴, and if proto-Indo-European mythology constituted an ensemble in this sense, it could well have been articulated by catastrophes separating different epochs. It is partly for its awareness of this issue that I enjoyed the thesis by Christophe Vielle⁵ – Dumézil himself had very little to say on catastrophe myths.

1 Lecture given at the Colloquium “Georges Dumézil. Dix ans après”, held at the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Belgique on May 13th-14th, 1996.

2 Grisward 1994:11.

3 Dumézil 1994:225.

4 Dumézil 1985:312.

5 Vielle 1996.

However, before I come to the Kafir catastrophe myth, there is a good deal of ground to be covered. I need to introduce not only the theology and mythology of these Indo-Iranian speakers, but also the pentadic schema that will play an important part in my comparisons. In doing this, I shall be able to elaborate and revise some of my previous analyses.

2 Kafir pantheon

Like the Vedic Indians and the pre-Zoroastrian Iranians, the Kafirs possessed a sizable pantheon, on which most of the available information was summarised by Jettmar⁶. The importance of this material for the study of Indian religion was emphasised by Fussman in 1977 in an article which stimulated one by myself in 1991. Although I knew that Dumézil was interested in the Kafirs⁷, I did not know the exact argument of his lecture, which was published only in 1994. Let us quickly compare his analysis of the pantheon and mine (rows 1 and 2 in Table I).

In his classic ethnography of the Kafirs Robertson lists “the principal gods and goddesses”. He begins with **1 Imra**, **2 Mon**, **3 Gish**, **4 Bagisht**; then he gives eight less salient male gods, and four goddesses including Disana (N° 14); finally he mentions the demons led by Yush⁸. Imra is etymologically Yamarāja, and thus, at least so far as his name is concerned, cognate with Vedic Yama son of Vivasvat and with Iranian Yima, son of Vīvan·hat. He is creator and sovereign, and Mon is his closest associate⁹. Gish is god of war. Bagisht is god of wealth and also son of Disani, who herself can be linked with fertility.

Straightaway, one glimpses a possible trifunctional analysis: Imra and Mon would represent Varuṇa and Mitra aspects of F1, Gish F2, Bagisht and Disani F3. The first to suggest this, albeit half-heartedly, was Morgenstierne in a personal letter to Dumézil in November 1948¹⁰. Jettmar proposed a similar analysis and, as I expected¹¹, basically Dumézil concurs (row 1).

However, in my view, this analysis is incomplete. In many contexts throughout the Indo-European world only the classical three functions are manifested; but enough contexts exist to justify positing a fourth function which brackets or encompasses the Dumézilian triad. The fourth function pertains, I think, to Otherness, and usually presents two aspects, one positive or transcendent (F4+), one negative and excluded (F4-). Thus, somewhat in the spirit of C. Sterckx¹², I look above all for pentadic structures, rather than for triadic ones. In the present case I interpret Imra as F4+, not F1, and my canonical list includes the demons, personified by Yush, in the F4- slot. As regards F3, I prefer to

⁶ Jettmar 1975, tr. 1986.

⁷ Both from his writings and from a conversation on 11th December 1985.

⁸ Robertson 1896:381.

⁹ His “prophet”, when seen through Islamic spectacles.

¹⁰ Dumézil 1994:221.

¹¹ Allen 1991:159.

¹² Sterckx 1975.

emphasize Bagisht and to leave on one side his mother Disani; the problems pertaining to “The Goddess” are so complex that I think they need separate and systematic study. In any case, the list of names in row 2 is not arbitrary: the Kafir myth of creation effectively mentions all these beings, *and no others*¹³.

3 Lokapālas

A pentadic analysis has the advantage of making it possible for manifestations of the functions to accord neatly with the schema of centre and cardinal points. In 1991 I referred to the classical Hindu World Guardians or Lokapālas, who had been analysed by Dumézil as Varuṇa F1, Indra F2, Kubera F3; but Yama, god of the Other World, qualified as F4-, and the central transcendent element qualified as F4+. I can now be more precise: one example of such an F4+ element is provided by Brahmā. Thus the *Mahābhārata* gives an account of the halls (*sabhā*) of each of the four Lokapālas followed by an account of Brahmā’s¹⁴: Brahmā is here clearly one element in a pentad. But as elsewhere, Brahmā the creator is transcendent: creators transcend their creation, which includes terrestrial space articulated into directions, as well as gods¹⁵. Moreover, although this particular text does not state the spatial relations of the halls, Brahmā – the four-headed – looks in all directions from an implicit centre, and his centrality is sometimes overt. Thus what is virtually his only temple is situated at Pushkara, which is often treated as the symbolic centre of India: when Arjuna travels clockwise to visit India’s four cardinal points¹⁶, his journey culminates at Pushkara¹⁷. Thus I include Brahmā in row 3 of the Table.

4 Yayāti’s sons

Another pentadic structure I referred to in 1991 was a “partage du monde” story. In 1971 Dumézil explored the comparison between Iranian Yima and the Indian king Yayāti¹⁸. Yayāti dispatches his four elder sons to found their own peripheral kingdoms¹⁹, and reserves the centre for his fifth and youngest son. Can they be aligned with functions? The youngest son Puru is suggestive of F4+ since he remains in the centre and succeeds his father, who represents the totality. The elder pair, Yadu and Turvasu, sons of Yayāti’s official Brahman wife, must outrank the others, who are bastards sons of a slave girl (a former princess); and among the bastards Anu (“non-Aryan” in the *RigVeda*) becomes king of the *mleccha*, the ultimate outsiders to Hinduism. But this is not quite enough, and the pentad has therefore been relegated to the lower half of Table I (row A).

¹³ Hussam-ul-Mulk 1974:26.

¹⁴ *Mahābhārata* 2.5-11.

¹⁵ As is noted by Bailey 1983:126, many manuscripts (though not the Critical Edition, cf. 2.11.31) include the names of the Lokapālas among those attending at Brahmā’s court.

¹⁶ Allen 1996.

¹⁷ *Mahābhārata* 1.213.13.

¹⁸ Dumézil 1968-1973:II 239-300.

¹⁹ Not clearly linked with cardinal points.

5 Kafir origins

The Kafir have a similar story of the migration of founding ancestors from a central point:

Imra one day sat himself on the rocky spur at the junction of the Kti and Presun rivers. He was engaged in making butter in a golden goat-skin churn; From the skin three women emerged who went and populated different countries. Imra then added water and a fourth woman was created, who settled at Presungul²⁰.

The river junction in question was a “very sacred place in the Kafir imagination”²¹, and the narrow tongue of land between the two rivers, marked by a stone placed there by Imra, was the gods’ assembly place (an Olympus, as it were). As for the goat-skin churn, in this area a milk container is held on the lap and see-sawed between the two knees, one of six methods used in Afghanistan²². To judge from the iconography of Imra’s chief temple, churning must have been an important feature of the god’s creative activity: the temple, located at “the most sacred village in the whole of Kafiristan”, contained eight huge wooden figures of Imra, “seated and working a goat-skin butter-churn”²³. The temple was associated with typical “Centre” symbolism: an omphalos and an axis mundi²⁴.

Leaving aside the tempting comparisons with the theme of churning in Indian creation mythology, I concentrate on the females in the story. In 1991 I considered only the four women who explicitly emerge from the churn, three before the dilution and one after. But as I now realise, the churn itself, filled with milk, held and buffeted close to the phallus of the creator, and producing offspring as if it were a womb, has to be interpreted as female, and as representing the totality from which the quartet emerge. The existence of the pentad is clear enough, as is the heterogeneity of the churn and of the fourth woman, relative to the triad. But nothing further is known of the triad, so this structure too is relegated (row B).

6 Iranian peoples

Another “partage du monde” story comes from Iran, and tells of the three sons of Frētōn or Ferīdūn. It is doubtless better known than the Kafir one, having been discussed by Dumézil, following Molé, as well as by Grisward²⁵. In the Pehlavi version, when their father offers them choices, Salm takes wealth, Tōz valour, Ērič law and religion; Ērič, the youngest, remains in the centre, and the others go to the periphery.

²⁰ Robertson 1896:385. For the geography see Edelberg's map in Jettmar 1974 or 1986.

²¹ Robertson 1896:65.

²² Buddruss 1977; Edelberg - Jones 1979:84 and pl. 58, 63.

²³ Robertson 1896:389-391.

²⁴ Allen 1991:161.:

²⁵ Dumézil 1968-1973:I 586-588, II 257; Grisward 1981:40ff.

Neat though it is, the trifunctional analysis ignores one fact: earlier forms of the same names occur in the Farvardin Yašt as the first three in a list of *five* peoples²⁶. These are given in row C, ordered as in the text. One might try manipulating the order so that the brothers' choices accord with functional columns (wealth under F3 and so on), but this cannot be done satisfactorily: although the choice made by Ērič points to F1, the centrality of his kingdom and the comparison with Puru points to F4+²⁷. I suppose the discrepancies arose when an original five-fold structure collapsed into a triadic one. An original pentad would fit well with several of the concepts discussed by Dumézil in 1971: the Vedic concept of the five peoples or countries; the likelihood that Iran originally recognised five, not seven, kišvars or cosmic regions; the five provinces of Irish tradition²⁸. Only the latter is clearly linked with the four functions.

7 Origin of society

The varnas (social estates) have played so central a role in the whole Dumézilian enterprise that one can hardly ignore them, but at first sight they are irremediably *four*. Some who have wrestled with these problems²⁹ have brought up the number to five, as it were, adding one at the bottom, by distinguishing between incorporated Śūdra and *real* outsiders such as Niṣādas. But this distinction seems to be historically secondary and conceptually insufficiently salient, and a more satisfactory approach turns to the myth of origin of the varnas, to the other end of the hierarchy, and to the body imagery. The four varnas emerge respectively from the head, arms, thighs and feet of the primal Puruṣa³⁰; but there is something that precedes this creational event and that transcends the separate body parts, namely himself Puruṣa himself, regarded as a whole body. Puruṣa and the three plus one varnas (row 4) echo the Kafir churn and the three plus one women (row B). In later versions of the myth³¹ Puruṣa is replaced by Brahmā, who has already appeared in the F4+ column.

As for Iran, according to post-Avestan sources, the pištras (the equivalent of the varnas) originated when Yima distinguished the population into priests, warriors, herder-agriculturalists and artisans. Although the Avestas only once include the artisans in a clear fourfold list³², one need not follow Dumézil in regarding them as a later addition to an earlier triad³³. It is just as logical to see them as typically *omitted* from an earlier quartet,

²⁶ Yašt 13:143-144; Boyce 1975:104.

²⁷ The Dāhi are probably cognate in name with the Dāsa who, for the earliest Vedic period, might replace the Śūdra in Row 4.

²⁸ Dumézil 1968-1973:II 251-254.

²⁹ Such as Sterckx 1992:58, drawing on Hocart and on Rees and Rees.

³⁰ RigVeda 10.90.12.

³¹ E.g. Manu 1.9ff.

³² Yašt 19.16-17.

³³ Dumézil 1958:8, 1968-1973:II 293.

perhaps owing to their lowly rank. Qua founder of an organised society Yima in row 5 parallels Puruṣa/Brahmā in row 4.

8 Yuga theory

Like the varnas, the eras of Indian cosmic time fall into a three plus one pattern: the fourth age, the *kaliyuga*, is marked off from the rest not so much because it is the worst but because it is the one in which we now live; it represents the present versus the past. Like the varnas again, the yugas come in order of declining value; and they are unambiguously four. However, as we know, it does not follow that the associated theory is necessarily quadripartite. We need again to look beyond the top end of the hierarchy.

It was in fact Brahmā who created time and the divisions of time³⁴, but since the god created everything it would be tendencious to conclude from this that Creator plus four yugas constituted an ideologically significant pentad. However, Brahmā transcends the yugas in a much more precise sense. When Manu moves on to his fuller discussion on time, we learn that a cycle of four yugas, lasting 12000 years, is called a yuga of the gods, and that a thousand of these makes up a day (i.e. twelve hours) of Brahmā. Such cosmological temporal schemata became highly elaborate³⁵, but there is no question of any entity even more transcendent than Brahmā. In thinking about row D it may be helpful to recall row 3. If a thousand clockwise circumambulations gave access to Brahmā in the centre, it would be analogous to a thousand yuga cycles adding up to one day in the life of the god.

9 Yima's realm

The final pentadic structure in my 1991 paper came from the story of the *vara*, the subterranean enclosure in which Yima preserved certain living beings, selected for excellence, during a period of harsh winter with heavy snowfall. We are now back to the theme of world catastrophes. My suggestion (row 6) was that, working from below upwards, the *vara* contain Yima himself; then selected representatives of each of the three social classes (the lower the rank, the larger the number); then, outside the *vara*, the rest of humanity, those doomed to extinction. The text itself works the other way round: the rejected; first (*fratəməm*) the one thousand, in the middle (*maḍəmō* the six hundred, and lowest (*nitəmō*) the three hundred.

However, the *vara* story constitutes only the second half of a text which, as I now see, needs to be looked at as a whole³⁶. The first half can be precised as follows:

Zoroaster questions Ahura Mazdā: “Before myself, who was the first mortal that you addressed and instructed in religions?”

³⁴ *Kālavibhaktīh*, Manu 1.24.

³⁵ Biardeau 1981.

³⁶ *Vīdēvdāt* 2; see Reichelt 1911:37-43, n.138-141.

The god replies: “The first such mortal was Yima. I asked him to learn and preserve religion but he was unwilling. When I asked him instead to make the world prosper, he agreed: under his protection there would be no cold or heat, no illness or death. I then gave him a golden goad and a golden-ornamented whip (for driving cattle)³⁷”.

After three hundred years the world was full to overflowing with flocks and herds, men, dogs, birds and fires. I warned Yima that there was no more space, and he moved southwards, goading and striking the Earth³⁸, telling her to stretch out so as to bear the livestock and men. She extended by a third, giving men and cattle space to move around. The same thing happened after two further three-hundred-year periods, so that the Earth was now twice its original size.

(The story moves into its second half)

Ahura Mazdā assembles the gods and Yima assembles mortals. The god warns Yima of the catastrophe about to befall the evil corporeal world telling him how to escape it and maintain the continuity of creation by building the *vara*.

The abstract five-fold structure is clear (row D). Yima starts off as ruler of primal creation; in a three-stage process he doubles the size of his realm; finally he builds an “Other World” where our present humanity originates. The fifth entry in row D relates of course to the second half of the story, which itself contains a pentadic structure (row 6). One pentad is nested or involuted within another.

More concretely, as regards geography, we have a starting point, three extensions to the south, and a fourth area for habitation, apparently subterranean and central. As regards time, if one takes the installation of Yima as starting point, the story clearly recognises three three-hundred year periods, each ending in an extension, and there is no doubt a fourth between the completion of the doubling and the building of the *vara*. According to the Pehlavi (Lommel), the assembly takes place after a thousand years.

The periods are not clearly differentiated except as regards the heterogeneity of life in the shrunken space of the *vara*. However, an overall decline is implied. During the first period there is no illness or death (§5), but by the time the inmates of the *vara* are selected numerous categories of infirmity are represented (§29). Moreover (§22), Ahura Mazdā describes the physical world he is destroying as evil.

10 Manu and Matsya

In his classic discussion of flood myths Frazer moves directly from Iran to India, to a story where the survivor is indeed a son of Vivasvat, but Manu, not Yama³⁹. The story appears first in the *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, then (in similar form) in the *Mahābhārata* and certain *purānas*. I summarise the first of these.

³⁷ The translation of the two instruments is debated.

³⁸ Identified as the goddess Spənta Ārmaiti.

³⁹ Frazer 1919.

Manu, while washing, is approached by a small fish who asks for protection. Acting on the fish's instructions, Manu keeps it in a pot, than, as it grows too big for that container, moves it first to a trench, and finally to the ocean. The fish warns him of the impending deluge, and tells him to build a boat to escape it⁴⁰. In due course the fish, now vast, guides the boat, via a rope attached to its horn (sic), to the Himalayas, where Manu disembarks. To produce offspring he offers ghee etc. into the waters (a *pākayajña*). A daughter emerges, and demands to be used at sacrifices; in return she will grant wealth and offspring. Through her he generates humanity.

The identity of the fish varies: not stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, in the *Mahābhārata* it is Prajāpati Brahmā, and thereafter it is Vishnu in his Matsya (fish) avatar. The number of containers for the fish tends to increase in later sources (four in the *Mahābhārata*, five and more in the *Purānas*). But row E uses our earliest source⁴¹.

In a general sense, row E shares its pentadic structure with row D, but we need to be more precise. The Avestan story has three individual agents: Ahura Mazdā, the creator who issues instructions, Yima who receives them, and the Earth Goddess, assimilated to a cow, who responds to Yima's goad by expanding; it also has the human and animal population whose demographic expansion necessitates the terrestrial one. Corresponding to these the Sanskrit has the fish/god who issues instructions and Manu who receives them, but demographic growth is replaced by the growth of the fish⁴². As for the Avestan goddess who provides the Lebensraum, her equivalent is the three-dimensional container of the fish (pots are made of clay, while ponds, rivers and sea are bounded by earth). The action of driving the cow is replaced by that of carrying the fish.

Ahura Mazdā	Yima	Sp. Ārmaiti	population
Brahmā Prajāpati/Vishnu	Manu	containers	fish

One difference lies in the dual nature of the fish. On the one hand it is the form or the disguise taken by the god when visiting the Earth, on the other it is the equivalent of the Iranian population. The Avestan god has no avatars and no special link with his population. Obviously too the physical nature of the catastrophe differs (winter/snow/melt water versus flood), as does the refuge (elaborate subterranean structure versus boat). Nevertheless, the stories have much in common. In addition to the five-fold structuring of events and the correspondances already noted, both gods warn their protégés of the

⁴⁰ In later sources Manu also preserves other living beings in the boat.

⁴¹ Gonda 1980:14, in an article devoted to the Matsya story, sees the three containers as exemplifying "the well-known triadic feature of folk-tales".

⁴² When the Creator and Yima discuss the latter's role, they use the verb *varəd-* "increase" (§ 4-5), and the same root, Sk *vr̥dh-*, applies to the fish in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ativardhā* "outgrow", *vardhate* § 3). Cf similarly *θrātār* "protector" (§ 4-5) and *trātum arhasi* (*Mahābhārata* 3.185.7,9). Reviewing two turn-of-the-century studies of flood myths, Mauss (1969:303, 307) maintained that "par certains côtés, le poisson de Manou est 'la Terre'..."

impending catastrophe and tell them how to escape it. The reasons for the event are not spelled out, except in so far as Ahura Mazdā refers to the physical world as evil (*ayəm* § 22) and Brahmā says that the time has arrived for purification of the worlds⁴³. No doubt both stories have a common origin, presumably Proto-Indo-Iranian.

11 Kafir catastrophe

Without claiming exhaustiveness I now present three catastrophe narratives from the Katis of Nuristan, none of them involving a pentad (or a flood), but interesting nonetheless. Version 1 comes via Albert Herrlich, a medical doctor of the German Hindu Kush expedition of 1935. Version 2, much longer, was recorded by the ethnographer Adolf Friedrich on the next German expedition to the area in 1955-1956. Both of these were summarised in Snoy, in a thesis which Dumézil used for other purposes⁴⁴. Version 3 was collected by the Chitrali prince Hussam-ul-Mulk in 1937, but not published till 1974.

Version 1⁴⁵: In the beginning were Wrok and Brok, a brother-sister pair (so runs a Kati legend). Brok, the brother, and Wrok, the sister, lived with their people in Kantiwo⁴⁶. At that time the Sun came very close to the Earth and the heat killed all mankind. Only Wrok and Brok were able to escape into a cave and were saved. They multiplied, and their descendants migrated to the eastern and western valleys of the region.

This version says nothing of gods. We merely have a brother-sister ancestral pair escaping the catastrophe in a refuge within the Earth, and then refounding mankind.

Version 2⁴⁷: He [the Asakal] told a story from the time when the Devutr [supernaturals] manifested themselves to man:

In Kantiva in Nuristan, where the Bashkali arrived in ancient times, there lived many people. They were constantly quarrelling and fighting with each other. Imra was very angry about this. In the form of an old white-bearded man with worn-out clothes he appeared one day among them. When he came to Kantiva the young lads mocked and harassed him.

An old woman lived in the village with her son and daughter; they were very poor. The son took the old man (Imra) to their poor dwelling. The old woman was delighted to see the guest. “My child, you did right, I am very pleased to see him. Only what can we give him? We have no food and no bed”. Imra answered: “I did not come here to eat. Your lad gave me protection from the insolence of the youths. That is enough. Do not worry on my account”.

⁴³ *Mahābhārata* 3.185.27.

⁴⁴ Snoy 1962:40.

⁴⁵ Herrlich 1938: 105; I translate from the German. The context is the oft-reported Nuristani claim to an origin in Arabia. A shorter version still (Herrlich 1937:239) adds nothing new.

⁴⁶ On the Ktiwi river 12 km north-west of the god’s assembly place.

⁴⁷ Recorded from Asakal (= Lambardar) Jan Mohammad of Schechnande, Burmutul village, 13.2.56. I translate in full from pp. 447-448 of the Friedrich’s manuscript.

At Kantiva there is a spring beneath the village which issues from a narrow cleft or hollow in the earth; a person can go inside. Imra said: “Take your two children and go with them to the spring. Try to reach its source in the hollow. Sleep there with your two children. Whatever you hear, do not come out. Just stay there all the time and sleep until midday. Now I am going”.

The old woman again apologised: “Pardon us, that we cannot give you anything”. “Do not worry ! But make a *zaruz*-fire [i.e. using incense], and throw into it some flour”. The woman did so. With the *zaruz*-smoke the old man vanished.

Then the woman went with her two children to the spring and did as she had been told. During the night she heard many voices and an earthquake. But she did not come forth. The noise lasted till noon the next day; then it fell quiet. The three issued forth from the room at the spring (*Quellstube*). The whole village area was destroyed, the trees burnt. No living human being remained. They lived all alone in the land.

The name of the girl was Vrok, that of the brother Brok (= Brother). Both were unable to find spouses; so they married each other. Their progeny were numerous and settled the whole region. It became a large settlement. They fought with a non-Bashkali village ten miles away. The descendant of Vrok and Brok conquered the regions of Ramgal and Waigal. Many settled in these new areas. Then they conquered Bashgal. This area too they settled. From there some came to Rumbur, others to Bumboret and Gobor. From here to Ramgal everything is Bashkali. Formerly Vombi-Mihtar from Torqu in Upper Chitral was ruler over half the Bashkali area. Chitral people lived there. In the rest of the Bashkali area lived Jashi. The descendants of Vrok and Brok drove those people out. (The Prasuns lived apart in another region). He (the Asakal) had heard that the Bashkali people before Vrok and Brok came from Mecca.

In this case, the catastrophe is an earthquake rather than a conflagration (or “ecpyrosis”), and the scale of devastation is limited to a single village. Nevertheless, miniature though it is, this is a “cosmic” catastrophe, involving the Creator himself and the founding ancestors of the human group that is significant to the narrators.

In this myth the moral dimension is more emphatic than previously. In Iran the immediately pre-*vara* humanity appeared to be largely decadent, and those selected for the refuge were the largest, best and most beautiful⁴⁸; but the selection process is left obscure. In India the little fish risks being killed and eaten by the larger ones⁴⁹, whereas Manu “filled with compassion” treats the fish “like a son (*Mahābhārata*); but it is not immediately obvious that the god is subjecting him to a test. In Nuristan the villagers misbehave; the angry god descends in disguise and is mocked; the triad offer hospitality and are saved. Imra’s purpose must surely be to separate the virtuous and the damned.

⁴⁸ § 27: *mazištaca vahištaca sraēštaca*.

⁴⁹ Who are thus implicitly cannibals?

Version 3⁵⁰: Once upon a time there was a great village at the saddle of Pythasoon in Urtsun. The people of this village were very wealthy, they had so much milk that they used big cakes of cheese for throwing weights and on account of abundance of wheat, they used to make targets out of bread for their bows and arrows. All the time they were very mean and unreligious. Instead of sacrificing bullocks and goats they used to sacrifice cats and dogs.

Once a god disguised himself as an old crippled man and sat by the spring which gave water for drinking purposes to all the villagers. The womenfolk who went there to fetch water teased him very much, even some of them spat on his face. At last one woman came. She had only one child. She took him to her house and made good arrangement for his food etc. He asked several questions from the child and the child answered them correctly. After that he ordered the woman to bring some water from the spring in a big pitcher. The man then washed his hands and sprinkled the water three times in all directions. At each sprinkle he uttered "Such!". Then he lit a fire and placed small twigs of juniper on the fire. Then again he sprinkled with his hand the water saying "Such" all the times. In this way he showed the woman and the boy the method of sanctifying a place which was polluted by unreligious deeds.

He had with him a stick with two heads. He did not stay with them to pass the night but went away, but he advised them not to get out of the room if there was an earth-quake during that night, but they could get out at sunrise. "Then search for this stick of mine, where you find this stick there build a malutsch (altar) in the name of Giz". So it happened that a very fierce earthquake shook the village that night. Next morning when they came out at sunrise, they saw that all the houses of the village were raised (sic) to the ground except theirs. Then people began to stay in a cave.

(The sequel can be abbreviated) A man from a raiding party moves in with the woman and son. They find the god's stick, built the altar and institute an annual sacrifice.

This version 3 lacks the motif of three sibling pair and leaves unclear the identity of the disguised god⁵¹. Whoever he is, this god tests the virtuous not only by seeking hospitality but also by questioning the son, and there is no need for the future survivors either to construct a refuge or to move to one. During the catastrophe they simply stay put in the house which the god has purified, and only after it do they move to a cave (for no obvious motive). When they emerge, apparently their first act is to set up an altar, a ritual undertaking which may recall Manu's *pākayajña*.

Wrok and Brok, the founding ancestors of versions 1 and 2, are names that crop up often in the ethnohistory. Thus Grynberg tape-recorded in Kabul in 1967 an account of tribal origins told in Kati: coming originally from Arabia, two brothers called Rok and Brok settled in Ktivi before migrating respectively west and east and founding various

⁵⁰ Hussam-ul-Mul 1974:27-28; I translate exactly.

⁵¹ Presumably Imra: Gish, god of war, is hardly likely to be a guardian of morality.

clans⁵². Similarly, Morgenstierne collected six lengthy genealogies in which Wrok or Rok lies some twenty-five generations back, and in three of them his brother is Brok⁵³. In this material the names are both male, which I take to represent the bowdlerization and/or Islamization of the earlier incestuous brother-sister pair who appear in myth proper.

If the shared pentadic structure of the Avestan and Indian catastrophe stories suggests a proto-Indo-Iranian original, how does the Kafir story fit into the picture? Let us follow the classicists and refer to the provision of hospitality by a mortal to a divinity as a theoxeny. This motif is shared by the Indian and Kafir stories, but the resemblance is distant: rearing a small fish as it grows is not very like providing overnight hospitality to a beggar. Moreover, the timing is different: Manu's "hospitality" comes at the start of the pentadic sequence, not just before the catastrophe. For a closer similarity we need to go outside the Indo-Iranian world.

12 Græco-Roman World

Græco-Roman material on cataclysms and the like is copious: Caduff assembles and analyses in detail 159 primary texts⁵⁴. I concentrate here only on the fullest and best-known accounts that combine a theoxeny and a catastrophe, and in particular on two stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, both of which no doubt ultimately go back to Greek oral tradition.

Philemon and Baucis: Jupiter and Mercury [i.e. Zeus and Hermes] visit Phrygia disguised as mortals. They are rejected by a thousand homes, but taken in by a poor and aged couple whose hospitality is touchingly described. The gods reveal their divinity, warn of impending destruction, and tell the couple to come with them up a mountain. The couple ascend with difficulty, using their staves. The neighbourhood is flooded, all save their own hovel, which becomes a golden-roofed temple. They serve there as priests until they are metamorphosed, both simultaneously, respectively into an oak and a lime tree⁵⁵.

Though in some ways resembling the Sanskrit, this story is particularly close to Kafir version 2: flood replaces earthquake, mountain replaces subterranean cave, and a couple replaces the widow. But both stories emphasise the poverty and apologetic attitude of the hosts. When the gods reveal themselves, Philemon and Baucis pray pardon for the meagre fare they can offer (683); the widow twice excuses herself, once for the empty larder. The Greek gods decline the goose the couple try to kill; Imra too declines a meal. Baucis lights a fire (640ff); so does the widow. After the flood the couple immediately take charge of the temple; in Kafir version 3 the survivors soon build an altar and establish a cult⁵⁶.

⁵² Gryunberg 1980:38.

⁵³ Morgenstierne 1980. Other genealogies mention Yak and Brok, or Werek and Zুরুk: Morgenstierne 1951:178-179.

⁵⁴ Caduff 1986.

⁵⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.611-724. Cf. Hollis 1970:106ff.

⁵⁶ The couple's staves *might* recall the Kafir god's two-headed stick, Matsya's horn, Yima's instruments. Duchesne-Guillemain (1979) argues that the latter were not goad and whip but horn (hornpipe,

However, Ovid's story lacks any genealogical dimension: there is no reference to the couple having children, and they are not presented as ancestors.

Lycaon and Deucalion: In the Age of Iron the inhabitants of Earth behave violently and impiously. Jupiter [i.e. Zeus] assembles the gods, and tells them what has been happening.

Wanting to see for himself the wickedness that rumour attributed to Lycaon, King of Arcadia, he had gone to the king's palace, taking human form, but claiming to be a god. The common folk worship him, but Lycaon decides to test the god's identity: he tries to kill him while he sleeps, and to trick him into eating a cooked human being. In response, Zeus blasts the palace, metamorphoses the king into a wolf, and decides to exterminate this sinful humanity, promising the gods to replace it with better stock. Rejecting the use of thunderbolt and fire, he decides on a flood, and calls on Neptune [Poseidon] to help.

Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha, the most just and pious of mortals, are the sole survivors. Leaving their little boat, they land on Mount Parnassus, and worship Themis and other deities. Themis tells them how to regenerate humanity: by throwing stones over their shoulders. Those thrown by Deucalion become men, those by Pyrrha, women⁵⁷.

We are not told how the couple demonstrate their virtues. However the theme of theoxeny is not absent; it is transferred to the sinners, whose hospitality is inverted. Although in reality the god is testing the mortal, Lycaon thinks it is the other way round⁵⁸. Moreover what he offers is an anti-hospitality. To kill a sleeping guest would impiously infringe the laws of hospitality, doubly so when the intended victim is divine; killing the Molossian hostage violates the laws of war (?); and to cook and serve up a human being is cannibalistic defiance of the rules bearing on food⁵⁹. This comprehensive display of wickedness contrasts of course with the displays of virtue in the other theoxenies examined. Perhaps it is *because* Greek tradition uses the motif in inverted form for Lycaon that it does not use it in the "normal" form for Deucalion. In any case the wickedness corresponds to the hard-heartedness of the Phrygian householders and to the mockery and spitting in Nuristan.

From the many variants of the Lycaon-Deucalion story I give only a summary of Apollodorus:

The fifty sons of Lycaon are exceedingly arrogant and impious. Wanting to test this, Zeus arrives disguised as a day-labourer (*anēr khernētēs*). The family offer hospitality, but for a meal kill and serve a male child from the locality. Zeus uses his thunderbolt to blast father and sons, excepting the youngest, Nyctimus, for whom Earth intercedes. It is while

trump) and goad. If so, Yima's horn used in bringing the survivors to safety, would correspond particularly closely to Matsya's horn.

⁵⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.127ff.

⁵⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.222: *experiar... discrimine aperto, 225 experientia ueri*.

⁵⁹ Presumably a trifunctional set. But Lycaon's fundamental mistake, transcending the specific sins, is that he doubts the Creator's identity. Is this a sin against Truth, and F4+?

Nyctimus is king and (some say) because of his brothers' impiety, that Deucalion's flood occurs⁶⁰.

Prometheus' son Deucalion has married Pyrrha, daughter of Epimetheus and the first woman (Pandora). When Zeus wants to destroy the men of the Bronze Age, Deucalion is advised by his father to construct a chest. After nine days and nights the couple land. Deucalion sacrifices to Zeus who, via Hermes, grants him a boon. He chooses to regenerate mankind, and Zeus tells him to use stones⁶¹. Deucalion's first son Hellen partitions Greece among the three grandsons⁶².

The differences in detail between Ovid and Apollodorus scarcely affect the comparison with the Indo-Iranian material⁶³. The Greek story contrasts with the Indo-Iranian ones in separating the role of advisor to the survivors (Prometheus) and the role of catastrophe-sender (Zeus). But here are some of the similarities.

1° Wrok and Brok are sister and brother. Ovid's Deucalion addresses Pyrrha as *soror* and *coniunx*, sister and wife⁶⁴, while in Apollodorus she is his father's brother's daughter, i.e. in a patrilineal society the closest form of cousin: a classificatory sister, as anthropologists say. It is probably relevant that Prometheus and Epimetheus have such similar names: cf. Wrok and Brok, Yama and Yamī.

2° Here again the catastrophe is immediately followed by a ritual act: Deucalion worship of Themis or Zeus parallels Manu's *pākayajña*.

3° Zeus offers a boon to Deucalion as he had to Philemon and Baucis⁶⁵. Compare Manu's daughter Idā negotiating with her father, or Brahmā offering a boon to Manu at the start of the *Matsya Purāṇa* version. By accepting Idā's proposal Manu will gain progeny (*prajā*), as Deucalion chooses to (re)generate mankind.

4° In the Greek, as in Kafīr version 2, the catastrophe story leads on to an account of the descendants and their territorial dispersion.

5° For my purpose, the most important point is that the Græco-Roman stories connect the theoxeny plus catastrophe with a theory of cosmic time. The theory is expressed not in the terms of abstract lengths of time, as the yugas usually are, but in terms of races associated with different metals. The metals themselves (gold, silver, bronze, iron) and (overall) the character of the associated races decline in value from first to last, again as in yuga theory. But the obvious question is whether or how the Græco-Roman theory is pentadic.

⁶⁰ Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.8.1-2.

⁶¹ As in Ovid.

⁶² Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.7.2-3.

⁶³ Nyctimus, lone survivor of the Creator's wrath, is perhaps a doublet or anticipation of Deucalion?

⁶⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.351.

⁶⁵ Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.7.2 *epetrepsen haireisthai ho ti bouletai*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.704-705 *dicite...quid optetis*.

It certainly is in one respect: Hesiod refers to himself as living among the fifth race of men⁶⁶. However, this fifth iron race is linked with the *fourth* metal⁶⁷, and since his account of the races does not mention the flood, it is less clearly relevant than one would like. The texts which do not connect flood and races do not explicitly use the numeral five, and the matter is complicated by discrepancies in the linkage between the two. Apollodorus, who does not rehearse the earlier races, simply locates the flood after the bronze race, while Ovid, having described in turn each of the four metallic races, locates it after the iron race.

Nevertheless, it seems that both sources can be interpreted in pentadic terms. For Apollodorus, one might envisage an initial transcendent element, three pre-diluvial metallic races, and one contemporary post-diluvial one. I see no grounds for envisaging the first element as the Creator himself⁶⁸, but it could well be represented by the epoch during which gods alone exist and reproduce, before the creation of humans. For Ovid it seems that post-diluvial humanity, born of stone, succeeds the metallic races. Arbitrarily perhaps, I have included only Ovid's structure in Table I (row G)⁶⁹. My main point is that, however it does it, Græco-Roman mythology sometimes links its main catastrophe narrative with a five-stage theory of the world history.

Perhaps this is not surprising. A priori, a mythology which recognises eras is likely to mark the divides between them with crises or catastrophes of some sort, and conversely, a mythology that includes catastrophes is likely to situate them at the divides between eras. Conceivably therefore, resemblance between Græco-Roman and Indo-Iranian myth could result from independent developments. However, given the pervasive presence of pentadic structures⁷⁰, it seems more likely that a pentadic temporal structure involving at least one catastrophe goes back to proto-Indo-European times.

13 Concluding remarks

It has sometimes been supposed that both the Indian and the Greek flood stories are borrowings from the Middle East, derivative from Sumerian and Akkadian traditions⁷¹. As Vielle too has argued, this is doubtful. On the basis of the pentadic temporal structures, this paper has proposed a proto-Indo-European derivation, which could predate the Sumerian texts⁷². The resemblances, obviously close, could have been due to borrowings

⁶⁶ Hesiod, *Erga* 174-175: *pemptoisi... andrasi*.

⁶⁷ His fourth race, that of the heroes, lacks a metal.

⁶⁸ On analogy with Brahmā in row D.

⁶⁹ Row G ignores the hint of a fifth prediluvial race born of the blood of Giants (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.159-162). No doubt we must envisage multiple versions of the myth coexisting and interacting.

⁷⁰ Table I; Allen 1996ab.

⁷¹ Cf. Dundes 1988.

⁷² Sumerian texts mention the foundation of five antediluvian cities (Hämmerly-Dupuy 1888:56-57) but apparently without implying five ages.

in one direction or the other in or close to proto-Indo-European times, or earlier, or to very remote common origins.

The fivefold structure itself is more fundamental to the argument than the precise nature of the catastrophe. Within the Indo-Iranian world we encountered snowfall, flood, heat and earthquake, and Græco-Roman tradition knew not only multiple floods, but also other modes of destruction. The heat of the Sun, as in Kafir version 1, is common enough: thus Ovid himself pairs Deucalion's flood with Phaeton's disastrous excursion in the chariot of his father, the Sun⁷³: a combination that might recall that of fire and water in the cosmic dissolutions of the Purāṇas⁷⁴. Manilius deals successively with earthquake, fire and flood⁷⁵. As Sergent notes, the notion of a sequence of catastrophes may well be old⁷⁶. Attention need not be limited to natural catastrophes: destruction can as well be due to fighting, in which many of the avatars are involved.

A major theoretical question is posed by the relation between the top and bottom of Table I. It is tempting to suppose that some or all of the structures in rows A-G were originally organised in terms of the functions, like rows 1-6. But one cannot be sure: one possibility is that the existence of functionally organised structures led to a liking for pentadic structures not directly related to functions. Each case needs independent consideration.

Indeed the paper leaves many relevant questions unanswered, and I conclude by suggesting just a few of them. For instance, what can be said about the motivation of the god responsible for the catastrophe? Often he is indignant at the wickedness of humanity, but not always. In a Lithuanian tradition, it is when the Earth complains to god about the weight of humanity that he sends, first a flood, then, when the problem recurs, a plague⁷⁷. The Earth's complaint is of course part of the mythic explanation for the catastrophic wars of the *Mahābhārata* and the Iliad. Again, what insights could be gained by bringing into the comparison the flood which terminates the first of the five mythic invasions of Ireland? Or the various floods which appear in traditional narratives from northern India and Pakistan? What can be said comparatively about the survivors and their immediate relatives? Can anything be made of the masculinisation of Wrok (assuming that is what happened)? Could one write the history among the Indo-Iranians of characters having names related to *yama* "twin"; is it for instance in essence a matter of gradual promotion from First Man and Woman, via demiurge and quasi-god of the dead, to supreme Imra? And how many of the triadic and fourfold structures one encounters are best construed as subsets within a pentad⁷⁸?

⁷³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.747ff.

⁷⁴ Biardeau 1981.

⁷⁵ Manilius 4.828-837.

⁷⁶ Sergent 1995:351.

⁷⁷ Greimas 1985:185.

⁷⁸ Thus I suppose Dumézil's trifunctional construal of the Aməša Spəntas can be filled out and retouched by recognising Ahura Mazda and his son Spənta Mainyu as F4+ and An'ra Mainyu as F4-.

I hope to have shown the contribution of the Kafirs can make to such questions. Dumézil was surely right to sense their potential significance for his great undertaking.

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TABLE I

Pentadic contexts discussed in paper. Although contexts A-G are not fully analysable by functions, the first and last entries in each row are often in some sense heterogeneous relative to the intermediate triad.

Contexts analysable by functions

	F4+	F1	F2	F3	F4-
1 Kafir pantheon (GD)		Imra Mon	Gish	Disani Bagisht	-
2 Kafir pantheon (NA)	Imra	Mon	Gish	Bagisht	Yush
3 Lokapālas	Brahmā	Varuṇa	Indra	Kubera	Yama
4 Origins of varnas	Puruṣa/Brahmā	brāhmaṇa	ṛṣatriya	vaiśya	śūdra
5 Origins of piśtras	Yima	āθravan	raθaēštar	vāstryō -fš.	huītis
6 Yima's <i>vara</i>	Yima	the 300	the 600	the 1000	doomed

Contexts not, or not fully, analysable by functions

A	Yayāti's sons	Puru	Yadu	Turvasu	Druhyu	Anu
B	Kafir origins	churn	woman 1	woman 2	woman 3	diluted
C	Iranian peoples	Airyā	Tūrya	Sairima	Sāinu	Dāhi
D	Yuga theory	Brahmā	ṛ ta	tretā	dvāpara	kali
E	Yima's realm	orig. world	+1/3	+ 2/3	+ 3/3	vara
F	Manu & Matsya	orig. world	pot	trench	ocean	flood
G	Ovid's races	gold	silver	bronze	iron	stone