

Chapter 9. Vindicating Durkheim: A long-range perspective on the emergence of theistic religion in prehistory

9.1. Introduction

With the extensive methodological and theoretical tools presented in the previous chapter, we are now ready to investigate whether Durkheim's claims concerning 'elementary forms of religious life' can at all be empirically substantiated in regard of prehistory, using the *Borean lexicon and the insights of modern Comparative Mythology.³¹⁶ Before we can do so, a number of further preparatory steps need to be taken. In the first place we need to consider the problem of *cultural universals* – Durkheim does not problematise his universality claims any more than he does his claims of absolute difference between *sacred* / *profane*. We must not blindly follow him on these points; especially not since our general analysis of *Borean semantics has suggested that, at that level of human language use and logical thought, to make absolute distinctions was less obvious, while often a format occurred

³¹⁶ While the immediate purpose of this chapter is to put Durkheim to another empirical test, an ulterior aim (as a persistent line in my work over the last few decades) is to engage in the historical reconstruction of specific patterns of thought in the history of Anatomically Modern Humans. The more recent millennia in that trajectory have been covered by a number of well-known and deservedly famous books which have inspired me in the background, although they wisely shunned from the more ambitious task of looking, beyond the West Eurasian Bronze Age, as far as possible into the Neolithic and even Palaeolithic. Cf. Onians 1951; Snell 1955; Vroon 1992; Jaynes 1976; Bottéro 1992; Frankfort *et al.* 1957 / 1946. Partridge 1979 is also a source of inspiration here.

which I have called ‘range semantics’.³¹⁷ This would seem to disqualify Durkheim’s claim as to the absolute and universal character of the opposition *sacred / profane*. Meanwhile we have to concede that some oppositions (e.g. ‘death / life’, ‘night / day’) are more or less givens in the natural world and not in the first place the result of the human imposition, upon that world, of imprecise logico-semantic cultural structuring. Leaving these boundary skirmishes behind us, we can proceed to look, in the *Borean vocabulary, for words whose semantics seem to match such *emic* concepts as Durkheim in *Les Formes* attributed to Australian Aboriginal religion, and to constitute ‘elementary forms of religious life’. A list of such items will be derived from the summary of *Les Formes* as presented above in Chapter 2. When we confront that list with the *Borean vocabulary, we will soon find out that, in the first place, Durkheim’s claim as to the universality of *sacred / profane* cannot be substantiated. These paired concepts have only a shallow history in Indoeuropean languages, and little beyond, and do not ascend all the way to Upper Palaeolithic language forms. However, the results of similar explorations for other (proclaimedly *emic*) lexical complexes of a religious nature (e.g. concerning the ‘sacralisation of space’, concepts of ‘purity / dirtiness’, ‘prohibition’, ‘taboo’, ‘soul’ (and ‘body’), ‘spirit / spiritual beings’, ‘demons’, ‘altered states of consciousness’, ‘God’ are, while chequered, rather more positive. *They amount too an unexpected, but unmistakable, partial vindication of Durkheim’s religion theory.* Since the reconstruction of *Borean and its proposed descendants implies a fairly reliable time scale, this exercise also enables us to pinpoint the emergence of theistic beliefs in both space and time. Our analysis suggests, for that emergence: Asia, c. 20 ka BP – rather later than according to rival reconstructions, and at any rate a finding which we need to try and explain in terms of modes of production, emergence of language macrophyla and phyla, and attested iconography. Next to the theistic core beliefs and representations thus emerging in the Later Upper Palaeolithic, we shall extend the analysis to more peripheral religious concerns such as magic, divination and sorcery – which brings us to take another look at the problem of evil and (as a central concern of Durkheim) the installation of morality. We shall conclude the analysis (and this book as a whole) with a glimpse at the *Borean antecedents of a few words which, although not stipulated by Durkheim in *Les Formes*, would yet seem to qualify as ‘elementary forms of religious life’ on the basis of intercultural comparison, Comparative Mythology, and comparative religion.

³¹⁷ Where a word carries the entire range of semantic possibilities between the two poles of an opposition (e.g. ‘male / female’, ‘light / dark’, ‘wet / dry’), and a specific context would be required before we can determine what is specifically meant.

9.2. Cultural universals as a problem; the possible contribution from religion

Durkheim claimed universality (and eternity!) for the *sacred / profane* dichotomy, and some of the other basic concepts proffered in *Les Formes*. A preliminary discussion is in order here.

Before we turn to a discussion of cultural universals such as may be argued to exist in any human culture (or religion, or society, or polity, or language, for that matter) regardless of specifics of space and time, let us realise that originally the concept of ‘the universals’ belongs not to empirical science but to philosophy³¹⁸ (a field which – as we have seen – Durkheim taught before being appointed at the University of Bordeaux as the first social-science professor in France – 1887). The first two giants of Western philosophy, Plato³¹⁹ and Aristotle,³²⁰ each had an elaborate theory of universals which had an enormous impact on the entire subsequent history of Western thought. Other literate and specialist philosophical traditions of the world, especially in Islamic West Asia (Parens 2006), in Hinduist (Kak 2003), Buddhist and Jainist South Asia,³²¹ and in China (Needham c.s. 1955–), were facing similar dilemmas, in semi-autonomous intellectual contexts where (*pace* Jaspers 1993 / 1949 with his idea of the ‘Axial Age’) mainly *distant* echoes of Western philosophy would be heard. While the heritage of Plato dominated philosophy in Late Antiquity and most of the Middle Ages, from the 12th c. CE the Scholastics’s struggle over the *universalia* signalled the fertilisation of European thought by Aristotelian thought as mediated through Islamic philosophy, where the Aristotelian heritage had been preserved more intactly and prominently.³²² The history of philosophy’s grappling with the problem of universals in modern times, via Kant and Hegel³²³ right through to Peirce, James, Russell (1962 / 1912, 1956 / 1911), Quine (1952 / 1980), Strawson (1979; *cf.* Strawson & Chakrabarti 2006) and Armstrong (1989, 1995, 1999), etc. need not occupy us here. Remarkable, meanwhile, is the considerable attention for the problem of cultural universals among

³¹⁸ *Cf.* Craig 1998; Jaegwon Kim & Sosa 1999; Strawson 1979; Burnett Monboddo 1779 (by a Scottish judge whom some consider the founder of comparative historical linguistics, on the strength of Burnett Monboddo 1774).

³¹⁹ *I.e.*: universals exist as Ideas independently from concrete things; Plato 1975: *De Re Publica*, and the dialogues *Phaidon*, *Parmenides* and *Sophistes*; *cf.* Sorabji 2006.

³²⁰ *I.e.*: universals are embodied in concrete things, Aristoteles 1831, 1844, 1938, 1938-1960: *Metaphysica*, *Categoriae*; *cf.* Loux 2009.

³²¹ Takakusu *et al.* 1974; Dasgupta 1992-1075-1922.

³²² In an inspiring contribution, Behrent (2008) uses the analogy of the Medieval struggle over the *universalia* to elucidate Durkheim’s realist viewpoint on religion and society – contrasting it with that of his contemporary the nominalist philosopher Guyau (who died young in 1888, and today is little known).

³²³ Hegel 1978 / 1817-1827-1830, 1977 / 1807, 1969 / 1812-1816-1831.

African philosophers,³²⁴ who thus appear to be rightly protesting against the habitual way in which African thought tends to be relegated to the realm of extreme local / regional specificity and global irrelevance (van Binsbergen 2003a, 2015b).

Suffice it to say that, when (in the North Atlantic region in the course of the 19th c. CE) the *empirical human sciences* came to be established, such as sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, and linguistics, the question of universals took on a different orientation: while all these fields of research were confronted with an enormous range and variety in human repetitive behaviour, the question arose whether it would yet be possible to distinguish universals in these empirical fields – human traits and patterns that would apply to all times, and worldwide.

One author engaging with this question has been Brown (1991, *cf.* 2000; also *cf.* Pinker 2002). Although his work suggests an anthropological inspiration, his insistence on a great many cultural universals (I give his list in Table 9.1) is very atypical for the anthropological discipline. Fascinated with (or should we say: *taking a guilty pleasure in*) the *variety* of human cultures, the idea of cultural universals has not been very popular in anthropology. Here the critical intercultural perspective has often made us realise, in recent decades (*cf.* van Binsbergen 2003a, 2015b), that *what we consider universal is often just that which is continuous with, or at least similar to, that which we have taken for granted against our own cultural background*. This immensely important, critical point has particularly been driven home by the rise of feminist alternatives in philosophy, theology, anthropology, psychiatry, etc.³²⁵ Moreover, the reliance on (usually individual) fieldwork, within very narrow horizons of space and time, has meant that intercultural comparison always has had to face the enormous problem of *how to extract that which is comparable and perhaps universal, from individual ethnographers' often highly idiosyncratic accounts, in which local language forms, often left untranslated, figure prominently*. As a result, intercultural comparison has tended to remain limited to relatively small complexes in space and time: regions much smaller than continents, periods of only a century or less. Despite important exceptions,³²⁶ compar-

³²⁴ Wiredu 1990, 1996; Keita 1997; also *cf.* Lloyd & Gay 1981 (who adduce African evidence towards the identification of universals of human thought), and the American / Iranian intercultural philosopher Seifkar (2011).

³²⁵ *E.g.* Vuola 2002; Schott 1988; Bell *et al.* 2013; Lichtenberg-Ettinger 1996. I am indebted to René Devisch for pointing out to me the significance of Lichtenberg-Ettinger's work in this respect.

³²⁶ Such as typological and quantitative, structural-functionally-orientated cross-cultural studies in the Human Relations Area Files tradition; Murdock 1965 / 1949; Naroll & Cohen 1970, with vital contributions by Vansina (also *cf.* Vansina 1962, 1966, 1968, 1981) and by Köbben (also *cf.* Köbben 1967); and from a totally different perspective – looking for comparability not so much in traits but in formal structures of traits – structuralism, *à la* Lévi-Strauss, Leach, and R. Needham. Only occasionally do anthropologists make universalist claims, *e.g.* de Surgy 1988, 1989 / Hackett 1992; and in a text apparently meant for undergraduate teaching rather than for scholarly debate, Matlock n.d. [c. 1995] (indebted to Swanson 1960) seeks to identify 'Universals and Variation in Religious Belief

ative ethnography, although often the key to the discovery of significant continuities between periods and between large regions of human culture, has generally been frowned upon as counter-paradigmatic and as denying, even destroying, the *emic* specificities that can mainly be captured in prolonged local fieldwork, that lie at the basis of anthropology's insistence on cultural relativism, and that have often been presented as a particular local group's only source of pride and identity.³²⁷ The insistence on long-range cultural continuity and comparability, which permeates the present book and most of my other work, does not reflect current anthropological thinking, and won me the estrangement and ridicule of most of my North Atlantic Africanist colleagues (whilst endearing me with my African colleagues). That the apparent fragmentation of humanity in myriad little enclaves of cultural specificity (the 'patchwork-quilt' view of humanity's culture) is largely a product, not of epistemologically and methodologically sound ethnographic research and of open-minded, encounter-orientated intercultural philosophy, but of totally obsolete imperialist and colonial 'divide and rule', is a truth that regrettably appears to register only very slowly with my North Atlantic colleagues.³²⁸

The limited attention for universals in the other social sciences is fairly comparable to that in anthropology. Despite passionately hopeful beginnings (in which the work of Durkheim looms large), beyond a few empirical generalisations³²⁹ sociology has not in the least succeeded in laying bare any universal conditions governing social life, no more than psychology has done for the human mind in its conscious and unconscious aspects.³³⁰ Claims concerning the structure and functioning of the human personality, intelligence, etc., while widely applied in practice, have seldom risen to tenets universally accepted by specialists. Proclaimed psychoanalytical universals such as Freud's Oedipus Complex, or Jung's archetypes (Jung 1954, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1991b, 2003; such archetypes especially as allegedly surfacing in children's drawings,³³¹ the delusions of the mentally

and Practice' – i.e. 'elementary forms of the religious life'?

³²⁷ Gellner 1990; van Peursen 1992; Herskovits & Herskovits 1973.

³²⁸ For Atran (2000), however, the problem of cultural fragmentation is not so much political / hegemonic but cognitive, arguing (with reference to the production of scientific knowledge as a human specialty) that 'cognition constrains culture in producing science'. Also Mandelbaum-Edel & Edel (1959) feel thwarted by moral diversity in the quest for universals, writing a few decades before our eyes were opened by the converging discourses of counter-imperialism, of the politics of knowledge, and the politics of recognition.

³²⁹ Such as Michels's 'Iron Law of Oligarchy'; or Runciman's 1966 specific application of Merton's 'relative deprivation' (1938) to the effect that the smaller the distance to the coveted reference group and its privileges, the stronger a response will be provoked on the part of the deprived; on the place of relative deprivation in religious studies, also cf. Glock 1964; Glock & Hammond 1973.

³³⁰ Yet Lonner's (1980) account of the findings of cross-cultural psychology in search of psychological universals can still profitably be read; cf. Norenzayan & Heine 2005; Triandis 1978.

³³¹ Also cf. a prominent anthropologist's reflections on the drawings of West African children: Fortes 1981.

disturbed, the ancient symbolism of alchemy and other occult sciences, and the expressions of people living outside the literate, logocentric, North Atlantic region), have been increasingly (though perhaps naïvely, ignorantly) discarded, even ridiculed, in the course of the last half century.

The only empirical science that has manifestly put universals at the centre of its attention is linguistics, probably because of the already highly formalised and standardised nature of language – so that the comparative linguist's task is already far more streamlined, to begin with, than that of the comparative anthropologist.³³²

Time to return to Durkheim after this general theoretical introduction. He claims universality for the absolute distinction which he attributes to the paired concepts *sacred / profane*, as the proposed basis for all religion. *Sacred / profane* is a pair of words, and a linguistic implication of Durkheim's claim would be that *emic* semantic equivalents of the analytically imposed / *etic* / Durkheimian concepts of *sacred / profane* are to be found in every language of the world. A tacit implication of this specific claim is, moreover, that humans have a universal capability of making absolute distinctions – a claim which, having proceeded deeply into the present book's argument, would appear less and less convincing to us. How could we investigate Durkheim's sweeping, implicitly linguistic, hypotheses? Durkheim was not much of a linguist, and we may assume that he did not realise the immense implications of his claim, or the unlikelihood that it could ever be substantiated. In an attempt to do just that, we shall have to rely on state-of-the-art comparative and historical, long-range linguistics, whose elementary features I have sketched in the preceding chapter.

In the course of proto-globalisation since the Bronze Age, and more particularly as a result of modern digital / high-tech globalisation during the last few decades, local life-worlds all over the globe have taken on more and more similar appearances (e.g. billions of people now communicate by Internet and cell phone, and even dress similarly, wearing underpants, bras, sports shoes, T-shirts and jeans trousers – none of which were in common use barely a century ago). *Yet no one would be so naïve as to see this convergence as an expression of universals* – the relevant patterns of invention, transmission, distribution, interest, manipulation, domination, commoditification, are recent, manifest, well-recorded, and generally regarded as superficial – scarcely penetrating to the level of cultural heritage and identity – and in many ways, in fact, interpretable as the denial of time-honoured local culture. For different reasons, anthropologists today tend to frown on any notion of universals. In this attitude such

³³² Cf. Kirby 1996; Brown & Levinson 1978; Butterworth *et al.* 1984; Chomsky 2004; Croft 1990; Décsy 1988; Greenberg 1963, 1978; Roman Jakobson's (1941 / 1968) seminal *Aphasie, Kindersprache und allgemeine Lautgesetze* became *Phonological Universals* in translation; Neumann & Widlok, 1996 (universals of speaking about space); Traill 1981. An entire publication series is devoted to the topic: *Working Papers on Language Universals*, running for decades on end.

anthropologists are affirming a classic position of cultural relativism and the equivalence of cultures. This position was *rightly* developed in the mid-20th c. CE (*cf.* Herskovits 1973) in reaction to evolutionism, diffusionism, and the racist assumptions of hegemonic North Atlantic colonialism; however, in the meantime this initially timely inspiration has stifled into the politically correct celebration of difference and mandatory (so often perfunctory, performative) ‘respect’ for the culture of the other, however offensive it may be to self and to one’s own culture (van Binsbergen 1999a / 2003a, especially ch. 15).

How humans differ from one another has always been one of the central questions of anthropology. But the complementary, reverse question should have been equally central: *how are people similar to each other*. On this point, developments in the last few decades, in such fields as Comparative Mythology, long-range linguistics, comparative ethnography, archaeology (notably the study of rock art and of palaeoastronomy), and molecular population genetics, neurobiology and even deep psychology / psychoanalysis, have left no doubt whatsoever that humans, especially Anatomically Modern Humans, even though organised in different nations, ethnic groups, and continents, have far more in common than they differ culturally, linguistically and genetically.³³³ This does not mean that the question of cultural universals has now been resolved to unanimity and has obtained a place among the canon of the social and historical sciences; profound questions remain (*e.g.* Wiredu 1990; 1996). Given the unmistakable anchorage of some major converging human traits in genetic and neurobiological patterns,³³⁴ what is left to ascertain is how much true universality there is in *unequivocally cultural behaviour*,³³⁵ and how much of that universality may be genetically inherited after all (as Jung claimed for the archetypes he described).

The question is more complicated than may meet the eye. Definitions of culture differ greatly (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952), yet for most anthropologists, culture is per definition ‘all that one *learns* (through a social communication process) as a member of a local social group’. On the moment that one apparently cultural form of behaviour can be demonstrated to be genetically inherited, it *ipso facto* ceases to be cultural. Now the advances in Comparative Mythology in the last few decades³³⁶ consist in the perception and explicitation of mythical patterns that have persisted across millennia,

³³³ Once more I refer to my short essay on ‘The fundamental unity of humankind’, in: van Binsbergen 2015b: 8f.

³³⁴ *Cf.* Farmer *et al.* 2002; Farmer 2008, 2010; Jürgens 1992b; E. Turner 1986; d’Aquili 1978; d’Aquili *et al.* 1979.

³³⁵ *I.e.* human behaviour patterned by social institutions and transmitted by human communication along sensory lines, in the form of speech acts, texts, material examples and models etc.

³³⁶ *Cf.* Witzel 2001, 2012; van Binsbergen & Venbrux 2010.

even across tens, yea scores, of millennia. Such *inertia* is common in the biological field – for the phenotypes of animal or vegetal species are genetically determined and tend to remain fairly constant (despite inevitable intra-species variation) during tens of thousands of years, often even during millions of years. Numerous are the examples of species (*e.g.* Coelacanth fishes – *Latimeria chalumnae*; or sharks; or varanes (archaic reptiles); or bedbugs) that are generally considered to have remained unchanged for millions, even dozens of millions of years. In the cultural field, we have generally been so unfamiliar with such prolonged inertia that, in case it comes knocking at our door (*e.g.* in the form of long-range linguistic reconstructions of phyla and macrophyla, and of *Borean; or in the form of the proto-myths of state-of-the-art Comparative Mythology, apparently persisting in more or less recognisable form across tens of ka), many specialists have dismissed the possibility offhand, have identified themselves as splitters rather than as joiners, declaring long-range versions of linguistics and mythology a mere pipedream, mere science fiction.³³⁷ Linguistic and genetic drift, inevitable material imperfections in intergenerational transmission, erosion and disappearance of the social institutions (*e.g.* rituals, initiation, taboos) that may be considered to be responsible for any conservation, prolonged immutability and transmission of cultural items – all this makes it far more likely that cultural forms should change than that they should persist over long stretches of time. Proposing that mythemes which do seem to persist over many thousands of years, may have a genetic anchorage, after all, would destroy the very basis of anthropology, in its own right, as well as its functioning as an auxiliary science for archaeology and palaeoanthropology; but it would at least begin to solve the immense problem of inertia, of persistence across tens of millennia. I believe that religious, ritual enshrinement is the main viable alternative answer, and (contrary to the hereditary hypothesis) probably the correct one.

A quarter of a century ago, Brown (1991) published an amazingly long list of cultural human universals (see Table 9.1), in the fields of language, worldview, modes of thought (*e.g.* logical operations), psychology (such as facial expressions, the Oedipus complex), kinship, socio-political organisation, the economy, and religion. Many specialists would be inclined to contest Brown's list in details, but its sheer length is compelling. The list invites criticism as a mixture of *emic* and *etic* positions, and as such is somewhat difficult to handle.

³³⁷ Meanwhile such dismissal has persisted in the face of the uncontested, widely demonstrated empirical fact of the inertia of lithic industries across tens of thousands of years, sometimes much longer.

abstraction in speech & thought	continua (ordering as cognitive pattern)	happiness	judging others
actions under self-control distinguished from those not under control	contrasting marked and nonmarked sememes (meaningful elements in language)	facial expression of surprise	kin, close distinguished from distant
aesthetics	cooking	facial expressions, masking / modifying of	kin groups
affection expressed and felt	cooperation	fairness (equity), concept of	kin terms translatable by basic relations of procreation
age grades	cooperative labor	family (or household)	kinship statuses
age statuses	copulation normally conducted in privacy	father and mother, separate kin terms for	language
age terms	corporate (perpetual) statuses	fears	language employed to manipulate others
ambivalence	coyness display	fear of death	language employed to misinform or mislead
anthropomorphisation	critical learning periods	fears, ability to overcome some	language is translatable
anticipation	crying	feasting	language not a simple reflection of reality
antonyms	critical learning periods	females do more direct childcare	language, prestige from proficient use of
attachment	cultural variability	figurative speech	law (rights and obligations)
baby talk	culture	fire	law (rules of membership)
belief in supernatural / religion	culture / nature distinction	folklore	leaders
beliefs, false	customary greetings	food preferences	lever
beliefs about death	daily routines	food sharing	likes and dislikes
beliefs about disease	dance	future, attempts to predict	linguistic redundancy
beliefs about fortune and misfortune	death rituals	generosity admired	logical notions
binary cognitive distinctions	decision making	gestures	logical notion of 'and'
biological mother and social mother normally the same person	decision making, collective	gift giving	logical notion of 'equivalent'
black (color term)	differential valuations	good and bad distinguished	logical notion of 'general / particular'
body adornment	directions, giving of	gossip	logical notion of 'not'
childbirth customs	discrepancies between speech, thought, and action	government	logical notion of 'opposite'
childcare	dispersed groups	grammar	logical notion of 'part / whole'
childhood fears	distinguishing right and wrong	group living	logical notion of 'same'
childhood fear of loud noises	diurnality	groups that are not based on family	magic
childhood fear of strangers	divination	habituation	magic to increase life
choice making (choosing alternatives)	division of labor	hairstyles	magic to sustain life
classification	division of labor by age	hand (word for)	magic to win love
classification of age	division of labor by sex	healing the sick (or attempting to)	making comparisons
classification of behavioral propensities	dominance / submission	hope	male and female and adult and child seen as having different natures
classification of body parts	dreams	hospitality	males dominate public / political realm
classification of colors	dream interpretation	husband older than wife on average	males engage in more coalitional violence
classification of fauna	economic inequalities	hygienic care	males more aggressive
classification of flora	economic inequalities, consciousness of	identity, collective	males more prone to lethal violence
classification of inner states	emotions	imagery	males more prone to theft
classification of kin	empathy	incest between mother and son unthinkable or tabooed	males, on average, travel greater distances over lifetime
classification of sex	entification (treating patterns and relations as things)	incest, prevention or avoidance	manipulate social relations
classification of space	environment, adjustments to	in-group distinguished from out-group(s)	marking at phonemic, syntactic, and lexical levels
classification of tools	envy	in-group biases in favor of inheritance rules	marriage
classification of weather conditions	envy, symbolic means of coping with	institutions (organized co-activities)	materialism
coalitions	ethnocentrism	insulting	meal times
collective identities	etiquette	intention	meaning, most units of are non-universal
conflict	explanation	interest in bioforms (living things or things that resemble them)	measuring
conflict, consultation to deal with	face (word for)	interpolation	medicine
conflict, means of dealing with	facial communication	interpreting behavior	
conflict, mediation of	facial expression of anger	intertwining (e.g., weaving)	
conjectural reasoning	facial expression of contempt	jokes	
containers	facial expression of disgust		
	facial expression of fear		
	facial expression of		

melody	play to perfect skills	other	achieved
memory	poetry / rhetoric	self as neither wholly	statuses distinguished
mental maps	poetic line, uniform length	passive nor wholly	from individuals
mentalese	range	autonomous	statuses on other than
metaphor	poetic lines characterized	self as subject and object	sex, age, or kinship
metonym	by repetition and variation	self-image, awareness of	bases
mood- or consciousness-	poetic lines demarcated	(concern for what others	stinginess, disapproval of
altering techniques and /	by pauses	think)	stop / nonstop contrasts
or substances	polysemy (one word has	self-image, manipulation	(in speech sounds)
moral sentiments	several meanings)	of	succession
moral sentiments, limited	possessive, intimate	self-image, wanted to be	sucking wounds
effective range of	possessive, loose	positive	sweets preferred
morphemes	practice to improve skills	self is responsible	symbolism
mother normally has	precedence, concept of	semantics	symbolic speech
consort during child-	(that's how the leopard	semantic category of	synesthetic metaphors
rearing years	got its spots)	affecting things and	synonyms
mourning	preference for own	people	taboos
murder proscribed	children and close kin	semantic category of	tabooed foods
music	(nepotism)	dimension	tabooed utterances
music, children's	prestige inequalities	semantic category of	taxonomy
music related in part to	pretend play	giving	territoriality
dance	pride	semantic category of	thumb sucking
music related in part to	private inner life	location	tickling
religious activity	promise	semantic category of	time
music seen as art (a	pronouns	motion	time, cyclicity of
creation)	pronouns, minimum two	semantic category of	tools
music, vocal	numbers	other physical properties	tool dependency
music, vocal, includes	pronouns, minimum three	semantic components	tool making
speech forms	persons	semantic components,	tools for cutting
musical redundancy	proper names	generation	tools to make tools
musical repetition	property	semantic components,	tools patterned culturally
musical variation	proverbs, sayings	sex	tools, permanent
myths	proverbs, sayings - in	sememes, commonly	tools for pounding
narrative	mutually contradictory	used ones are short,	toys, playthings
nomenclature (perhaps	forms	infrequently used ones	trade
the same as	psychological defense	are longer	triangular awareness
classification)	mechanisms	senses unified	(assessing relationships
nonbodily decorative art	rape	sex differences in spatial	among the self and two
normal distinguished from	rape proscribed	cognition and behavior	other people)
abnormal states	reciprocal exchanges (Of	sex (gender) terminology	true and false
nouns	labor, goods, or services)	is fundamentally binary	distinguished
numerals (counting)	reciprocity, negative	sex statuses	turn-taking
Oedipus complex	(revenge, retaliation)	sexual attraction	two (numeral)
oligarchy (de facto)	recognition of individuals	sexual attractiveness	tying material (i.e.,
one (numeral)	by face	sexual jealousy	something like string)
onomatopoeia	redress of wrongs	sexual modesty	units of time
overestimating objectivity	resistance to abuse of	sexual regulation	verbs
of thought	poser, to dominance	sexual regulation includes	violence, some forms of
pain	rhythm	incest prevention	proscribed
past / present / future	right-handedness as	sexuality as focus of	visiting
person, concept of	population norm	interest	vocalic / nonvocalic
personal names	risk-taking	shame	contrasts in phonemes
phonemes	rites of passage	shelter	vowel contrasts
phonemes defined by set	rituals	sickness and death seen	weaning
of minimally contrasting	role and personality seen	as related	weapons
features	in dynamic	snakes, wariness around	weather control (attempts
phonemes, merging of	interrelationship (i.e.,	social structure	to)
phonemes, range from 10	departures from role can	socialisation	white (color term)
to 70 in number	be explained in terms of	socialisation expected	world view
phonemic change,	individual personality)	from senior kin	
inevitability of	sanctions	socialisation includes	
phonemic change, rules	sanctions for crimes	toilet training	
of	against the collectivity	spear	
phonemic system	sanctions include removal	special speech for special	
planning	from the social unit	occasions	
planning for future	self-control	statuses and roles	
play	self distinguished from	statuses, ascribed and	

this list is derived from: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~mfiddler/hyphen/humunivers.htm>, with thanks; original spelling retained. *Comments:* The improbability of a universal concept of 'Nature' we have discussed elsewhere in this book, section 8.2.1. Also the universality claim for 'folklore' is puzzling: in the general understanding, folklore is *virtualised traditional culture* – and such secondary reflexivity we would only expect in a logocentric context. Instead of 'precedence', 'aetiology' would be a better term.

Table 9.1. Proposed universals of the cultures of Anatomically Modern Humans, after Brown 1991

When we concentrate on religious items, Brown's list becomes much shorter:

belief in supernatural / religion	good and bad distinguished	rituals
beliefs, false	magic	snakes, wariness around
beliefs about death	magic to increase life	succession
beliefs about disease	magic to sustain life	symbolism
beliefs about fortune and misfortune	magic to win love	symbolic speech
classification of fauna	mood- or consciousness-altering techniques and / or substances	taboos
classification of flora	moral sentiments	tabooed foods
culture / nature distinction	moral sentiments, limited effective range of	tabooed utterances
death rituals	mourning	time
divination	murder proscribed	time, cyclicity of
dreams	music related in part to religious activity	true and false distinguished
dream interpretation	normal distinguished from abnormal states	units of time
fire	rape proscribed	violence, some forms of proscribed
folklore	redress of wrongs	weather control (attempts to)
future, attempts to predict	rites of passage	world view

Table 9.2. Proposed religious universals of the cultures of Anatomically Modern Humans, after Brown 1991

What surprises me is the paucity of obviously religious terms: although 'belief in supernatural / religion' is claimed by Brown to be a human universal (remarkably, and contentiously, considering the relatively great, and rare, mental effort towards transcendence the concept of 'Nature' hence of the supernatural, entails).

My own explanation of such apparent universals (such as the institution of marriage, and the proscription of murder, and belief in the power of magic) is in the first place (and ignoring, for a moment, the occurrence of such universals *before* the Middle Palaeolithic) that *they constitute the collective heritage of Anatomically Modern Humans, – a heritage that emerged in Africa c. 200 ka BP and that percolated and was developed for over 100 ka within the African continent, before being spread to other continents in the context of the Out-of-Africa Exodus from 80 to 60 ka BP.*

For modern anthropologists even this would not be enough of an explanation for the inertia of these alleged universals. For, given the fact that from generation to generation a local culture is being transmitted and managed by social interaction predicated upon sensory communication processes, *a Pre-Exodus condition in the very remote past could only be an explanation for present-day universals if we have a ready and convincing explanation for the selective retention and transmission of particular universals of culture across tens of millennia.* We have to realise that, by contrast, many other cultural traits, once perhaps

equally widespread, did not survive at all and, in the course of more recent human history, dropped by the wayside, to be forever lost to posterity (unless dug up by archaeologists). *E.g.* Most humans today are no longer organising their social life in terms of explicit or implicit totemism (although a significant minority clearly still do), most do no longer practice strict avoidance between son-in-law and mother-in-law, most do no longer celebrate the manifestations, in everyday life, of the ancestral dead, nor retain their ancestors' (or their enemies') skulls denuded from the flesh; most do no longer venerate the luminaries especially the Sun,³³⁸ the Moon, or the Evening / Morning Star, to the extent of making human sacrifices to them;³³⁹ yet we have reason to assume that once these were fairly common patterns of human behaviour. Like the fission / meiosis and recombination of gonads in genetic reproduction, the transmission of cultural items, from generation to generation, is a precarious process, with considerable risk of failure. If yet we must assume that the transmission went essentially successfully and continued to yield results that, across tens of millennia, are still so recognisable that we may speak of 'cultural universals', we have much explaining to do: why these particular, apparently institutionalised, cultural items have more or less escaped the normal decay implied in cultural drift, imperfect transmission, the emergence of new interests, new technologies, and new forms of communication. Apart from invoking extrasensory perception or the material intervention of gods, angels or extraterrestrials, *the principal explanation is that some cultural items, by virtue of certain socio-cultural technologies, have been endowed with such a sense of importance, relevance, reality and eternal value, that their transmission has been safeguarded from generation to generation.* In recent decades, the psychology of perception,

³³⁸ Over the past two centuries, modern and post-modern globalised life in the North Atlantic and in that region's transcontinental social, cultural and political extensions such as (the elites of) Australia, South America, etc., have developed a form of recreational sun worship on beaches and other resorts, which might be considered an atavistic transformation of prehistoric solar cults. But the point is immaterial in the present context.

³³⁹ #47. *ON HUMAN SACRIFICE.* Generating a voluminous literature, the practice of *human sacrifice* is widespread in space and time. It played a considerable role in the Ancient West Semitic world and the Ancient Greek world (Day 1989; Zintzen 1979; Hughes 2013) and is allegedly still being practiced, not only in Africa (Toulabor 2000) but also in North Atlantic occult circles. It receives ample attention in Hastings's still authoritative *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1909-1921: VI, 840a-867a, including human sacrifice to earth demons (Hastings 1909-1921: VI, 852b) and water spirits (Hastings 1909-1921: XII, 710b). Astronomically more relevant, the Midsummer human sacrifice is discussed there for a number of regions (Hastings 1909-1921: VIII, 503a). The Pawnee of North America annually used to sacrifice a maiden to the Morning Star at the Winter Solstice (Hastings 1909-1921: IX, 699). Human sacrifice at astronomically significant moments in the calendar was particularly prominent in Ancient Mexico, Peru and Columbia (Hastings 1909-1921: XII, 67). Among the Tlascalans of Ancient Mexico, 'red-skinned people' (?) were sacrificed in order to stop the fighting of sun and moon, thought to cause eclipses (Hastings 1909-1921: XII, 68). Especially elaborate calendrical sacrifices to the sun, moon and stars have been reported for Ancient China (Hastings 1909-1921: XII, 78 f.); no mention of human sacrifices is made in that connection; but cf. Allan 1984.

of childhood, of mass media and crowds, and of the sub- / un-conscious; neurobiology; religious anthropology; and the study of altered states of consciousness, have all combined to begin to explain now why certain cultural items may be endowed with an indelible sense of reality and validity in individual minds (including their sub-/un-conscious layers). This is why rituals, especially puberty initiation rites but also *e.g.* rites of childbirth and burial, and ecstatic ritual involving altered states of consciousness (through drugs, psychedelic visual, auditive and olfactory effects, etc.)³⁴⁰ offer splendid opportunities for the enshrining and transmission of central cultural items – saving them from extreme erosion, even loss, from generation to generation. *The implicitly transcendent immutability of religious institutions across the generations would then be religion's main contribution to society.*

From this perspective our initially Durkheimian quest for 'elementary forms of religious life' acquires rather new overtones. For considered in this way, religion is not just an institution at a par with other institutions, – it appears as the pivotal social institution par excellence, *on which the more or less intact transmission of all other cultural items, in other words all institutionalisation, may be argued to depend. This is still rather close to Durkheim, but it is also a major step ahead away from Durkheim and towards a post-idealist, agnostic yet non-reductionist analysis of religious life. In this perspective, religion is central, not because (as for Durkheim) it constructs the social as an ultimate source of authority, submission and veneration hovering over the members of a society, but simply and more humbly, because it underpins the socio-cultural transmission on which all social stability and future social life depends.*

If this line of argument can stand up to further theoretical and empirical scru-

³⁴⁰ #48. *FURTHER ON EFFERVESCENCE.* Inevitably, we are reminded here once again of Durkheim's *effervescence*, whose inadequacy as an analytical concept I have already discussed above. However, here Vic Turner's distinction of structure and anti-structure is helpful. *Effervescence*, somewhat equivalent to Turner's *communitas*, is by definition chaotic and incoherent – it is certainly not structured to the extent of being capable of safeguarding detailed, highly structured, precious cultural material unchanged from generation to generation. The collective excitement may be capable of leaving an indelible mental and / or psychosomatic imprint on the individuals living it through, and thus to preserve cultural items from loss and drift – but to really preserve such items across the ages more is needed, notably a social communication process that is sufficiently firm, sanctioned, organised, controlled, and coercive so as to preserve the delicate cultural form of the item in question. For instance, in South Central African male puberty rites (Turner 1967c; Kubrik 1977; White *et al* 1958; van Binsbergen 1993 – the Nkoya had them until 1900), as in those of West Africa, or of Oceania / Australia) the initiands go through paroxysms of excitement, deprivation, fear and terror when confronted with masked embodiments of collective representations – but while this chaotic experience makes them *receptive* for the concrete initiatory knowledge that is to be imparted to them, the teachings in themselves must be articulate, structured, cool – and take place at different times and places from the masquerades.

tiny, it implies that we can scarcely hope to ever capture the very elementary form of religious life, for, being human, we cannot objectively and consistently go back to the origin of our very essence. Essential forms of religion in the theoretical sense elaborated here must have existed, inevitably, throughout human cultural history, so also long before *Borean times (20-25 ka BP) when the mental capabilities of Anatomically Modern Humans were emerging and were being tested and honed to perfection – and even long before the Out of Africa Exodus (60-80 ka BP). We have some telling material manifestations of these capabilities: *e.g.* the decorated ochre block from Blombos Cave, South Africa, 70 ka BP (Fig. 4.1, above); barbed harpoons (*cf.* Yellen 1998); rock art; etc. Meanwhile the most crucial argument for the extreme antiquity of human religion is the existence of so many cultural universals in themselves: in all likelihood, they could never have survived, they could never have persisted and have become universal, unless for the socio-cultural inertia produced by religion.

Most religion is not theistic, and below we shall explore the relatively late appearance, shortly after *Borean times, of the theistic variant. Many other religious traits probably have far greater antiquity. Whether Durkheim's famous opposition *sacred / profane* should be ranked among very old religious forms going back to the remotest Palaeolithic; or should be included, in time and orientation, with the *Borean forms of theistic religion; or has an even more recent origin, is one of the central questions the present chapter seeks to answer.

9.3. Words suggestive of absolute difference in

*Borean

In modern life, in modern science (including Durkheim's), in the world religions, political movements and artistic traditions that to a considerable extent have shaped our present-day life world, *our capability, as humans, of making absolute distinctions* is simply taken for granted. One of our principal distinctions, and a fairly absolute one, is that between human and animal. Animals may (under certain, fairly permissive, restrictions) legally be captured, kept, sold, killed and eaten – in contradistinction from humans; the latter, moreover, are considered to be capable of rational thought and to be motivated by ethical considerations believed to be absent in animals. All world religions offer to humans a perspective of liberation / salvation in an afterlife, but most do not extend this promise to animals. There are indications that the human-animal distinction did not obtain in quite the same absolute form in *Borean times. The totemic principle implied a gradual merging / identification / distinction between humans and animals. Numerous are the prehistoric representations of animals and humans in various states of merging, therianthropy, pardives-

ture.³⁴¹ This is religiously relevant because the totemic spirits were often *venerated* – according to Durkheim (relying second-hand on the ethnography of Spencer & Gillen, mainly), they even constituted the core of Aboriginal Australian religion.

In view of Durkheim’s claim that the logical operation of distinguishing between *sacred* and *profane* constitutes the hallmark of religion, it is remarkable that there are several *Borean words for ‘separate, split’, as listed in the following Table:

*Borean reconstructed root	semantics
*PVTV	‘separate, split’
*CVKV	‘to cut, split’
*CVLV	‘split, tear off; fish trap, fence’
*HVCV	‘to cut, to separate’
*KVRV	‘to hide, protect’
*PVKV	‘to burst, split (many roots)’
*PVLV	‘to divide, cut in half’
*PVRV	‘to tear, break, split’
*PVTV	‘break, split’
*PVTV	‘separate, split’
*RVKV	‘to cut, split’

Table 9.3. The *Borean vocabulary of ‘separating, splitting’

Nonetheless, this finding is difficult to interpret in Durkheimian terms, for the demonstrable lexical capability of ‘separating’ does not at all yield attestations of *Borean terms for *sacred* or *profane*, however much Durkheim asserts that these concepts are universal.

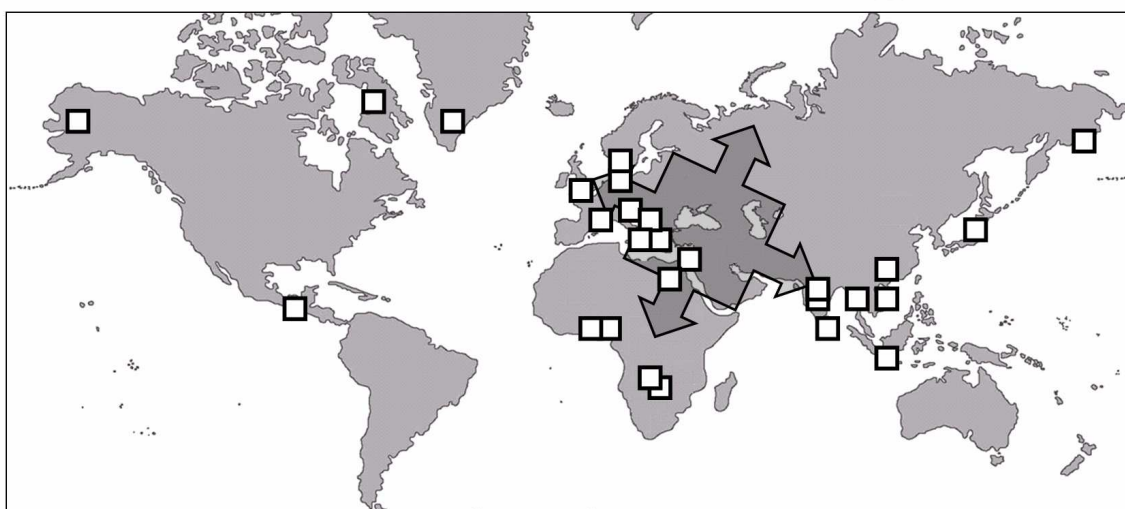
9.4. ‘Death’ vs. ‘life’ as a likely instance of Durkheimian absolute difference in prehistoric religion

To what extent is absolute difference just a matter of thinking? Are there no instances that absolute difference is pressed upon us humans not by virtue of

³⁴¹ *Therianthropy* is when humans ritually or iconographically impersonate animals in appearance and movements. *Pardivesture* is when humans dress in skins of the leopard (*Pardus pardus*), either (a) in an attempt at identification with that formidable quadruped (once common throughout the Old World), or (b) as a sign of having subdued it – and the evil connotations for which it tends to stand. Cf. van Binsbergen in press (d). However, apart from identification or victory there is another possible connotation to wearing a skin that has belonged to another quadruped (perhaps also human): it has been known as a device to come into contact with the world of the dead (Farwerck 1978: 53). According to a Jewish tradition, Noah’s Ark had on board the animal skins which Adam and Eve had worn after their expulsion from Eden, and even their very corpses – Ham’s greatest sin was not mocking his drunken father’s nakedness, but attempting sorcery with these ancestral remains (Heller 1993; Ginzberg 1988).

our (pretended) superior thinking power but simply by natural circumstances?

Until the advent of post-modern criticism of gendered thought in recent decades, gender was usually considered, in very many cultural settings throughout space and time, as a naturally-given, absolute difference; even though, in many cultural settings, a ritual or performative play on straddling or crossing gender lines has also been a common occurrence, to wit the virtually global distribution of homosexuality, transvestitism, etc. In postmodernist thought it has become anathema to consider gender a natural datum, and instead the socio-cultural constructedness and manipulability of *apparent* gender identities is emphasised. The two-gender solution for reproduction, for the preservation of species characteristics but also for the indispensable variability requires to species response to changes in the environment, has been extremely old, and dates from relatively early stages of multicellular life on earth, some 1200 million years BP.³⁴²



Sources: see footnote on the next page; the block arrow indicates the 'cross model' (van Binsbergen 2012d: 37) according to which the Pelasgian Complex, after emerging in Neolithic West Asia and spreading in transformed form to the Mediterranean, by the Late Bronze Age spread in all four directions

Fig. 9.1. Provisional global distribution of reincarnation beliefs

Be this as it may, human life encounters, as an apparently natural condition, another instance that would be eligible as a natural form of absolute difference: *the opposition between life and death*.³⁴³ The irreversibility of death is even more of an undeniable given than the emergence of new life from humble begin-

³⁴² Cf. Buttfield 2000; via Anonymous, 'Sexual reproduction'.

³⁴³ Very recent scientific approaches to death in mammals including humans have begun to suggest that death in humans is accidental and avoidable – that living tissue does not automatically and necessary decay to the point of the extinction of life. However, as long as the practical implementation of this inspiring idea has not become a clinical reality, death is to remain the only certainty of human life.

nings: sperm, ovum, or (at least, at the level of widespread folk beliefs) filth, rotten substances, desire, the human will, the divine breath, saliva, tears, kisses. If we could show that the semantics of 'death' as an *emic* concept (*i.e.* consciously perceived and named by the historical actors) has universal distribution and is well attested in *Borean, then we would have made considerable progress towards establishing the possibility that absolute difference (as a precondition for the Durkheimian *sacred* / *profane*) was emically perceived and verbally articulated even in the Late Palaeolithic.

There is a little difficulty here, however. Death may be irreversible and absolute, but this is not how all pre-modern world views have conceived it. In the preceding chapter, I have discussed aspects of the archaeology of human burial. Neanderthals already engaged in that practice, but the fact that they not only carefully laid out the deceased's body, but also added grave goods such as tools, weapons and food, strongly suggests that they, like very many people after them until modern times, believed that the deceased would still be capable of some form of effective animate life. In other words, acknowledging death does not *ipso facto* mean acknowledging its absolute, total nature. Beliefs in reincarnation turn out to be widely distributed in historical times,³⁴⁴ and may well go back to the Upper Palaeolithic. Viewed in the light of reincarnation beliefs, but also of the even more widespread belief that ancestors, though deceased, may still play an active, even decisive, role in the world of the living, the linguistic attestation of a 'death' lexicon does not fully prove the capability of making absolute distinctions.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ #49. ON REINCARNATION BELIEFS. Reincarnation / transmigration beliefs have been reported from many periods and all directions of the globe: Eliade 1988, Jung 2003, Obeyesekere 2002, Taliaferro *et al.* 2010, Stevenson 1980; Zander 1999; Anonymous 'Reincarnation'; Thomas 1909-1921 (general, *i.e.* comparing Native American, Buddhist and Greek forms); Wachtmeister 1956 (Eskimos); Meyer & Nutt 1895-1897, Dottin 1909-1921, Lucanus *Pharsalia*, 1807 (Celts); Mexico (Harrington 1988); Obeyesekere 1980, Anesaki 1909-1921 (Buddhism); Mus 1932-1934 (Indonesia / Buddhism); Gogerly & Bishop 1908 (Sri Lanka); Flinders Petrie 1909-1921 (Egypt); Gaster 1909-1921 (the Israelite / Jewish world); Bluck 1961, Pearson 1909-1921 (Greece); Dickins 1909-1921 (the Germanic world). Also in the African context reincarnation beliefs have been intensively studied and debated, *cf.*: Stefaniszyn 1954; Sembereka 1996; Oluwole 1992; Echekwube 1987; Onyewuenyi 1996; Zahan 1965; Miles 1978; Motoshi 1995 (*cf.* Japan); Delord 1957; van Binsbergen, *in press* (a). Against the background of the Pelasgian Hypothesis I would suggest (*cf.* van Binsbergen 2015, 2017; van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011) that reincarnation beliefs are essentially a Pelasgian trait (or at least, have been since the Neolithic), and I would also suggest historic continuity here between sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia (which as seen from the North Atlantic region is the typical abode of reincarnation beliefs, especially in relation with Buddhism; *cf.* Kaelber 1976, Garbe 1909-1921; yet (*pace* Kaelber) Gonda 1943 warns us that reincarnation belief does not go back to Vedic times, *cf.* Witzel 1984), and Graeco-Roman Antiquity (where Pythagoras, probably under West- and South-Asian influences, was a prominent exponent of such beliefs; *cf.* Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV – Ovid 1812, 1815 (the latter edition includes the Latin text).

³⁴⁵ The point was forcibly driven home to me when living and working among the *sangoma* diviner-healers of Botswana and Zimbabwe (van Binsbergen 1991, 2003a). So deeply convinced were my *sangoma* colleagues of the relatively easy transition between death and life, that dispatching an enemy (and the intense rivalry between ritual practitioners in their bid to control the local ritual market bred formidable enemies) through ritual killing was scarcely considered an hideous act: because of rein-

Casting all these reservations aside for the time being, our search for ‘death’ semantics in *Borean will be limited to the *Borean, and macrophylum level, without descending to the attestations in individual languages and language clusters. Therefore ‘death’ or ‘death-related semantics found at these lower, more recent branches will be ignored unless the death connotation ascends at least to the macrophylum. The results are contained in Table 9.4.

One of the *Borean roots listed with the semantics ‘to die / kill’, in other words ‘death’, is: *KVLV, with reflexes in Eurasiatic, Sinocaucasian (in most of its phyla: Northcaucasian, Sinotibetan, Yenisseeian and Burushaski)^{346, 347} and African languages notably Nigercongo > Bantu.

Another one is *MVRV, ‘ill, die’,³⁴⁸ with reflexes in Eurasiatic (Indo-European, Altaic and Uralic),³⁴⁹ Afroasiatic and African languages (> Bantu).

Related semantics has: *HVLV,³⁵⁰ ‘die, starve’, with reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and African (misc.): Macrokhoisan *ʔV ‘to die’ (with reflexes in nearly all Khoisan clusters including Khoe³⁵¹ and Sandawe).³⁵²

Further we have *Borean *NVVV, ‘weak, tired, dead’, with reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, and Austric.³⁵³

Borean *KVTV ‘to finish’ only in Afroasiatic (notably in Centralcushitic) attains a death semantics, and therefore is not suitable for our purpose. Similar situations are encountered in other phyla, e.g. Dravidian and Kartvelian. Similarly, *Borean *PVTV, ‘to fall’, only produces unmistakable ‘death’ semantics in Dravidian, although it has reflexes in most Eurasiatic languages. Cf. the following *Tower of Babel* listing for Nostratic etymology, s.v. Eurasiatic: *peʔV, ‘to fall (down)’ (Table 9.5)

Then we have *Borean *TVVV, ‘to suffer, die’, with reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic: *diwaʔ-, Sinocaucasian (notably Sinotibetan *dhəw (~e-) ‘stick into, hurt’; Proto-Westcaucasian *dV ‘die, grow numb’), and Austric: *taj (~*ʔt-)

carnation, the victim was considered to be back in no time, anyway. And I was considered to be a reincarnated human being myself: as part of my *sangoma* training, I was shown – and I can tell you that it was a most unsettling experience, even for a professional student of African religion – my own grave in 1990, where a few decades earlier I had reputedly been buried under my ritual name of Johannes, having then the incarnate identity of male first cousin (‘brother’) of the lodge leader Mma Shakayile / Elisabeth Mabututu who oversaw my training and initiation. Among the Nkoya, I made an extensive study of their name-inheritance ritual, which likewise revolves on reincarnation beliefs (van Binsbergen, in press (a)). In both African settings, I suspect decisive influences from South Asia during the 1st and 2nd mill. CE.

³⁴⁶ As declared above, I will usually only quote the *Tower of Babel* main entries, without copying that website’s additional comments and notes, unless these contain vital bibliographical references. Whenever quoted, such comments and notes will appear in **bold**, to mark them as the *Tower of Babel* copyright material they are, and to signal my gratitude for being able to use them. Reconstructed protoforms appear, throughout this book, in the Arial sanserif font, all other text in the present Constantia font.

³⁴⁷ In Proto-Northcaucasian cf. also *=ilq_wV- (/*=ily_wV-) ‘kill, slaughter’ (Starostin 1989: 58), *-lqwV.

³⁴⁸ cf. Illich-Svitych 1967: 331, 1976: 57-58; Guthrie 1967-1971: 1281.

³⁴⁹ Illich-Svitych 1967: 331, 1976: 2, 57-58; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1464 *muRV ‘go away, perish, die’, 1470 *mäR(h)V ‘be wounded, ill’ (with a lot of confusion).

³⁵⁰ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 129, 2476 (Nostratic + rather weak Semito-amic / Afroasiatic).

³⁵¹ Originally the Khoe part of the etymology included *||ʔo ‘to die’, but if this is really another example of an initial lateral non-click consonant in Proto-Khoisan, a hissing affricate reflex in Khoe would be expected.

³⁵² Dolgopolsky n.d.: 129, 2476 (Nostratic + rather weak Semito-amic / Afroasiatic).

³⁵³ Proto-Austronesian *ñava ‘spirit, breath’ (Peiros 1989: 129).

Proto-Eskimo: *tuqu- (-t-) 'to die; to kill' is as far as I have observed the only 'death' semantics deriving from *Borean *TVKV, 'to be lost, exhausted'; this *Borean root has further reflexes in other Eurasiatic languages besides Eskimo (*tVKV), in Afroasiatic : (*dag- ?), but only in Amerind (misc.) : *tik 'die' ?³⁵⁴ do the 'death' semantics crop up again.

Lacking a *Borean ascending form is Proto-Afroasiatic: *wah- 'die, death', with reflexes in Egyptian, Westchadic: *wah- 'perish', and Centralchadic: *way/H- 'death'

However, *MVTV, 'die, finish', has rich reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian (notably Sinotibetan *mēt 'extinguish, destroy', but shedding the 'death' semantics), and African (misc.) : Bantu *-màd- 'finish'?, again without explicit death component.

Among the macrophyla proto-forms with 'death semantics' which do not ascend to *Borean we can mention: Proto-Afroasiatic: *rasVw- (?), 'death, sleep' (with reflected in Egyptian (no death connotations), while such connotations are present in Westchadic including Hausa.

Neither ascends to the *Borean level: Proto-Northcaucasian / Proto-Westcaucasian *dV, 'to grow numb; to die'

The *Borean root *CVWV, 'breath, smell', has reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian,³⁵⁵ and Amerind (misc.)³⁵⁶ produces (only in Sinotibetan < Sinocaucasian) all sorts of 'death semantics

Neither ascending to Sinocaucasian, let alone *Borean, is Proto-Sinotibetan: *sāt, 'kill', with reflexes in Chinese (殺 *srāt 'kill', 搬 *sāt 'to slap from the side'; Tibetan: *gsod* (p. *bsad*, f. *bsad*, i. *sod*) 'to kill, *rcod* (p. *brcad*) 'to contend, fight with arms'; Burmese: *sat* 'kill', Lolo-Burmese **satx*, Kachin: *gəsaβ* 'to kill, to murder'; Lushai: *that* 'to kill', Kuki-Chin **that*!, and Kiranti: **sét*

Table 9.4. 'Death' semantics in *Borean and descending macrophyla

<p>Eurasiatic: *peŋV, 'to fall (down)' Indoeuropean: *pet-, *ped- (...) Altaic: *p`et`a (cf. also *p`éta (...), *p`ăt`à(-kV) (...) Uralic: Ob-Ugric *pät(t)V- 'fall' (if kept separate from *pitV 'hold') Dravidian: *paḍ- (+ *pād_ (...) Chukcheekamchatkan: *pet 'bottom' Cf. also Proto-Altaic *p`ăt`à 'strike, hit', Proto-Kartvelian *petk- (...); Dravidian *paḍ- 'battle, army' (...) Illich-Svitych 1976: 3, 84-88 (2 roots?); Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1822 *pätV 'to fall', [Dolgopolsky n.d.:] 1823 *pEtV 'to pass, go out' N.B.: *Borean *MVJV, 'to weaken, disappear', has reflexes in Eurasiatic : *mVjV, but does not seem to attain 'death' semantics in its reflexes.</p>
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Table 9.5. Aspects of 'death' semantics in Eurasiatic / Nostratic

As a result of this worldwide survey we may safely maintain that the concept of 'death' is massively attested in *Borean, which suggests at least one specific way of *thinking near-absolute difference* right back in the Upper Palaeolithic. This is not a direct corroboration of Durkheim's claim as to the universality of *sacred / profane*, but at least leaves that possibility open.

It stands to reason that also the opposition 'night / day', 'dark / light' provided *Borean-speakers with one of the most obvious and clear-cut Nature-suggested occasions for thinking logical oppositions as a model for other symbolic and spiritual distinctions. The *Borean vocabulary on these points, with manifest range semantics ('dark, black, dawn, light, day, sun, luminary') is extensive but is not necessarily to be interpreted in a religious

³⁵⁴ Ruhlen n.d.: 167 (...); also some forms under *tā 'full' Ruhlen n.d.: 303 (...)

³⁵⁵ Starostin 1991: 34, Starostin 1989: 62 *sVHWV, Dumézil 1971: 32.

³⁵⁶ *asa (or *asu ?) 'nose; smell' (Ruhlen n.d.: 514) (...); ? *paši 'wind' (Ruhlen n.d.: 854) (...)

sense. Although comparative ethnography suggests that also in *Borean times the night was considered more ominous and threatening than the day, there are no strong indications that moral evaluations attached to this opposition – perhaps also since it is likely that many *Borean speakers and their descendants in Eurasia throughout the Upper Palaeolithic had high levels of skin pigmentation, as a result of their ancestors' origin in Africa where such pigmentation has considerable survival value.³⁵⁷ What strikes us is the abundance of 'sun' semantics combined with the relative paucity of references to that other great luminary, 'moon', and to the stars. Perhaps this is an indication that the sun was venerated, but before we can list this as an aspect of *Borean religion, more evidence is needed, *e.g.* of an archaeological / iconographic nature. Meanwhile the most vocal archaeological evidence on sun cults in rock art is not from the Late Palaeolithic / *Borean times, but much more recent, from the Bronze Age, when solar iconography abounds all over West and Central Asia (*cf.* Fig. 9.1).



³⁵⁷ #50. *HIGH SKIN PIGMENTATION IN WESTERN EURASIAN PREHISTORY: AN AFROCENTRIST PERSPECTIVE*. It has been a pet topic of Afrocentrist writing since the 1970s, to stress the existence of an undercurrent of high skin pigmentation in the populations of Western Eurasia, including Europe, in Mesolithic, Neolithic, and more recent millennia (van Sertima 1985; Maguire *et al.* 1887; Wakankar 2010; Bernal 1997; Jairazbhoy 1985). In this connection a new significance has been given to inveterate traditions such as that of the 'Black Irish', of an ancient 'Black' population in the Caucasus / Black Sea region, and re-interpretation has been attempted of the demographic and historical place of the highly pigmented people of South India (often categorised as Dalit / 'untouchable', and mainly Dravidian-speaking). I have much sympathy for these reinterpretations. The etymologies of such Indo-European words as English black, English bleak / Dutch bleek, and English / Germanic / Dutch nigger / nikar / nikker ('water spirit', much older than the influence upon West Germanic from Romance languages nigra / negro) point in the same direction. *E.g.* Proto-Southdravidian: *mās-, 'black' (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 478i), from which also an epithet derives of the primal god Vishnu: māyōn_ 'dark-coloured person, Vishnu'. An important implication of the whole argument is that, contrary to recent, politically-correct belief (also expressed by Bernal 1987), European popular anti-Black racism probably did not just begin with Early-Modern Mercantilism, the European trans-Atlantic slave trade, and colonial imperialism, but probably goes back to a prolonged and thorough ethnic cleansing of Europe from highly pigmented populations during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Again, 'die Mörderer sind unter uns'...



Source: Singh 1993.

Fig. 9.2. Arguable solar representations in rock art, Central Asia

9.5. What to look for in *Borean? *Emic* concepts attributed to Australian Aboriginal religion and qualifying as ‘elementary forms of religious life’ according to *Les Formes*

In the preceding chapters, important aspects of Durkheim’s approach to the religion of Australian Aboriginals have been discussed, usually succinctly, in such a way that only the most central concepts (especially the paired concepts *sacred / profane*) were highlighted. Although based on an armchair reading of the early ethnography of the Australian continent, Durkheim’s treatment was detailed and coherent. He makes extensive claims as to the concepts and beliefs which, in his opinion, existed at the conscious, *emic* level among the Australian actors. If his secondary ethnography, and his theory, are sound, in other words if his claim that he has captured ‘elementary forms of religious life’ is borne out, then it will be worth our while to try and ascertain how much of such *emic* beliefs and practices turn out to be actually reflected in *Borean. Deriving from the Upper Palaeolithic, against the background of hunting and gathering modes of production not essentially different from those of the Australian Aboriginals of the late 19th c. CE, the *Borean lexicon might provide surprising corroborations of Durkheim’s synthesis – or, failing which, would alert us to fundamental shortcomings of his approach. This section seeks to provide an overview of the *emic* concepts of Australian Aboriginal religion which qualify as ‘elementary forms of religious life’ according to Durkheim. Once we have drawn up the list (cf. Table 9.6 below) we can seek to ascertain their occurrence in the *Borean lexicon.

In the beginning of *Les Formes*, Durkheim discards a number of rival approaches *en vogue* at the time: approaches which lay the emphasis on the con-

ception of the supernatural, on the mysterious, of the idea of God or on spiritual beings in general. He introduces the distinction between beliefs and rites, and, more importantly even, between *sacred* and *profane*. After this has led him to his famous definition of religion which we have considered above in detail, he discusses 'the central conceptions of elementary religion': animism (as against naturism), the idea of the soul, of spirit, and the cult of spirits, then touches upon the dream and death. Constantly he builds arguments to the effect that, what other writers may have considered elementary forms of religion, on closer consideration turns out to be not so elementary ('primitive') after all: religious anthropomorphism, the cult of the souls of the departed, mystery cults, the veneration of spiritual beings, of gods. Finding that from the perspective of animism, religion is merely a system of hallucinations,³⁵⁸ he rushes on to find what, in his opinion, is the real meaning and important of religion, – one that does justice to that incomparably important institution. He proceeds to discuss naturism (the Max Müller approach), which however fails to explain the distinction between *sacred* and *profane*...³⁵⁹

Finally, Durkheim arrives at the central descriptive focus of his argument: totemism. Totemism (*i.e.* the naming of sub-sections of society – usually designated 'clans' in the ethnographic literature – in terms of natural objects, and the veneration and otherwise respectful treatment of these objects) offers, in Durkheim's view, a truly elementary form of religious life. The analysis of totemism had already been pioneered by such prominent anthropologists as Frazer and Lang; it is clearly Durkheim's ambition to make decisive contributions to that field of study. Essential for him is that the totems not only exist as ideas or as natural species, but have a material representation, a man-made totemic emblem, which is the most *sacred* object of local society. Surrounded by numerous prohibitions, the totem is intimately linked with the human members of the clan through what is conceived as ties of kinship. The totemic system amounts to a logic of classification, where the religious categories follow those on the ground: those of actual social groups as distinguished by the local actors. As a result, the entire reality of the members of the clan is subsumed under the *sacred* classifications of the totem and its cult. The system is further differentiated into collective, individual, and gender totems. How to explain the genesis of such a system? Durkheim enters into polemics with Wilken, Jevons,

³⁵⁸ And this view, which Durkheim rightly rejects, comes close to the standard view of a debunking anthropology of religion, still prevailing in the middle of the 20th c. CE.

³⁵⁹ Here Durkheim falls victim to a *petitio principii*: having raised (artificially and intuitively, and without proper backing in personal and prolonged participant observation) the paired concepts *sacred* / *profane* – in other words, the assumption of their absolute, transcendent difference – to the centre of religion, he cannot afford to entertain the possibility that in many actual situations the conditions for such transcendence are only partially fulfilled, resulting in religious forms characterised by immanentism. This problematic is the central theme of my discussion of transcendence among the Nkoya people, in Chapter 7 of this book.

Tylor, Frazer, Boas, Hill-Tout, and Lang,³⁶⁰ who have advanced earlier explanations of the totemic system; their approaches unfortunately appeal to pre-existing religious notions on which totemism then is supposed to be based, and of course lack the saving grace of Durkheim's radical sociology.

Durkheim then slightly changes his course and begins to derive a major inspiration from the Oceanian concept of *mana*, whose analysis had then recently (Codrington 1891) invaded the anthropology and history of religion. What gives the totem its importance, is the impersonal force that is attributed to it – but that must simply be the force which society exerts over its members. By virtue of this hold, society is capable of inspiring its members with the sense of the divine and of the *sacred*. The experience of this sense is not always merely routinised, on the contrary: occasionally – in situations of the periodical concentration of large assemblies of humans, such as occur annually – it explodes into a form of agitation which Durkheim designates 'effervescence' – an altered state of consciousness, where the individual consciousness dissolves into that of the group as a whole. Durkheim then unfolds his theory of the totemic emblem, whose essence is not the utility of the natural phenomena to which the totem refers, but the totemic emblem's sheer *sacredness* as central (but essentially arbitrary, non-intrinsic) representation of society.

Following the major ethnographers of the Aborigines of his time, Spencer & Gillen and Strehlow, Durkheim stresses the link between the totem and the soul, and discusses reincarnation as an *emic* concept. Soul, *mana*, are discussed from the perspective of the opposition between body and soul.³⁶¹ Compelled by existing trends in religious studies in his time, Durkheim then returns to the discussion of spirits, gods, magic, civilising heroes, and High Gods. Book III of *Les Formes* is devoted to the principal ritual attitudes, and opens with a discussion of 'the negative cult and its functions'. Prohibitions, in Durkheim's opinion, serve to perpetuate the distinction between *sacred* and *profane*, even though the *sacred* has the tendency to be contagious – to impart its quality to whatever comes into contact with it. Next comes the discussion of the 'positive cult', notably that of sacrifice. Rites serve not only the veneration but particu-

³⁶⁰ Cf. Wilken 1912; Jevons 1899; Tylor 1899; Frazer 1887, 1899, 1937; Boas 1916; Hill-Tout 1903; and Lang 1905.

³⁶¹ #51. *ON THE OBSOLESCEMENT OF BODY-SOUL DUALISM OF WESTERN THOUGHT*. Also on this point Durkheim would appear to be uncritically reflecting the self-evidences of his time and age. Ever since Plato, and in a long philosophical tradition encompassing St Augustine, St Thomas, and Descartes, body-soul dualism has been built into the very core of the Western philosophical tradition, but it has been increasingly rejected by Western philosophers in the course of the 20th c. CE (cf. Pétremont 1973; Hein 1983; Feyerabend & Maxwell 1966. For an overview of the history of alternatives to Cartesian dualism, cf. the work by Poortman (1978 / 1954), pedestrian in execution (and translation) but of immense relevance.). Possibly, a more critical perspective on this point would have brought Durkheim to perceive less dualism among the Australians. After all, such dualism is a form of thinking absolute difference, which – as we have seen – does not sit well with an immanentist, pre-modern life world.

larly the propagation of the totemic natural species. Mimetic rites offer a religious formulation for the principle of causality – again against the sociologicistic background that all force ultimately emanates from society itself.

As the argument of *Les Formes* unfolds, Durkheim's treatment increasingly suffers from a difficulty that it has in common with many theoretically-informed ethnographic monographs: the actual socio-cultural phenomena such as exists on the ground and are open to direct observation, turn out to be too complex and too diverse to be capable of being forced into the straightjacket of a pre-existing, imposed theoretical framework. Since our present interest is with Durkheim's theory more than with Aboriginal ethnography, there is no need to follow his book in all the labyrinthine distinctions of types of rites. Finally he arrives at the mourning rituals, where again purity and impurity are highlighted as aspects of the *sacred*. Thus winding up his theoretically-filtered ethnographic argument, the concluding part of the book sums up its results in terms of an impressive and surprisingly influential theory of religion and society.

Confronting this overview of Durkheim's proclaimed *emic* concepts with the *Borean lexicon, the result is Table 9.6. In interpreting these data, we must be careful not to attach too much significance to 'the argument of silence'. Let us be impressed with the many cases where our results are positive in the sense that a supposedly *emic* concept which Durkheim attributes to the Australian Aboriginals does seem to be attested in *Borean and therefore appears to testify to an 'elementary form of religious life'. However, the negative cases cannot be interpreted as firm evidence to the contrary,

- in the first place because we have only the most indirect evidence for the Upper Palaeolithic language forms subsumed under the term *Borean, the reconstruction is unsystematic and on the basis of essentially recent material,
- and secondly because the very taboo, specialist and innovative mechanisms outlined in Chapter 8 may be at work here, possibly obscuring what could have been the oldest, most important and most secret parts of the Upper Palaeolithic lexicon. This may well be the explanation why such an obvious term as '*mana / force*' had to be scored as negative, with *magic* and *sacrifice*, *totem* possibly constituting similar cases. Perhaps these very concepts were too *sacred* and too secret to openly discuss and thus to be enshrined in a vocabulary passed on to remote posterity.³⁶²

³⁶² #52. CAN WE RELIABLY DATE THE EMERGENCE OF THEISTIC BELIEFS BY LINGUISTIC MEANS, IF THEIR VERY LEXICON WAS POSSIBLY TABOOISED? We hit here upon a methodological difficulty so far overlooked. Below, I shall advance linguistic grounds for the emergence of theistic religion c. 20-25 ka BP. This analysis, however, does not take into account the possibility that also the words designating 'god' may have been tabooed and hence hindered in their transmission to posterity – so as to leave little or no traces in the reconstructed linguistic record. I see no easy solution for this problem. We need to treat our 20-25 ka BP date with great caution. That the name of / word for God may well be taboo can be argued by reference to two examples. The first is the well-known case of the extreme reluctance, in

However, for the case of ‘sacred’ semantics we shall shortly (at the end of the next section 9.5) present another linguistically underpinned argument suggesting its emergence to have been even far more recent than the Upper Palaeolithic: only 7 ka BP. Also the concept of the *supernatural* appears to be too logocentric to be at home in the presumably immanentist life world of the Upper Palaeolithic. Because of its theoretical significance, the case of the non-attestation of *sacred* / *profane* in the *Borean lexicon – crucial in the light of Durkheim’s claim of its universality – deserves treatment on its own, below.

elementary <i>emic</i> religious concepts to be expected on the basis of <i>Les Formes</i>	attested in *Borean?	*Borean examples, and remarks
altered state of consciousness / effervescence	(+)	*PVRV (‘to boil’); *HVLTV (‘burn, boil’); *CVRV (‘roast, boil’); *KVPV (‘to boil, foam’); *KVJV (‘to burn, boil’); N.B. ‘boiling’ is a common expression for ecstatic dancing among San speakers, cf. Katz 1982.
body, cf. soul	+	*PVTV (‘body’); *HVLV (‘upper part of body; handle’) discursive treatment below
civilising hero (mythical)	–	this concept does not really appear to be an ‘elementary form of religious life’ – WvB
clan	+	*HVRV (‘clan member’); *PVRV (‘seed, kin’); *HVLV (‘settlement (< *root, seed?’); discursive treatment below, under ‘sacralisation of space’
death	+	*NWWW (‘weak, tired, dead’); *MVTV (‘die, finish’); *HVLV (‘die, starve’); *NVKV (‘die, kill’); *MVRV (‘ill, die’); 8KVLV (‘to die, kill’); *HVVV, *TWWW (‘to suffer, die’); discursive treatment above; the oscillation between ‘kill’ and ‘die’ is an example of range semantics
dream	+	*CVMNV (‘dream’), *HVMV (‘sleep’); *HVMLV (‘sleep, dream’) discussed by Durkheim next to death, but not in the specific terms of the Dream Time which in the course of the 20th c. CE has become recognised as the central concept of Australian aboriginal religion
effervescence, cf. altered state of consciousness	(+)	*PVRV (‘to boil’); *HVLTV (‘burn, boil’); *CVRV (‘roast, boil’); *KVPV (‘to boil, foam’); *KVJV (‘to burn, boil’); NB. ‘boiling’ is a common expression for ecstatic dancing among San speakers, cf. Katz 1982.
force, cf. <i>mana</i>	–	probably a tabooed concept
God, High God, gods	(–)	*PVRV (‘to ask, pray’); *TVPV (‘to ask, call’); *MVLV (‘to say, pray’); discursive treatment below; deemed insufficiently primary by Durkheim
impurity, cf. purity	+	*CVNV (‘clean’); *PVLV, *PVKV (‘ashes, dirt’); *TVRV (‘bad, dirty’); *CVKV (‘dirt, faeces’); *HVMGV (‘dirt, earth?’); discursive treatment below in this chapter
magic	(–)	cf. *TVLV (‘to deceive’)? – see below probably a tabooed concept – WvB
mana, cf. force	–	probably a tabooed concept – WvB
mystery	(–)	cf. *KVRV (‘to hide, protect’); *KVLV (‘to lose, hide’)? deemed insufficiently primary by Durkheim
<i>profane</i> , cf. <i>sacred</i>	–	discursive treatment below
prohibition	+	*MV (‘prohibitive / negative particle’); *TV (‘prohibitive particle’)

Judaism, to pronounce God’s name (however specifically conceived – as יהוה *YHWH*, אלהים *Elohim*, אֲדֹנָי *Adonai* etc.), and instead the use of the circumscription ‘The Name’ (השם *ha Šem*). The second example I owe to Bonno Thoden van Velzen, who during his fieldwork on oracles and shrines among the Cottica Ndjuka of Surinam in the 1960s was at long last considered worthy to be told, by the local high Priest, the secret name of the High God – and who was shocked and disappointed when it was whispered into his ear: ‘JEHOVAH’ – a name in public circulation at the other side of the Atlantic for several millennia already!

		discursive treatment below
purity, <i>cf.</i> impurity	+	discursive treatment below
<i>sacred, cf.</i> <i>profane.</i>	–	discursive treatment below
sacrifice	–	perhaps a tabooed concept – WvB
soul, <i>cf.</i> body	+	*HVMSV ('soul, breath'); discursive treatment below
spirit, spiritual beings	+	*CVNV ('blood, spirit'); *CVJV ('to blink, shine, shade'); discursive treatment below deemed insufficiently primary by Durkheim
supernatural		deemed insufficiently primary by Durkheim in view of my above exposing of the concept of Nature as recent, probably the notion of the <i>supernatural</i> is also too logocentric to qualify as an elementary form of religious life – WvB
totem	–	probably a tabooed concept – WvB

attestation (2nd column) between parentheses = only indirectly attested; grey shading of a row: negative result
 Note to entry on magic: Durkheim 1912 / 1960 / 1990 scarcely pays attention to divination. In Durkheim's time divination would largely have been considered a form of magic (*cf.* Hastings 1909-1921: s.v. divination; van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999), which is why I shall discuss divination under the heading of magic, below

Table 9.6. Elementary *emic* religious concepts to be expected on the basis of *Les Formes*

By and large, and despite about half of the cases being negatives (the shaded rows in Table 9.6), this confrontation of Durkheimian proposed *emic* concepts, and the Upper Palaeolithic vocabulary, turns out to be surprisingly positive for the Durkheim camp. There is no denying that his theoretical pronouncements capture something of essence in religion – and perhaps some of the very elementary forms of religious life he was after.

Let us now proceed to the principal assessment intended for this chapter: the extent to which the *Borean lexicon bears testimony as to the universality which Durkheim accords his paired concepts *sacred* / *profane*.

9.6. The paired concepts *sacred* / *profane* in (a) Indoeuropean, (b) in the other phyla of the Eurasiatic macrophylum, and (c) beyond

Instead of immediately turning to *Borean in our attempt to trace the linguistic pedigree of *sacred* / *profane*, let us first explore the more obvious etymology of the paired concepts *sacred* / *profane*.

The word *profane* has a very specific origin in the Ancient Roman world: the temple area (*fanum*) was out of bounds for the ordinary people, who therefore were to remain in front of the temple: *pro fanum* (Veen & Sijs 1997 / 1989, s.v. 'profaan'). This seems to be a nice partial confirmation of my initial hypothesis that the *sacred* / *profane* opposition belongs to the relatively recent, Bronze Age (and Early Iron Age) complex of writing, the state, organised religion (those who as outsiders are *profane* are non-priests), and proto-science.

While *pro-* is a common and non-problematic prefix, the lexical core *-fanum* is puzzlingly considered to derive from an Indo-European root **dhēs-*, **dhəs-*, which the leading linguist Pokorny (1959-1969) has identified in Indo-European languages ranging from Armenian to Latin, Oscan and Greek, where it applied to holy places and/or times.

Already in preparation for our explorations of the ‘God’ semantics, below, we observe that in *Tower of Babel* the Proto-Indo-European root **dhēs* appears as ‘god, deity’, with reflexes in the languages mentioned but also in the other Italic languages Umbrian and Paelignian, and Oldindian.³⁶³ Unfortunately for Durkheim’s claim as to the universality of the *sacred / profane* opposition, the Indo-European root **dhēs-*, **dhəs-* has no recorded reflexes in other language phyla, nor can it be derived from proto-forms of higher levels, such as Eurasiatic let alone **Borean*; it is thus fairly isolated.

However, the standard Proto-Indo-European root for ‘god, heaven’ is **deiw-*, **dyew-*, similar but certainly not identical to **dhēs-*, **dhəs-*. The latter root has reflexes in most Indo-European languages including Hittite, Oldindian, Avestan, Oldgreek, Slavic, Baltic, Germanic (with the relatively obscure **fiw-a m*, mainly surviving in today’s English Tuesday, Dutch *dinsdag*, German *Dienstag*, etc.), Latin, other Italic languages, and Celtic. Along this linguistic trail, certainly no claim of universality could ever be substantiated.

Meanwhile English *sacred*, French *sacré* derive from a Proto-Indo-European root **sak(’)*, *sacred* (Pokorny 1959-1969: II, 448), with reflexes in Hittite (Friedrich 1932: 176), Tokharian (Adams 1999: 680), Germanic, Latin (which is the source of the English and French reflexes), and other Italic languages. As suggested by V. Glumov,³⁶⁴ the Indo-European root derives from Eurasiatic: **svkV* (~ š-) ‘*sacred* place, luck’, with (among all Eurasiatic phyla as listed above) reflexes only in Altaic and Indo-European. Clearly there is not one common root underlying many of most of the world’s languages, and conveying the semantics of *sacred*.³⁶⁵ Yet those semantics are more widespread than just Proto-Eurasiatic: **svkV* (~ š-) alone.

³⁶³ In Old Indian, **dhīṣṇya-* appears as ‘mindful, attentive, benevolent and liberal’ – everything for which the cartoon tycoon Walt Disney (<??? **dhīṣṇya-* !) could have been famous.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Starostin *et al.* 2003; Glumov is one of the collaborators of that publication.

³⁶⁵ #53. *ON GLOBAL ETYMOLOGIES*. My formulation here seems ridiculous, for who would ever expect common roots cropping up in all or most languages of the world? Not one scholarly specialist working within a modernist framework. That is why the discovery for many dozens of ‘Global Etymologies’ by Bengtson & Ruhlen 1994 has been so counter-paradigmatic. I discovered another such global etymology in the ‘Earth / Human / Bottom’ complex referred to above (see Appendix IV, below). But nothing prepared me for the shock when, in my global exploration of leopard-skin symbolism, I found that in practically all macrophyla of the world the scatter pattern that is characteristic of the leopard skin, is designated by a common root which ascends all the way to **Borean* and probably even higher (Kammerzell 1994; van Binsbergen 2004a, in press (d); van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 412 *f.*, and Appendix III at the end of the present book.

In Indo-European, we could point to the proto-forms as listed in the following Table.

<p>Indo-European *alk- ('sacred place, sanctuary, idol(s)', with reflexes in Baltic and Germanic; Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 90), which has no Eurasianic proto-root;</p> <p>Indo-European *tem- ('sacred place', with reflexes in Old Greek – notably the well-known expression τέμενος temenos for temple precinct – , and the seminal Latin templum – especially for the observation space in the sky which the bird augur has delineated with his staff – Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 721 f.)</p> <p>Indo-European *k'wen-, 'holy' (with reflexes in Avestan, Slavic, Baltic and Germanic; Pokorny 1959-1969: II, 525 f.)</p> <p>Indo-European *noib(h)-, 'good, holy', with reflexes in Old Persian and New Persian, 'schön, gut', displaying the sacred semantics only in Celtic *noib- > Old Irish nōib 'heilig' (Pokorny 1959-1969: II, 321)</p> <p>Indo-European *weik-, 'to choose, to sacrifice, to conjure' (< Eurasianic *wVjkV, 'straight', with reflexes in Indo-European, Uralic, Kartvelian; References: Illich-Svitych 1967: 358; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 2468 , cf. *woykv 'straight, even') displays the specific sacred semantics of 'holy, consecrate' mainly in Germanic: Proto-Germanic: *wíxa-z/*wígá-z, *wíxia-; *wíxan- vb., *wíxian-/*wígán- vb., *wíxēn- vb.; *wikkēn, for which the following reflexes are all to be considered as illuminating (notably of the way in which this root was pressed into service in the process of the Christianisation of North-western Europe in the second half of the 1st mill. CE): Gothic: wīh-s (a) 'holy'; wīhan wk. 'consecrate', *wīhnan wk. 'be hallowed'; Old Norse: vē n. 'heiliger Ort; Gerichtsstätte', vígja wk. 'weihe'; Norwegian: vigja vb.; Swedish: viga vb.; Danish: vie vb.; Old English: wēoh, wīg m. 'Götterbild'; wicca m. 'Zauberer',³⁶⁶ wicce 'Zauberin'; wigol 'zum Wahrsagen gehörig', wíglan 'wahrsahge'; Old Frisian: wīa, wīga 'weihe'; Old Saxon: wīh- 'heilig', wīh m. 'Tempel', wīhian 'weihe'; Middle Dutch: wīden, wīen; Dutch: wijden; Wierook; Old Franconian: wīun; Middle Low German: wīen, wīge; wickelen 'wahrsagen'; Old High German: wīh (8th c.), { wīhi } 'heilig'; wīhen (8th c.); Middle High German: wīhen, wīen, wīchen wk. 'weihe, kirchlich segnen, einsegnen'; diu wīhe nacht; wīch (-h-) adj. 'heilig'; German: Weihnachten; weihe Indo-European *dhwor- / *dwer- (almost merged with *dhwer- < *durV 'hole' q.v.), 'door, gate, court' (Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 870 f., II, 160), which in Indo-European does not have the connotation of <i>sacred</i>, but does have such a connotation in some of the other Eurasianic languages:</p> <p>Altaic *t'Ōr[e] , 'post, pole, tower'; cf. Poppe 1960: 14, 79; Dravidian: *tōr-, Dolgopolsky n.d.: 570) in which cognate reflexes are found, notably Proto-Tungus-Manchu: *turu 'pole, mast; sacred pole, place' (Tsintsius <i>et al.</i>, 1975-1977: 2, 221; some forms were possibly influenced by Mongolian tura < Turkic tura, but on the whole loan is hardly acceptable, see Doerfer 1985: 38).</p> <p>These may all be considered reflexes of Eurasianic *dwVrV 'court, enclosure', and ultimately of *Borean (...): *TVRV, 'enclosure, yard', with reflexes not only in Eurasianic but also in Afroasiatic: *dar- (e.g. dār, 'house', in modern Arabic), and Sinocaucasian: Northcaucasian *HdūrV 'plot of land, yard, enclosure' (Dolgopolsky n.d.: 570.) Altaic Evenki > Dolganic turū 'sacred pole' (see Stachowski 1993: 233').</p>
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Table 9.7. *Proto-forms with *sacred* semantics in Indo-European and other phyla

From the fact that the semantics *sacred* only appears low and sporadically in the derivational tree and does not attach to the higher level proto-forms, one gets the (thoroughly Durkheimian!) impression that the first connotation of this root is an architectural item as symbol of the community, to which only secondarily and occasionally the *sacred* semantics is superimposed. That the pole appears as an epiphany of the *sacred* is certainly not limited to the Altaic phylum < Eurasianic macrophylum: ever since the dramatic Separation of Heaven and Earth has imposed itself as the central mythological theme of Anatomically Modern Humans in the Upper Palaeo-


³⁶⁶ We see here that the original semantics lack the distinction as made by North Atlantic academics around 1900 CE (including Durkheim), between *magic* as a suspect, will-driven, unholy, manipulative practice, on the one hand, and the *divine*, on the other hand. The *magician* / *Zauberer* / *tovenaar* is essentially a person associated with the divine, if not simply divine in her or his own right.

lithic (considered by the historic actors to have had largely detrimental effects on the condition of humanity) posts, poles, trees, towers, mountains have signified attempts to re-establish the connection between Heaven and Earth; for a treatment of this theme in the context of African mythology, cf. van Binsbergen 2010a.

A similar case occurs with Indo-European: *polə-. Along with Altaic, Uralic and Dravidian; Indo-European is one of the Eurasiatic phyla that display³⁶⁷ reflexes of Eurasiatic: *palVHV, 'settlement', ultimately *Borean (...): *PVLV, 'settlement', with reflexes in Eurasiatic but also in Sinocaucasian and Austric (Peiros 1989). Eurasiatic: *palVHV, 'settlement', takes on *sacred* semantics only in some Dravidian reflexes, notably Proto-Nilgiri: *pal-i 'sacred dairy, matrilineal sib, Badaga³⁶⁸ house'; and Tamil: *palli 'hamlet, herdsman's village, hermitage, temple (esp. of Buddhists and Jains), palace, workshop, sleeping place, school, room'; Malayalam: *palli 'hut, small settlement of jungle tribes, public building, place of worship for Buddhists or foreigners, mosque, royal couch'; Tulu: *pall 'mosque'. Again, the *sacred* semantics appears to be secondarily imposed upon a primary semantics in terms of community / production site.

A similar case is Proto-Indo-European: *sel- (cf. also *st[e]- 2725), with along with the cognate proto-forms in Altaic, Uralic, and Dravidian derives from Eurasiatic: *CoIV, 'steppe, valley, meadow' – ultimately from *Borean CVLV 'steppe, valley, meadow', with reflexes not only in Eurasiatic but also in Sinocaucasian. Here the *sacred* semantics only emerge in Proto-Northdravidian: *cāl-ā 'grove, sacred grove' (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 2891).

Table 9.8. From spatial semantics to sacred semantics in Indo-European and other Eurasiatic phyla – aspects of the sacralisation of space

The emergence of a *sacred* semantics low in the derivational tree, and sporadically, can also be seen in other instances, e.g. Eurasiatic: *ʒalwV 'to bind', with reflexes in Altaic, Uralic, Kartvelian and Chukcheekamchatkan, and with equally neutral semantics in Altaic (Proto-Altaic: *ʒǎlo, 'to fasten, bind, hang'; cf. Doerfer 1985: 23), but acquiring *sacred* connotations in Proto-Turkic: *jala-, '1 *sacred* band 2 flag 3 tie, strap'³⁶⁹ We hit here on the very widespread minimal ritual (found all over Eurasia, North Africa, and South East Asia) of acknowledging the *sacred* by binding a rag or shred of textile on a tree branch; the cover of this book illustrates this custom, generally known as the Rag Tree. Its oldest attestation is perhaps the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic sign for 'deity': a flag on a pole:  (Gardiner 1994: Ro8). We are reminded that 'binding' is one of the oldest manifestations of the *sacred*³⁷⁰ and particularly of magic.

Clearly, *sacred* semantics are far from limited to the Indo-European realm, and are also found, for instance, in the other phyla within the Eurasiatic macrophy-

³⁶⁷ Illich-Svitych 1967: 356, 1976: 3, 89-93, Tyler 147; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1699 *palV[G]V 'settlement, home, wall' (+ some Eastcushitic).

³⁶⁸ The Badaga are an ethnic group in the Nilgiri Hills, Western Tamil Nadu, India.

³⁶⁹ Sewortyan *et al.* 1974-2000:4, 99-100, Räsänen 1969: 181; Turkic *jala-gu, *jala-ga and *jala-ma seem to be derived from a common root, thus it is most probable that Mongolian *žalama* 'sacred strips' and *žalaya* 'tassel, thick silk thread' are borrowed from Turkic and not vice versa.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Dolgopolsky 1998: 38, item 28, citing a Nostratic root that is probably also the etymon of common Bantu *nganga*, 'healer, sorcerer'.

lum. Although we are inevitably dependent upon the perceptions, cultural orientations, self-evidences and idiosyncrasies of the original lexicographers who provided the data for our database, the data do suggest that it is not just under the ethnocentric influence of North Atlantic Judaeo-Christian thought that the *sacred* semantics have been recorded in comparative linguistics:

From Proto-Altaic we have the form **üdu*, 'wonder, supernatural',³⁷¹ with reflexes in Proto-Turkic **iduk*, *sacred* (Clauson 1972: 46, Sewortyan et al 1974-2000: 1, 649-650, Yegorov) 1964: 80, Fedotov 1996: 199, Doerfer 1963-1967: 230-231 (most sources give a dubious inner Turkic derivation < **id*- 'to send', based on the old gloss in the *Dictionary of Maḥmūd Kāšyārī*, cf. Clauson 1972 – most probably a folk etymology), but also in Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu, and Japanese (**i* / **ju*, 'sacred, purified', Martin 1987: 420). Ozawa 1968, 52-53, 177-181.

Despite Scherbak 1997: 120, not a borrowing in Mongolian < Turkic. The Middlejapanese **itiko* 'virgin consecrated to a deity, sorceress' (with a later form **itako id.*), which Miller (1985: 148) compares directly with the Mongolian form, should be treated as a secondary distortion of **i-tu-kua* (lit.) 'sacred girl'.

Proto-Altaic: **maji*, 'protecting spirit' (with reflexes in Turkic, Tungus-Manchu and Japanese; Illich-Svitych 1976: 3, 51 < Eurasianic: **majV*, 'to deceive, bewitch (?)', with reflexes in Indo-European, Altaic and Dravidian (Illich-Svitych 1976: 3, 35f.). An interesting common Altaic religious term (although within Turkic it is rather hard to distinguish from **bāj* 'rich' < **bēžu* q. v.'). The Proto-Altaic root has reflexes in Proto-Turkic: **baj* (~ -*ñ*) with richly textured semantics: '1 holy 2 God 3 true, reliable, honest', and with reflexes that suggest (just like the above Eurasianic semantics of the higher-level root **majV*) the great antiquity of this root, immanentist, and prior to the impact of such world religions as Islam, Christianity and Buddhism: Karakhanid: *bajat* 2 (Clauson 1972) *bajiq* (...) 3; Turkish: *bajat* 2, *bajiq* (dial.) 3; Middle Turkic: *bajat* 2 (Velyaminov-Zernov 1868; Sanglax 1960); Oyrat: *baj-lu* 1, *maj-* 'first part in a number of theonyms', *baj terek* 'world tree'; Yakut: *bajanaj* 'name of a God'; Kirghiz: *baj terek* 'protection, advocacy'; Clauson 1972: 385. See Räsänen 1969: 56-57 (for derivatives), Doerfer 1963-1967: 2, 379. The root should be probably distinguished from **bāj* 'rich' (v. sub **bēžu*). An unattested Tuva source > Russian dialect (Tuva) *bajbá* 'spirit of hunting luck', see Anikin 2000: 109. Yakutic > Russian (Yakutic) *bajanaj*, see Anikin 2000: 125-126.

The above argument as to the non-Judaeo-Christian background of the *sacred* semantic, applies again to Proto-Altaic: **bögé* 'wizard, holy', with reflexes in Turkic, Mongolian (**bogda*, 'holy, sacred'; (...)) Todayeva 1982: 122; Ramstedt 1935: 49), Tungus-Manchu, and Japanese.

From another Eurasianic phylum, Proto-Kartvelian, we have **qwam-*, 'sacred object', which in the constitutive language Megrel takes the semantics 'cultic festival, shrine',³⁷² and in Svan 'shrine, thanksgiving' (Klimov 1998: 564).

From Proto-Dravidian: **pāz-*, 'a kind of sacral building and nearby territory [sacred precinct]', which partly retains its sacred semantics in Tamil (where it means 'temple, hermitage', among other more secular meanings), but has exclusively secular meanings in Kannada and Proto-Nilgiri. (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 4112)

From another branch of Dravidian, Proto-Kuikui: **supari* (**c-*), 'holy; vowed, devoted; Kui: *supari*; Number in Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 2671

The same pattern (sacred semantics occasionally emerging relatively low in the derivational tree amidst

³⁷¹ It is somewhat puzzling to encounter this semantics in proto-Altaic, in a socio-political context which probably, dating from 7 to 8 ka BP (Starostin et al. 2003; Kuzmina 2007; Anonymous, 'Altaic languages') and therefore pre-state and pre-writing, had only a very low level of logocentricity. The Altaic phylum however has been argued to display a considerable level of intra-area transmission in more recent millennia, so the 'wonder. supernatural' semantics may in fact be much more recent and have a Bronze Age / logocentric background.

³⁷² Again there is a strongly Durkheimian suggestion in the fact that group palladium, group, and festival may all contribute to the emerging notion of sacredness, in these semantics.

predominantly secular cognates)³⁷³ for Proto-Southdravidian: *nāḍ-, 'country, village', < Proto-Dravidian: *nāḍ-, 'village', < Eurasianic: *nadV 'group, village' (with reflexes in Kartvelian and Dravidian; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1531 *NAdV '(the whole) clan' (+ Arabic), with the sacred variants in Proto-Nilgiri: *nāḍ-, 'sacred place', in Kota nār (obl. nāt-) 'country, settled area (opposite to jungle), place where dead go', and in Toda: nōḍ (obl. nōḍ-) 'sacred place, dairy complex which is a god' (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 3638)

Table 9.9. *Sacred* semantics in various Eurasianic phyla without ascent all the way to *Borean

The above amounts to a fairly exhaustive exploration of the *sacred* semantics throughout the Eurasianic macrophylum. Somewhat to my surprise, attestations of these semantics in the other macrophyla than Eurasianic are few and far between.

That *sacred* semantics occasionally emerge amidst predominantly secular cognates – as we have seen above for some Dravidian cases, still within Eurasianic), is also found outside Eurasianic, e.g. in Proto-Afroasiatic:

Proto-Afroasiatic: *bVq(w)-, 'bull, antelope', with neutral reflexes in Berber, Westchadic, Eastchadic, and Mogogodo (Yaaku), but with the sacred semantics only emerging in Egyptian: bh_ 'sacred bull'

Table 9.10. A case of the emergence of sacred semantics in Afroasiatic

The last case seems to be somewhat echoed in Proto-Afroasiatic: *biʔVy-, 'snake', taking on the semantics 'holy serpent' in Old Egyptian by3; but the only cognate reflex cited is Centralchadic: *biʔVy- 'python' (which in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa is a *sacred* animal in its own right – while Comparative Mythology suggests the python-like Rainbow Serpent this to be one of the oldest mythical representations of humankind, referred to *passim* in the present book; also cf. van Binsbergen 2011 and extensive references cited there); *Tower of Babel* warns of scarce data in this case.

The *sacred* connotations of the celestial are known from many cultures and are encoded in the mythology of the Separation of Heaven and Earth which in my opinion has been dominant among Anatomically Modern Humans ever since the Upper Palaeolithic.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ This situation also might obtain, but most doubtfully so, in the case of Proto-Khoekhoe: *cana (*th-) 'song (*sacred* / *profane*)', of the Khoisan macrophylum, today confined to minority expressions in Southern and East Africa. *Tower of Babel* gives one reflex, from the Nama language: tsana-s (Haacke 1998: 42; Rust 1969: 379). Haacke is a modern author whose text has not been available to me. Rust is a reprint of Krönlein 1889, who has on p. 240 ||nāi-tsanas, 'der Gesang, das Lied' ['song'], without the slightest reference to sacred or profane nature of the song in question. This particular Khoisan root appears to have no bearing on the question of *sacred* / *profane*. The user of *Tower of Babel* is largely dependent on the limitations and pitfalls of the coding and editing of the original data into the data base, and sometimes this is confusing, even deceptive.

³⁷⁴ Such sacred connotations of the celestial seem to be brought out, e.g., in the Proto-Khmer reflex *rah, *3rah, 'be bright, shiny; be clean; *brah 'celestial or holy body' < Old Khmer *wrah, but the evidence is very slight, since Oldkhmer: *3əmrah merely means 'to clean, cl[ea]nse' (...), while the overarching Austroasiatic etymology is said to derive from Proto-Austroasiatic: *rVh, 'shine' (with reflexes listed only for Proto-Katuic and Khmer). As we have seen, perhaps as a sign of Sunda influence in Western Eurasia, perhaps as a coincidence, several central names in the Ancient Egyptian tradition could be given an Austric etymology; Proto-Austroasiatic: *rVh, 'shine' could be the etymon of the Ancient Egyptian theonym Ra^c, 'Sun'. Cf. van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 370f., Table 28.4.

Borderline cases are those in which a plant is considered *sacred* and conveys its sacrality to objects made of it and situations in which it is used, e.g. the *sacred* bamboo species ‘ghupiri’ (*Cephalostachyum capitatum*)³⁷⁵ which the East Himalayan³⁷⁶ speaking Kirāntīs are said not to be allowed to cultivate, and from which *sacred* implements and attributes of the Dumi shaman (Nepali: dhāmī) are made;

‘ghupiri hupiri all species of bamboo, various bamboo types; cf. *hibu, *hibuna:m, *hupiri.’

in the same vein, in a way reminiscent of prehistoric shamanic continuities, *hibuna stands for

‘*Arundinaria falcata*, sacred grassy shrub of the *Gramineae* [grasses – WvB] family from which the two wands are made which the shaman uses to strike the branches from the *isilimbhu* oracle 2) the shaman’s wand.’ (‘the tree *Castanopsis tribuloides* of the family *Fagaceae* [beeches and oaks – WvB] , sacred tree of the Dumi shamanist oracle’.)

A similar situation obtains, in the same Dumi branch of Nepali, for *khøre

‘1) gourd used as a sacred vessel for an imma or a:rkī based potion and wielded by the shaman as a rattle and as a potion-flask 2) sacred wooden offeratory vessel for *a:rkī ‘millet brandy’; here the comments also refer to: Dumi *solotim, ‘the sacred gourd of the shaman which he fills with a millet beer potion to be imbibed and to be used in anointing’.

We should however be aware that with these languages we are no longer at the Upper Palaeolithic level but in the vicinity of a rather recent world religion.

After this, in more than one sense, exhaustive presentation of the *Tower of Babel* data on the global distribution of the *sacred* semantics, it is time for an intermediate conclusion, which (with all the methodological reservations formulated above) would *certainly not be favourable for Durkheim’s universality claim*. At the lexical level in as far as the semantics are properly recorded in the *Tower of Babel* database, the *sacred* semantics are mainly attested in the Eurasiatic macrophyllum, and then still primarily in Indo-European. Attestations in other macrophylla are scattered and late, and may well be due to the influence of world religions in historical times. Far from being perennial and universal, the concept of the *sacred* appears to be considerably more recent than *Borean times. Reticently using our periodisation of the disintegration of *Borean (Fig. 8.16), the concept of the *sacred* as a word appears to date from no earlier than roughly 7 ka BP!

³⁷⁵ A bamboo-like plant from Northern South Asia. The Nepali name according to *Tower of Babel*, *phurkedhōt*, *phurkeghā?*, appears to be a ‘leopard’ word suggestive of granulation (see Appendix III of the present book), and indeed, on photographs the plant stem appears to consist of segments that are intermittently green or brownish / blueish, in other words, variegated / checkered.

³⁷⁶ A branch of Dumi < Sinotibetan.

9.7. Evidence for the sacralisation of space / of the kin group, in *Borean?

In his approach, Durkheim lays excessive emphasis on the group aspect of the religious, which allegedly shapes the local constituency (especially the clan) into 'a congregation / church'. This makes us expect that for those *Borean words denoting social collectivities a religious dimension becomes manifest. This expectation, however, is not quite borne out.

One such root is **Borean *PVRV, 'assemble, gather, assemble', with reflexes in Eurasiatic (*pVrV: 'buy, assemble'), and (with the semantics 'full') in Afroasiatic (*pVhVr; ?here also Berber *ufur 'full?'), and Austric (? Proto-Austroasiatic (*b(?)i:r / *p[ir]); none of the recorded reflexes has a manifest religious dimension.

Another social collectivity is evoked in *Borean *HVRV, 'clan member', but *none* of its reflexes in the macrophyla Eurasiatic (including Indo-European, whence the frequently used and – since Nazist times – notorious, term 'Aryan'), Afroasiatic and Sinocaucasian suggests that this human collectivity ever rises above the level of a secular, mundane assembly notably a (matrilateral or affinal) kin group (or its individual members), and approaches something like a sacred or sacralised group – even though in Proto-Sinocaucasian: *ʔwəhri (~ -e), 'army; enemy' the altering collective dimension prevails.³⁷⁷

Table 9.11. Negative evidence concerning the sacralisation of the kin group in *Borean

beyond Ego	
*Borean root	semantics
*MVKV	'person, relative'
*LV	'we'
*PV	'we'
*TV	'we'
*WV	'we, I' [1st p. pronoun]
*PVRV	'gather, assemble'
*CVPV	'people, army'
*HVRV	'clan member'
*PVRV	'seed, ki'n
*HVLV	'settlement' (< *root, seed?)
blood as an expression for family, kin, descent group	
*CVMV	'blood'
*KVNv	'blood'
*PVLV	'blood'
*PVRV	'blood'
*PVHV	'blood vessel'
*CVHV	'blood, breath'
*HVNV	'blood, breath'
*KVRV	'blood, red'
*CVNV	'blood, spirit'
*WVRV	'blood; red'
CVLV	'blood, flesh, blood'
TVLV	'blood, meat, blood'
belly, womb, stomach as expressions for descent groups, especially matrilineal ones	

³⁷⁷ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 67; Bengtson & Ruhlen 1994: 15 *ar ((...) various differences in Sinocaucasian and Nostratic); Dolgopolsky n.d.: 67 *ʔarV; 781 *he(y)r[E] 'male' (hardly separatable) (in [Entry] 1881 *q[ä]rV 'ox' Dravidian, is compared with Kartvelian *qar- 'bull, ox' and some East-cushitic). Tischler 53-55 is doubtful); Pokorny 1959-1969: I 80; Starostin 1991: 34, Dumézil 1971: 31; Ramstedt 1935: 123, Vladimirtsov 1929: 324, Poppe 1960: 79, 106; Tsintsius 1972a: 45-49; Illich-Svitych 1976: 1, 247, Starostin 1991: 54, 283. A well known Turkic-Mongolian isogloss. Borrowing in Mongolian from Turkic (see Doerfer 1963-1967: 2, 179, Sherbak 1997: 115) is quite improbable because of the final vowel. Cf. *jōre.

*PVNKV	'belly'
*WVNCV	'belly'
*KVNv	'belly, heart'
*KVTv	'belly, intestines'
*PVHV	'belly, intestines'
*KVLV	'belly, liver'
*KVRPV	'belly, stomach'
dwelling and their parts / the house as indication of household, family group	
*HVLKV	'house'
*HVTv	'house'
*PVRV	'house'
*KVMV	'house, village'
*LVNV	'roof, cover'
*MVRV	'roof, house'
*KVNv	'yard, building'
*PVLV	'settlement'
*HVLV	'settlement' (< *root, seed?)

Table 9.12. The *Borean lexicon of social groups and their physical abodes

One common aspect of religion is the *sacralisation of space*, so that in the landscape boundaries are imposed within which the *sacred* as locally defined and venerated is subjectively more intensely present for the local participants, than outside these boundaries. This sums up the idea of a *shrine* or *sanctuary*. The idea of the 'sacred precinct' is almost globally applied in the immediate-surroundings of temples, sources, conspicuous trees, rocks, and other cult places, often even including (like in the North African peasant world view; van Binsbergen 1971a / forthcoming (b)) the human dwelling. The principal *Borean term for 'enclosure' is *KVRTV, with reflexes in Eurasiatic and Sinocaucasian. It generally retains the semantics 'enclosure' throughout its reflexes; in Sinotibetan this is specifically developed into 'door or space in front of the house', while also in Eurasiatic the semantics may become more specific while remaining spiritually neutral and seemingly irrelevant: 'court, yard' in Indoeuropean,³⁷⁸ 'door, enclosure' in Uralic, and 'paddy field' in Dravidian. The same constancy of reflex semantics, without any indication that a specific religious aspect might already be manifest in *Borean, is found among the other *Borean terms for 'enclosure, yard': *KVRV, *WVCV, *KVNTV and *TVRV.³⁷⁹ Close to the semantics 'shrine' also seems to be *Borean PVMV, 'mound, earth', in which we could suspect the basic function of the shrine, notably reconnecting Earth and Sky to restore their cosmogonic Separation (NarCom 1).

Neither do we find any compelling linguistic evidence of the sacralisation of the kin group at the *Borean level. In principle, not only kin groups but also kinship roles may be imbued with sacrality, especially in connection with seniority and authority. *Borean has two terms for elder relative: *HVTv (spec. male, father), and *HVKV (general). *HVTv has reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian (notably Northcaucasian *dājV, 'father / other'), Amerind (misc.) and African (misc.); in the latter language cluster, it follows a

³⁷⁸ Cf. Dolgopolsky n.d.: 677 *gärdV 'encircle, surround, fence' (Indoeuropean + Semitic?).

³⁷⁹ I do not count *Borean *CVLV here 'fence, fish trap', since it is clearly confined to fishing as a mode of production, and not the kind of socially relevant enclosure discussed here.

fairly common productive rule (van Binsbergen in press (c)) by which Nigercongo > Bantu words often derive from *Borean: the *Borean root is cut in half, and the result reduplicated, so *HVTV (*Borean) > *TV > *TVT (Nigercongo; cf. Nkoya *tate*, ‘father’; but cf. -*tutu*, ‘infant’ instead of ‘father’) – or perhaps via the very similar Austric: **tá*, ‘father’; we should remember that Austric clusters with Nigercongo in the earlier millennia of the disintegration of *Borean). A religious aspect is not conspicuous in any of the later reflexes, in all these nearly globally distributed macrophyla, yet in Afroasiatic the semantics is expanded to include ‘chief, monarch, prince’ (notably in Oldegyptian), and as we shall see, in many *Borean reflexes an identification occurs between royalty and divinity; and between palace and temple / shrine.

semantics	*Borean	reflexes in	inspection of descendant reflexes suggests the following religiously relevant aspects
‘settlement’	*PVLV	Eurasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Austric	Indoeuropean ‘wall, stronghold’; Proto-Austronesian ‘public building, guest house’ (which on comparative grounds may have diffuse <i>sacred</i> connotations, of sanctuary etc.)
‘settlement (< *root, seed?)’	*HVLV	Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic (‘tent, hut, family’), Sinocaucasian (‘root, seed, kin; convent’)	later, limited
‘village, house’	*KVTV	Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic (‘wall, house’), Sinocaucasian (‘way, road, passage’)	none
‘village, house, village’	*KVMV	Eurasiatic (incl. Uralic: ‘pantry’), Sinocaucasian	to a very limited and implied extent
‘yard, building’	*KVVV	Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Austric	none
‘yard, enclosure, yard’	*TVRV	Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic (‘house, granary’), Sinocaucasian	to a limited implied extent

Table 9.13. Further aspects of the possible sacralisation of space in *Borean

Also for another *Borean term for kin group, ‘family, to give birth’ (KVMV) the reflexes in the two macrophyla in which it occurs (Eurasiatic and Afroasiatic) show no indications of an emerging religious aspect. In some reflexes it takes the specific semantics ‘husband’, with emphasis on the affinal link created through marriage.³⁸⁰ Thus the *Borean lexicon strengthens a suspicion I had already formed on the basis of the universality of marriage as an institution (cf. Brown 1991): marriage belongs to Pandora’s Box, in other words was already a common social institution in Africa before the Out-of-Africa Exodus, and was thus transmitted to the other continents very early on (from 60-80 ka BP). Yet again no explicit suggestions of sacrality appears here in the reflexes. Such is also the case with *Borean *KVLV, ‘female in-law’,³⁸¹ which according to the Russian linguist Dolgopolsky (n.d.) specifically means: ‘woman of the opposite moiety’ – reviving the Morgani scheme and terminology (cf. Morgan 1870 / 1871) which, originating in the study of the North-eastern North American Iroquois, has had such an

³⁸⁰ Also cf. *Borean *LVSV, ‘husband’.

³⁸¹ Illich-Svitych 1976: 1, 295, 1967: 363; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 862.

impact on Friedrich Engels's approach to kinship (Engels 1976 / 1884), and thus became canonised in Marxist / Soviet scholarship.

Although the evidence is not entirely conclusive, I am afraid we must come to the conclusion that the *Borean lexicon only sporadically and unsystematically contains indications of such sacralisation of space and of the kin group as we would expect, much more massively, on the basis of Durkheim's theory.

Unfortunately the space, most of the data, and the stamina, are lacking to allow us to extend the present exploration of the possible sacralisation of space, into one relating to time; even though admittedly in many cultures time and the calendar tend to be subjected to sacralisation.

9.8. Exploring the semantics of 'purity' / 'dirtiness', in prehistoric lexicons

Another dimension of Durkheim's *sacred* is 'purity', especially discussed³⁸² in connection with the funerary rites of the Australians. The 'clean / pure' semantics is very widespread, and often has *Borean antecedents:

*Borean (...): *CVNV, 'clean, with extremely widespread reflexes in Sinocaucasian (notably: *Há3Ěŋ (e.g. Proto-Sinotibetan: *chĕŋ, 'clean, clear', > , Chinese: 清 *chen clear, pure, bright; (...)³⁸³ Peiros & Starostin n.d.: 213; and further in Northcaucasian, Yenisseian, Burushaski and Basque) and also in Austric: Proto-Austroasiatic *cVŋ 'clean', Proto-Austronesian *lasaŋ 'bare, bald', *tilanzaŋ 'naked'.

or e.g. *Borean (...): *CVKV, 'white', with reflexes in Eurasiatic (*swVĶV (~ c'w-, ĉ'w-, 'white, clean' > Altaic, and Dravidian as suggested by V. Glumov (...), Afroasiatic: *CVĶ-, Sinocaucasian: *[š]á[k]wV, and Amerind (misc.): *sik'a 'blue, green' (?) (Ruhlen n.d.: 75) (...); ? *çik'a 'wash' (Ruhlen n.d.: 819) (...) (...)

or e.g. Proto-Indo-European: *k[e]jubh-, 'beautiful, clean', with semantically neutral reflexes in Old Indian (*śóbhate 'to beautify, adorn; look beautiful, shine, be bright, splendid', *śobha-, *śobhaná-, *śubha-, *śubhrá- 'radiant, shining, splendid, beautiful'), but taking on sacred connotations in Armenian surb 'rein, heilig', *srbem 'reinige, heilige' (Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 368)

or e.g. Proto-Indo-European: *pōk'- / *pēk'-, 'to clean, to adorn', (with reflexes in Baltic and Germanic (Pokorny 1959-1969: II, 16), and deriving from a nearly global root *Borean (...): *PVĶV, 'to rub, scratch', with semantically neutral reflexes in Eurasiatic: *plĶV, 'to polish, rub' (in Indo-European, Altaic, Kartvelian and Dravidian; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1674, 1680, 1683), Afroasiatic: *PVĥVĶ-, Sinocaucasian: *bVxV (~ -xg-, -xq-), and even African (misc.): Bantu *-

³⁸² With its counterpart, 'impurity', *l'impur, le sacré impur*, e.g. Durkheim 1912 / 1960 / 1990: 431, 442n, 585, 595.

³⁸³ Clearly, I am extremely indebted to the inconceivable efforts that have gone into the *Tower of Babel* database, and I have acknowledged this debt throughout this book. However, true to the Biblical Confusion of Tongues from which the project derives its name (*Genesis 11*), the user is confronted with tantalising inconsistencies, omissions and gaps in *Tower of Babel's* use of acronyms for the names of authors and of languages, and its supply of bibliographical data. I have given myself great pains to solve these puzzles on my own account but did not always succeed; in those cases the etymological tables show: (...), i.e. at this point an acronym or author's name could not be expanded or clarified. In other cases I may have picked the wrong solution, for which I apologise.

pàk- 'to rub' (Dolgopolsky n.d.: D 1680, 1683).

or e.g. *Borean (...): *PVLV, 'shine, burn (several roots?)', with reflexes in Eurasianic: *belV; Afroasiatic: *bVIVg- / *bVIVk-; Austric: Proto-Austronesian *balar 'pale, albino', *balaR 'pale, white'; Amerind (misc.): *pali 'sun, shine' (Ruhlen n.d.: 705) (...); *pole 'white' (Ruhlen n.d.: 843) (...); African (misc.): Bantu *-bád- 'shine'; **Reference: Illich-Svitych 1967: 363; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 204; in Dolgopolsky n.d.: 207 (*bál[X]V 'boil, cook' a non-existent Altaic root is compared with Cushitic *bil- 'boil' which may also be related somehow); Bengtson & Ruhlen 1994: *bel (...); Guthrie 1967-1971 [indexes]: 17.**

or Proto-Sinotibetan: *th(r)Vŋ (~ dh-), 'clear, pure', with reflexes in Chinese (notably 澄 *dhrəŋ, 'limpid, clear', Karlgren code: 0883 m), Tibetan and Burmese.

or, with a clearly spiritual semantics, in Dumi, one of the branches of Kiranti < Sinotibetan: *pha:kNsin 'scrape, scrape around, rub off, with sam 'soul', said of mourners observing purifying rituals) 'to become cleansed with the tears of mourning, to cleanse one's soul after the death of a loved one through the observance of the mourning rituals'

or, with the 'clean' semantic emerging in only explicitly in Proto-Austronesian: *Borean (...): *CVVV, 'liquid', Eurasianic: *śVwV, Afroasiatic: *hVsaw-/*hVsay-, Sinocaucasian: ?ST *śūH 'wash', Austric: Proto-Austroasiatic *suaH 'wet, dip in' (but the 'clean' semantics also emerges in the Thai-Kadai i.e. Siamese reflex of Austroasiatic: Li Fangkuei 1977: 154), Proto-Austronesian *hisuq 'clean, wash, scrub, scour', *besaq 'wet, wash', Amerind (misc.): ? *si 'water' (Ruhlen n.d.: 825) (...)? cf. also *iči 'water' Ruhlen n.d.: 832) (...), African (misc.): Bantu *-cùp- 'pour' or *-cùb- 'urinate'. Notes: Sinotibetan may be < Austric, **Illich-Svitych 1967: 341, Dolgopolsky n.d.: 2139, 2141.**

Table 9.14. Aspects of the semantics of 'purity' in *Borean and constituent macrophyla

However, since we cannot automatically consider 'clean' to be identical with *sacred*, and since 'clean' semantics are likely to occur in nearly every language, we will have to discontinue our further explorations in this direction here.

The opposite of 'clean / pure' is 'dirty, polluted, soiled', and that too could be implied in the Durkheimian *sacred*. Comparative ethnography indicates that in the construction of a cosmology, notions of purity, pollution, boundaries and prohibitions / taboo tend to play a great role (Douglas 1966). This is also acknowledged by Durkheim, but by no means given the central place accorded by him to *sacred / profane*. 'Purity' is not explicitly treated in the recording of *Borean semantics, but 'clean, cleanliness' is, under *Borean *CVNV, with reflexes in both Sinotibetan and Austric. On the 'dirty' side, we have, in *Borean, the rich information contained in the following Table 9.15:

semantics	*Borean	reflexes in	inspection of lower-level reflexes suggests the following religiously relevant aspects
'dirt'	*CVRV	Eurasianic (Indo-European, Altaic, Uralic, Dravidian); Afroasiatic; Sinocaucasian; Austric (Proto-Austronesian)	material stains (earth, sand, esp. Sinocaucasian), occasionally also defecation (Dolgopolsky n.d.: 318), no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'dirt'	*KVTV	Eurasianic (Indo-European, Altaic, Dravidian); Sinocaucasian	filthy and disgusting, no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'dirt'	*LVKV	Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Au	mainly suggestion of liquid dirt, mud; in Sinocaucasian ashes; no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'dirt, ashes, dirt'	*PVLV	Eurasianic (ashes), Sinocaucasian (manure), Amerind (ashes)	no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'dirt, dust, dirt'	*PVKV	Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Austric, Amerind	dust, mould, rotten; no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution

'dirt, earth' ?	*HVMGV	Eurasianic, Sinocaucasian, Amerind (misc.)	earth, dirt, ashes, coal; no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'dirt, faeces'	*CVKV	Eurasianic, Sinocaucasian, Amerind (misc.)	from sand / pebbles to musk, resin and faeces (Sinocaucasian); no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution except perhaps in the Uralic and Kartvelian reflexes: Unreinigkeit am menschlichen Körper,
'dirt, slime, dirt'	*CVLV	Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Amerind	slime, dirt, resin, dung (Sinocaucasian); no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'dirty, bad'	*TVRV	Eurasianic (incl. Indoeuropean: diarrhea). Afroasiatic	dirt(y), ashes, dust, excrement (Indoeuropean): no clear indication of spiritual impurity or pollution
'ripe, rotten'	*RVMV	Afroasiatic *'be rotten, of bone), Sinocaucasian, Austric	limited implied suggestion of spiritual impurity or pollution

In addition to the *Borean roots listed here, we could have considered the very similar cases of: PVKV, 'dust, dirt'; PVRV, 'dust'; TVRV, 'dust, earth, dust'; TVTV, 'dust, ashes'

Table 9.15. The lexicon of pollution in *Borean

Selective attestations in our database are:

<p>Proto-Sinocaucasian: *ǵwV, 'to smear, dirty', with reflexes in Northcaucasian and Sinotibetan: *Gǵā(k), 'dirt', with reflexes in Chinese (汙, Modern (Beijing) reading: wū, 'impure, untidy', etc.; radical 85, Four-angle index 3240), Tibetan (*ǵo (p. gos, ǵos) 'to dirty, sully oneself), Kachin (*wuʔ2 'be unclean, impure', *əwuʔ2 'pollution, defilement') and Lepcha: *ko 'to be muddy, thick (water etc)'; *kā-kju-lā 'unwashed, dirty, filthy, unclean'; Peiros & Starostin n.d.: 213.66</p> <p>Proto-Sinocaucasian: *HǵǵkV, 'dirt', with reflexes in Northcaucasian, Sinotibetan and Basque (notably Proto-Basque: *lohi, '1 mud 2 dirty, impure')</p> <p>Eurasianic: Dravidian: Telugu: Proto-Telugu: *anǵ-, 'to touch; n. touch, uncleanness, defilement by touch, impurity, pollution' (Telugu: anṭu; Additional forms: Also anṭalu (pl.) 'crowd, crowds'; anṭincu 'to unite, join'; anṭagu 'to be in menses, menstruate'; anṭa 'nearness, support, assistance, protection, patronage'; Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 120), which is rather unexpected in view of the higher-order forms and semantics: Proto-Dravidian: *anǵi- ~ *anǵ- < Eurasianic: *anTV 'to join, unite' (with reflexes in Telugu, Kolamo-Gadba, Gondi-Kui, North-Dravidian and Brahui) < *Borean (...): *HVNTV 'to join, together' (with only reflexes in Eurasianic); Proto-Telugu: *puruḍ 'ceremonial uncleanness after childbirth, childbirth, delivery' (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 4290), < Proto-Southdravidian: *puruḍ-, 'childbirth; pollution', < Proto-Dravidian: *puruḍ-, 'childbirth; pollution' (Clearly another word belonging to the global etymology of 'leopard / scatter', spec. 'stained', see Appendix III, below.)</p> <p>Proto-Austric: *mVc, 'ghost', with reflex in Proto-Austroasiatic: *mo:c, 'ghost', notably in Proto-Thai: mɛ.B mat 'witch', and further reflexes in Proto-Katuic, Proto-Bahnaric: *mo:c 'corpse', Khmer and Proto-Palaungic</p> <p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *gVwun-, 'be black'; Semitic: *gVwVn- 'be black'; Berber: Semlal *a-ssgan 'black'; Proto-Westchadic: *(wV)gun- 'dirty' or Fyer ngwèn 'night' (Jaggar) < gwn?; an alternative reconstruction is *wVgun-</p> <p>Proto-Sinocaucasian: *čVwǵV? 'dirt': Northcaucasian: *č_ǵwǵV; Sinotibetan: *[ch]ǵ?; Proto-Northcaucasian: *čǵwǵV; Sinocaucasian etymology: Sinocaucasian etymology; meaning: 'dirt, dungwash; urine'; Proto-Nakh: *čVwVn (~ -b-); Proto-Tsezian: *cimǵ; Proto-Lezghian: *čVm(a); Proto-Westcaucasian: *čwV;</p>
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Table 9.16. Aspects of the lexicon of 'pollution' in descendant phyla below *Borean

The 'dirt' semantics does ascend all the way to the *Borean level in the following cases:

<p>*Borean (...): *TVRV 'bad, dirty', with reflexes in Eurasianic *darV: 'bad, dirty' (notably Indoeuropean: *dher(ə)-, Kartvelian: *dar-, Dravidian: *dar- (?)); Afroasiatic (Sem. *dr(n)- 'be dirty', Chadic *dVr- 'dirt, dust', Cushitic *dVrǵ- 'ashes').(...), Dolgopolsky n.d.: 563, 563a; cf. Dolgopolsky n.d.: 563 *dUr[?]V 'dirt' (Indoeuropean) and 563a *dAr?V 'ashes' (Dravidian).</p>
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<p>*Borean (...): *LVKV 'dirt'; Eurasianic: *IVkwV, 'liquid, dirt' (with reflexes in Indo-European, Altaic, Uralic, Kartvelian, and Dravidian: Proto-Gondi *lej-kor 'dew'), Afroasiatic: *lahak-/lahik-; Sinocaucasian: *Láqū; Austric: Proto-Austronesian *luyek 'soft mud', Proto-Austroasiatic *luk, *IVk 'pond, mud';</p> <p>*Borean (...): *PVKV, 'dust, dirt'; Eurasianic: *böka, 'dirt' (with reflexes in notably Altaic: *bjök`à(rV) (~ *p-); Uralic: *pEkV 'mould'; Dravidian: *bug-i; For the Uralic word cf. alternatively: Proto-Altaic *p`ék`V 'acid, astringent' or *begV 'a kind of ferment'.); Afroasiatic: *buk- (also *bubuk 'earth, dust'); Sinocaucasian: *bʃÖqwV; Austric: Proto-Austronesian *apuk 'dust', *la(m)bug 'turbid', Proto-Austroasiatic *bʔok 'rotten'; Amerind (misc.): *pok 'ashes' (Ruhlen n.d.: 25) (...);</p> <p>*Borean (...): *PVCV 'bad, evil', with reflexes in Eurasianic: *bVHCV, 'bad' (notably Indo-European: *bhous- (Germanic), Altaic (Mongolian *busa-ki 'bad, wicked'), Uralic (? *pečV 'nasty'), Kartvelian (*bʒež- (+ *bežy-?); Dolgopolsky 1969, 307, Dolgopolsky n.d.: 169 *bVG[č]V 'bad, wicked' (Kartvelian + Arabic *baʔīḏ- 'hate'), 259 *bu(?)VšV 'bad' (Indo-European, Mongolian + Semito-Hamitic / = Afroasiatic); Afroasiatic: *baʔas-;</p> <p>*Borean (...): *KVRV 'dung, mud' > Eurasianic: *korV; Afroasiatic: *kuʃar- (? + Cushitic, Berber 'dung'); Sinocaucasian: *(x)qārē;</p> <p>*Borean (...): *NVLV 'black, dark'; Eurasianic: Dravidian *nal- 'black'; Sinocaucasian: *nHāā_wV; Cf. *AVŋV? Proto-Sinocaucasian: *nHāāwV, 'dark, blue'; *Borean etymology: *Borean etymology; Northcaucasian: *nHāā_wV; Sinotibetan: *nək; Basque: *urdi-n. The semantic connection of 'blue' and 'iron' is found in Proto-Northcaucasian *nHāā_wV 'blue; (blue metal) > iron' and Basque *urdi-n 'blue, gray', *burdina 'iron'. It is uncertain whether this association existed already in the ancestor of Basque and Northcaucasian, or developed independently. If original, the word may have referred to rare, and expensive, meteoric iron.³⁸⁴</p>

Table 9.17. Aspects of the lexicon of 'pollution' in *Borean

We may conclude that, contrary to the notions of *sacred* and *profane*, the notions of cleanliness and pollution massively go back to the *Borean level, and therefore are far more likely to belong to the 'elementary forms of religious life' than Durkheim's famous paired concepts.

9.9. Exploring the semantics of 'prohibition' and 'taboo' in prehistoric lexicons

An important dimension of religion and of the *sacred*, especially in Durkheim's treatment, is the prohibition, notably of certain objects and acts – which is only one step further than religious considerations of purity and pollution. In Durkheim's approach, the connection between the *sacred* and prohibitions is extensively discussed; here he speaks of 'the negative cult'. It is therefore fitting that our explorations extend to the global vocabulary of prohibition / forbidding, and taboo.

For prohibition to be thought and expressed it is imperative that language and the logic implied in it permit to distinguish between 'P' and 'not-P' – the fundamental basis of the logic which Aristotle codified in the fourth c. BCE, with

'where P there not not-P'

³⁸⁴ At this point we are reminded of the probable West Asian origin of the invention of metallurgy

(the excluded third) as the basic principle. Tertiary and higher-order logics, fussy logics etc. have been developed as alternatives to the classic Aristotelian position, and postmodern philosophy has thrived on the idea that every given contains in itself its own negation (Derrida 1967). Yet in order to think and to speak coherently, some form of fairly strict negation must have been at the disposal of more or less *Borean-speaking, Upper Palaeolithic humans. The basic linguistic / logical instruments for negation were clearly in place – which seems an important qualification to my claim that *absolute* difference could not yet be thought or expressed; relative difference certainly could. That the operative requirements for thinking ‘prohibition’ were actually available in *Borean, is confirmed by the reconstructions, in *Borean, of:

the prohibitive / negative *Borean particle *MV, with reflexes in Eurasiatic (notably in Indoeuropean, Altaic, Kartvelian, and Dravidian), Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and Austric (Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1353; leaving out only African and American languages).

More isolated, for only recorded for Northcaucasian, is the proto-form: *-s:V, ‘negative / prohibitive particle’.

Moreover the alternative *Borean form *TV, ‘prohibitive particle’, which has only reflexes in Sinocaucasian and Austric.

Also cf. *Borean KVCV, ‘to be angry’, with reflexes in Eurasiatic *kVCV, ‘to be angry, hostile’ (✠; Altaic: *kiūč’ú (or *kasa, *kesa); ✠; Uralic: *k□čV ‘call’? Samoyedic *kotъ ‘scold’? Proto-Finnic-Permian *kačV ‘accuse’; ✠; Kartvelian: Georgian *kicχ- ‘scold, blame, revile’; Dravidian: *kac-; ✠; **Dolgopolsky n.d.: 955 *käḡšV ‘vexation, anger, quarrel’ (Dravidian + Altaic *kesa + Semitic); 1246 *kaḡ(V)χV (~ *-ḡ-) ‘to scold’ (same Dravidian + Georgian + Samoyedic + Arabic), Afroasiatic *kiHVc-, ‘to be angry’; and Amerind (misc.): *qac ‘bad’ ? (Ruhlen n.d.:37) (...)**

Table 9.18. Aspects of the lexicon of ‘prohibition’ and ‘negation’ in *Borean

By the same token, there is the *Borean root *HVNV, ‘not’, as reflexed in Eurasiatic (notably Altaic), Afroasiatic and Austric.³⁸⁵

Also in cases that do not ascend to an higher-level (ultimately *Borean) etymology linking up with other phyla and macrophyla, the ‘prohibition’ semantics are richly developed in the many branches of Dravidian. Still within Eurasiatic, the same may be said for Eskimo languages. Of immense impact on the North Atlantic study of religion have been the abundant food prohibitions of animal species as listed in the Hebrew Bible especially *Vayikra / Leviticus* and *Devarim / Deuteronomy*; it would be interesting to explore their *Borean etymological antecedents, with special attention to the suspected interplay between Eurasiatic and Afroasiatic – but that will have to wait for some other occasion. The ramification of such *Borean-ascending ‘prohibitive’ etymologies through the various macrophyla is astonishingly wide; and in addition we have various isolated ‘prohibition’ semantics in e.g. Chinese (排 ‘rank, order; to expel, prohibit’), Austroasiatic, and Khoisan, that do not clearly ascend to *Borean.

An interesting case is Proto-Nilgiri (a branch of Southdravidian > Dravidian > Eurasiatic): *kas-əmb-, ‘to break rules’, with illuminating reflexes in the following languages: Kota: *kacp- (*kacpy-) ‘to be exposed to pollution (funeral, disease), have forbidden sexual intercourse’; Toda: *kasp- (*kasp-/-) ‘to break rules of the sacred dairies’; Additional forms: Also Kota kacpl ‘pollution caused by having sexual intercourse on day of god-

³⁸⁵ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 48; Räsänen 1969: 258; Starostin 1991: 95-96, 277, Vovin 1997 / 2001: 3.

ceremony'; Toda *kaspil* 'transgression of dairy rules'. **Although there is no reliable external data to confirm the suffixal -mb-, it seems to be the only possibility to account for -p- in both languages. Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 1088. The higher-level etymon is < Proto-Southdravidian: *kac-, 'impure (?)', Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 1088; without listed reflexes in cognate Southdravidian languages)**

Also in Proto-Southdravidian (<Proto-Dravidian: *màḍ-, 'cleanness; clean cloth') Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 4654) we have *mad-l, 'purity; pure cloth', which has semantics of ritual purity bordering on sacrality / holiness in some of its reflexes in Tamil, Kannada, Kodagu, Tulu (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 4654); and more or less the same holds true for Proto-Southdravidian: *Tu(j)- 'pure' (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 3338) (with reflexes in Tamil and Malayalam (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 3338); Proto-Southdravidian: *vāl-, 'white, pure' (again with reflexes in Tamil and Malayalam, Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 5364)

Table 9.19. Aspects of the lexicon of 'prohibition' in Dravidian

Stressing, in our etic scholarly discourse, the 'forbidden' aspect of religion is only possible for us because those very same semantics are available in modern European languages, in Indo-European in general, and even in Eurasiatic as the wider macrophylum. In this connection, there is at least one derivational tree, with these semantics, which ascends all the way to *Borean:

*Borean (...): *KVRV, 'to hide, protect'
 Eurasiatic: *kVrV
 Proto-Mongolian: *kori-, '1 to forbid 2 to fence, shield 3 block, fort, shelf 4 enclosure, fence, yard' – but 'forbid' semantics scarcely in the reflexes of other phyla of Eurasiatic
 Afroasiatic: *kVr- 'to hide, protect' (...)?; **Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1145, 1937**

Table 9.20. Aspects of the lexicon of 'hiding, protecting' in *Borean, Eurasiatic and Afroasiatic

Many more 'forbidding' forms, though not ascending to *Borean, are found in the other macrophyla, *e.g.*:

The 'forbid' semantics in Eurasiatic languages have several manifestations:
 Eurasiatic: *wVrV, 'to cover'
 Indo-European: *werV-; alternatively *(e)werwə, wrū
 which produces the 'forbid, obstruct' semantics mainly in various Germanic reflexes
 Altaic: *ōri (~ -e)
 Proto-Altaic: *késa (~ *k'-), 'to suffer', which produces the 'prohibit' semantics in Proto-Turkic and the Turkic language Yakut, but not in the other phyla in which reflexes of this Altaic root are found (Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu, Korean and Japanese)
 Dravidian: *Ur- (*-d_-)
 Proto-Dravidian: *taṇḍ-, 'to obstruct; obstruction'
 Proto-Southdravidian: *taḍ-
 Proto-Telugu: *taḍ-
 Proto-Northdravidian: *ṭaṇḍ-
 Brahui: taḍ
 produces 'forbid' in South Dravidian: Tamil, Malayalam, (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 5423)
 Proto-Southdravidian: *kac-, 'impure (?)'
 Proto-Nilgiri: *kas-əmb-, 'to break rules', especially in relation to forbidden sexual intercourse
 Proto-Dravidian: *śil-, 'not to be'
 Proto-Southdravidian: *il-
 Proto-Telugu: *ilē-
 Proto-Kolami-Gadba: *Sil-
 Proto-Gondi-Kui: *sil-
 Proto-Northdravidian: *cil- 'to forbid'
 The 'forbid' semantics also occurs in Eskimo languages but without etymological connections to the higher levels of the Eurasiatic macrophylum let alone *Borean.

Table 9.21. Further aspects of the lexicon of 'forbidding' in Eurasiatic

Beyond the Eurasiatic realm, other macrophyla offer many instances of the

‘forbid’ semantics:

<p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *lay- (?) , ‘speak’ has reflexes in Semitic, Westchadic, Eastchadic and Loweast-cushitic, but only in the latter (notably in Oromo) produces the ‘forbid’ semantics</p> <p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *pVr-, ‘refuse’ Semitic: *pVr- ‘forbid, refuse’ Centralchadic: *pyar- ‘refuse’</p> <p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *mVnaʕ- (?), ‘refuse’ Semitic: *mVnaʕ- ‘forbid, refuse’ Centralchadic: *mVn- ‘refuse’</p> <p>Proto-Sinotibetan: *riəmH, ‘fear, threaten’ Chinese: 懷 *r_əm? (~ -im?) ‘full of fear, respectful’; 禁 *krəms ‘forbid, prevent, forbidden ground’ Tibetan: khrims ‘right, custom; law, lawsuit’ Burmese: khrimh, krimh threaten, be threatened, terrified. Kachin: əkhrim1 to threaten, to alarm as with a threat, məkrim1 set the teeth on edge. Dimasa migrim ‘fear’; Luce [1981]: 44, Coblin [1986]: 127-128 (...).</p> <p>Proto-Sinotibetan: *kāk (~ g-, q-, G-), ‘obstruct, hinder’ Chinese: 鋼 *kāks obstruct, stop. Tibetan: āgag ‘obstruction, stoppage (...), ākhegs id. (pf. khegs), āgogs-pa ‘prevent, avert’, bkag’ to forbid.’ Character: 禁, Modern (Beijing) reading: jin, Preclassic Oldchinese: krəms ‘to forbid, prohibit’ [Late Zhou] also various occurrences in Katuic, without higher-order links Cf. Proto-Austroasiatic *bri:m ‘afraid’ (also other forms, see Peiros 1998: 226).</p>
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Table 9.22. Aspects of the lexicon of ‘forbidding’ beyond Eurasiatic

Usually the term ‘taboo’ is reserved for a very strong prohibition with religious sanction. Such semantics have not been explicitly listed for the *Borean level, but they do obtain for Eurasiatic:

<p>Eurasiatic: *HimV, ‘taboo, substitute’ Indoeuropean: *Him- Altaic: *əmi (~ a-, *ime), ‘avoid, taboo’, with reflexes in Turkic, Mongolian, and Japanese (Ramstedt 1935: 121.) Uralic: *wOmV ? Dravidian: Proto-Dravidian: *pol-, ‘bad, mean; dirty, pollution’, which produces the ‘taboo’ semantics in the South Dravidian branch Proto-Gondi-Kui: *pol-, ‘bad; taboo’</p>
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Table 9.23. Aspects of the lexicon of ‘taboo’ in Eurasiatic

An interesting though puzzling case is the following:

<p>*Borean (...): *MVLV, ‘face, head’ Sinocaucasian: *hwVmVlī (~-ě) Eurasiatic: *mVÍV, ‘top’, with reflexes in: Indoeuropean, Altaic, Uralic, Dravidian;? Cf. *malV; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1417 *mAlHo ‘head, skull’ (Indoeuropean + Altaic + Berber); only in the Dravidian languages Gondi < Gondwan does the semantics ‘taboo’ emerge (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 4547 / 5086</p>

Table 9.24. Aspects of the lexicon of ‘taboo’ in various macrophyla

Proto-Eskimo has various significant and illustrative forms for the ‘taboo’ semantics, again (like in other Eskimo cases considered above) without linkage to higher level etymologies.

Proto-Eskimo: *aɣləʁ, 'sin, taboo' Proto-Yupik: *aɣləʁ Proto-Inupik: *aɣliʁ-, *aalʁ-u- Fortescue 1994: 8 Proto-Yupik: *aɣləʁ, 'sin 1, to make magic on the dead person 2, taboo 3' Sirenik: //aɣləχ 'sacred thing', aɣləχnəχ 3, aɣləʁə- 2 Chaplino: aɣləʁnaq (t) 1, aɣləʁwāquq 2, //aɣləq 'sacred thing' Naukan: //aɣləʁ- 'to practice taboo' Chugach (...): cf. ʁum̄m-aʁa (3sg.) 'menstruating woman' Central Alaskan Yupik: aɣləʁ- 'to menstruate' Fortescue 1994: 8
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Table 9.25. Aspects of the lexicon of 'taboo' in Eskimo

Clear 'taboo' semantics are manifest in Katuic, a branch of Austroasiatic in continental South East Asia:

Proto-Katuic: *tan, 'be taboo' Proto-Westkatuic: *tan Proto-Eastkatuic: *tan this also as: Proto-Katuic: *dʔiaŋ, 'taboo' Proto-Eastkatuic: *dʔiaŋ Proto-Eastkatuic: *ja:ʔ 'clan, family' Pakoh: ja:ʔ 'extended family clan in longhouse; totem taboo' (an eminently Durkheimian formation: the group is the source of sacrality!) Lao Katu: ʔja:ʔ 'male clans' Ngeq: kaw ja:ʔ.(...) 'to make tabu' A comparable situation also obtains in Bahnaric

Table 9.26. Aspects of the lexicon of 'taboo' in Katuic, a branch of Austroasiatic

Considering the – most probably unjustified, and already criticised above – notion of extreme primitiveness which many writers have projected onto Khoisan speakers ('Bushmen, Hottentots') it is interesting that also the Khoisan macrophylum is familiar with the concept of 'taboo':

Proto-Khoekhoe: *ŋ!āũ, 'taboo, prohibited' Nama: !nāu Haacke & Eiebb 1998: 108.
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Table 9.27. Aspects of the lexicon of 'taboo' in Khoisan

Linguists have frequently had occasion to comment on what they have called the tabooistic departure from otherwise general derivational linguistic rules, often in relation with animal species, or with symbolically highly charged body parts such as the sexual organs. This postulated tabooed use testifies to the possibility of the concept of taboo in the language in question, but need not concern us here: it is essentially an analytical postulate projected upon the data by present-day analysts.

9.10. Exploring the semantics of 'soul / body' in prehistoric lexicons

Although the *Borean lexicon is relatively rich in designations of material body parts

and functions, there is only one word listed for 'soul, breath': *HVMSV, and only two words for 'body': the general one *PVTV, and one for 'upper part of body, handle', *HVLV. On this limited basis one would be inclined to deny the existence of an emic category 'soul' in Upper Palaeolithic lifeworlds. In other long-range linguistic analyses listed above, we have found that we should not just consider the semantics listed explicitly for the *Borean level, but must also allow ourselves to be inspired by the semantics that are listed lower in the derivational tree, for more recent language forms. If we do this for the 'soul' semantics, we find many additional cases that suggest that 'soul' may have been an implied concept already at the *Borean level. On closer scrutiny, therefore, the linguistic evidence turns out to be much richer (Table 9.28):

No.	*Borean root	Details
1	*CVLMV	*Borean *CVLMV, 'heart' (so far no matches outside Nostratic [/ Eurasianic]) returns the semantics 'spirit, soul , scent' for Proto-Kartvelian : *śul
2	*CVVV	*Borean *CVVV, 'breath, smell', has reflexes in Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and Amerind (misc.). It produces the semantics ' soul ' in the Northcaucasian language Nakh, which also appears to be echoed in Westcaucasian
3	*HVLV	Borean: HVLV, 'die, starve', produces the ' soul ' semantics exclusively in Proto-Tungus-Manchu: *(x)olbu- ' soul of the dead; shadow'; Tsintsius <i>et al</i> 1975-1977: 2, 445. Attested only in Evenki, with probable parallels in Turkic and Mongolian
4	*HVMSV	Borean *HVMSV, ' soul , breath' – <i>this is the only explicit attestation of the 'soul' semantics in *Borean itself, mainly thus reconstructed on the basis of Sinocaucasian</i> Proto-Eurasianic: Altaic *müsi ³⁸⁶ 'steam, spirit' Indoeuropean *Hans- may be < Northcaucasian ³⁸⁷ Proto-Sinocaucasian : *ʔāmsi, ' soul , breath; god, sky', (with reflexes in: Northcaucasian, where the semantics 'cloud' is added, although the basic semantics is listed as 'soul, spirit'). An important common Northcaucasian root, basically meaning 'sky' but with original religious and mystic connotations. (...) Sinotibetan Yeniseian Burushaski ('heart, soul) and Basque Proto-Austriac: Austronesian *pu-su, Tai *cai heart (?) Proto-Amerind (misc.): *matik (actually *mVCik) 'smell' (Ruhlen n.d.: 654)
5	*HVMV	*Borean *HVMV, 'sleep', has reflexes with the same semantics in Eurasianic, Sinocaucasian and Austric, but only in Proto-Mongolian: *amu-, *ami- produces the ' soul ' semantics, among others: '1 to rest 2 peace, rest 3 to be / become quiet 4 life, soul '; Probably the variant Proto-Tungus-Manchu: *ōmī, ' soul ', also belongs to this complex. ³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Cf. musi-a-tunya, 'the smoke that thunders', regional Bantu designation for the Victoria Falls on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. There are also striking Altaic / Mongolian reminiscences in the Comparative Mythology of that region (van Binsbergen 2010a), which are perhaps due to South Asian (Moghul-associated) or East Asian (Manchu-associated) transcontinental maritime migration in the early 2nd mill. CE.

³⁸⁷ For Hans- read Ans-, Proto-Indo-Hittite, 'deity'; cf. van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 370, n 1247, with extensive details ranging from Oldindian to Olddanish, and displaying, once more, the conflation of 'god' with 'high-ranking human'.

³⁸⁸ As a Mongolian reflex of Proto-Altaic *ām *āmV, 'to be quiet; sleep'. Ramstedt 1935: 9; Räsänen 1969: 19; Tsintsius *et al* 1975-1977: 1,2-3; Starostin 1991: 292, Dybo 1996: 13, Rozycki 1994: 17. A Western isogloss. The root presents considerable difficulties because of widespread later interlingual borrowings (see Doerfer 1963-1967: 2, 125, Scherbak 1997, 97-98). A specific problem is raised by initial h- in some Southern Mongolian forms (Dong. hamura-, Bao. hamera-, Mongor xamurā- 'to rest'). The aspiration here is evidently secondary, because it is absent both in Dagur and in most attested Middle Mongolian sources (but cf. Battal 1934, s.v. hamisqu). It is, therefore, probable that these forms are in fact borrowed from modern Turkic dialects with secondary aspiration (cf. h- in Khalaj). This would be indeed an argument in favour of the whole *amura- group

6	*HVNV	*Borean *HVNV, 'blood, breath', has reflexes in Eurasianic, Sinocaucasian, and Austric (Peiros 1989, 127). The Eurasianic reflex *HwinV, 'to breathe' (with reflexes in Altaic, Uralic, Dravidian, Eskimoaleut and Chukcheekamchalkan) appears to produce the semantics 'soul' (of a dead), ghost' in Uralic: Uralic: *oríV 'tame, quiet' (if 'quiet' is original); cf. also *wajne 'soul, breath'
7	*HVVV	*Borean *HVVV, 'to blow, winnow' has reflexes in Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, and African (misc.); the Eurasianic protoform *Hewa has reflexes in Indo-European (Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 220 f.), Altaic and Dravidian, and in the latter phylum (protoform *áv-1 'to breathe 2 steam' produces 'soul' semantics in the following South Dravidian languages Tamil ávi (-pp-, -ft-) the meanings 'to sigh, let out (as smoke); n. breath, sigh, soul , steam, vapour, smoke' (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 393); Nilgiri *ávī, 'soul, breath'; and Kota áyv 'soul, steam, vapour'
8	*KVRV	Likewise, *Borean *KVRV 'to understand, see', produces reflexes in Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and African (misc.), which designate all sorts of operations of the mind and of the senses in the lower levels of derivations, including, but exclusively for Indo-European as a branch of Eurasianic: 'soul' Proto-Indo-European: *g ^w hren-, 'diaphragm; intelligence' / 'phrenic; soul , mind' Oldgreek: phrén-, -enós, pl. phrénes, -enōn f. 'Zwerchfell', 'Sinn, Seele, Geist, Verstand, Herz'; phronéō 'gesinnt sein, denken, verständig sein', phroni-s f. 'Einsicht, Kunde'; phrontís, -idos f. 'Nachdenken, Sorge, Besorgnis', á-phrōn 'unverständlich, töricht', eϕ-phrāinō 'froh machen, erheitern'; sō-, pró-phrōn; Germanic: *grun-a- m.; *grun-ō- vb. (Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 699)
9	*LVNTV	*Borean *LVNTV, 'intestines', has reflexes in Eurasianic, Sinocaucasian, Austric and Amerind (mis.). (Sinotibetan forms with -m may be < Afroasiatic). Among the Austric branches, Austroasiatic (cf. Miaoyao) returns the semantic 'soul' : Proto-Austroasiatic *(Cə)luom 'liver'; *IVŋ 'stomach, soul ', Yao liŋ 'spirit, soul '; *IVŋ 'middle, inside'
10	*LVPV	*Borean *LVPV, 'spleen', has reflexes in Eurasianic, Afroasiatic and Austric (Peiros 1989, 129). Proto-Afroasiatic: *li/ubb- 'heart', takes on 'soul' semantics in the following phyla: Saho-Afar: *lubb- 'heart, soul , yolk, soft part' Loweastcushitic: ³⁸⁹ *lu/abb- 'heart' 1, 'soul, spirit' 2, 'chest' 3 Higheastcushitic: *lubb- 'soul' Proto-Higheastcushitic: *lubb-, 'soul'
11	*MVRV	Sometimes *Borean meanings take a tortuous path to end up with the 'soul' semantics. Thus *Borean *MVRV, 'ungulate', with reflexes in Eurasianic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and Austric (Dolgopolsky n.d. 1473a), leads to Proto-Turkic: *bura (?), 'soul of a sacrificial animal (horse)', while in other Altaic languages the animal connotations are retained with a religious element added Khakassian: pura 'picture of a male maral [<i>Cervus elaphus maral</i> , Caspian red deer – WvB] on a shaman drum' Oyrat: pura (dial.) 'sacrificial animal'
12	*NVKV	Thus *Borean *NVKV (suggested by V. Glumov) 'good', returns *näki, 'good (of soul)' already at the Eurasianic level, and displays an abundance of religious connotations in the constituent phyla of Eurasianic: Proto-Indo-European: *yak(-) (Gr *h-) 'healthy; medical treatment, medicine' / 'Heilmittel; Ehre, Würde' (or *jaǵ- 'religiös verehren') (Pokorny 1959-1969: 1, 195). Altaic: *ñiák'i, 'mild, soft (Nam Kwang U. 1960: 104, Martin <i>et al.</i> 1967: 332); An Eastern isogloss. The original meaning must have been 'mild', particularly (but not necessarily) applied to feelings, whence the more general meaning 'soul' in (...) Turkic *jaki 'good' (see Sewortyan <i>et al.</i> 1974-2000: 4, 63-64) may be a merger of this root with *jaki- 'to approach' Dravidian: *ney- [or nek- 'sacrificial rite, custom' (Burrow & Emeneau 1984: 3763)

of words in Mongolian to be regarded as borrowed from Turkic (although later reborrowings into modern Turkic languages were, of course, also possible). However, significant semantic and formal differences do not allow us to regard as borrowed, on the one hand, the Turkic forms going back to attested Old Uyghur (*e.g.* amir- 'to love'), on the other hand, Mong. *ami-n* 'life, soul' and amu- 'to rest'

³⁸⁹ Some of the Cushitic forms may be Semitisms. Cf. *la/íp?- 'inner organ; chest and belly with interior'. Cf. also *lab- 'side of body' probably related. (...) Cf. *nib- 'heart'.

13	*NVPV	*Borean *NVPV 'smoke, cloud', has reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and Austric (Dolgopolsky n.d. 1556, 1557), and returns the semantics 'soul' in some branches of Afroasiatic: ³⁹⁰ Semitic: *nVpVš 'to breathe', *nap(i)š- 'soul' ; vitality, life; person, personality; self Saho-Afar: *naf- 'breath, soul ' 1, 'face' 2 (alternatively: 'heart, soul , yolk, soft part) Centralchadic: ³⁹¹ *nafis- ~ *sifn- ~ *sVnf- 'soul' 1, 'breathe' 2, with alternatives: Proto-Centralchadic: *naPus- ~ *su/inP-, 'soul' 1, 'breathe' 2 Proto-Centralchadic: *nVf-, 'soul' 1, 'heart' 2, 'life' 3 Loweastcushitic: *na/ēf- 'breath' 1, soul 2, 'life' 3
14	*NVWN	*Borean *NVWN, 'weak, tired, dead', has reflexes in Eurasiatic ('decease'), Afroasiatic ('tired, weak') and Austric (Proto-Austronesian *nava 'spirit, breath' (Peiros 1989, 129).), but only in Proto-Turkic as a branch of Altaic produces the semantics of '1 cemetery, grave 2 soul of the deceased 3 ghost 4 funeral' (Räsänen 1969: 197.)
15	*TMMV	Likewise, *Borean ³⁹² *TMMV, 'root, bone', with reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic ('blood'), Sinocaucasian (kernel) occasionally produces the semantics 'soul' in Eurasiatic, notably in Altaic, whose protoform *tēmò (~ -a) means 'root, strength, soul ', and then particularly in Proto-Japanese *tamà -in the other Altaic branches this semantics does not crop up (Martin 1987: 539, 540). ³⁹³
16	none	'1 to breathe 2 breath 3 soul are the meanings of *eri- in Proto-Tungus-Manchu; this protoform derives from Eurasiatic *erV, 'to be'. The latter also has reflexes in Indo-European, Kartvelian and Dravidian, but these do not lead to 'soul' semantics. The Eurasiatic protoform does not ascend to *Borean.
17	none	From Proto-Tungus-Manchu *sug- '1 breath 2 vapour 3 soul 4 sacrifice 5 hurricane, wind 6 to breathe', derive (Tsintsius <i>et al.</i> 1975-1977: 2, 118-119) a series of religiously relevant reflexes.: Ulcha: sugdu- 'to place a sacrifice before an idol', sūi 5 Orok: sugditči- 'to place food in front of a deceased', sūi 5 The Proto-Tungus-Manchu protoform derives from Proto-Altaic *soge (<i>cf.</i> also *šigà 1991), 'to breathe, breath', < Eurasiatic: *šoge, 'to breathe, breath', not ascending to the *Borean level
18	none	The Eurasiatic protoform *šUNV means 'soul' and returns in Altaic and Uralic (Dolgopolsky n.d.: 2160: *šunje 'breathe'. <i>Cf.</i> *sun(g)V) but does not ascend to the *Borean level
19	none	In Proto-Mongolian we also find *süne-sü, 'soul', as a reflex of Proto-Eurasiatic *šUNV, 'soul' (no *Borean etymology listed), which also has reflexes in Uralic (Dolgopolsky n.d.: 2160 *šunje 'breathe'. <i>Cf.</i> *sun(g)V) (Ramstedt 1935: 340, Sun / Menggu 1999 / 1990 (?): 617. Mongolian > Evenki. sunesun, see Poppe 1966: 197; Doerfer 1985: 128.) ³⁹⁴

As declared above, original *Tower of Babel* comments and notes appear in **bold**.

Table 9.28. The semantics of 'soul' in *Borean and descending (macro-)phyla

In connection of Durkheim's religion theory, what do we make of this impressive array of linguistic attestations? What we clearly perceive is a process of emergence, where the notion of the soul, initially vague and lost in all sorts of divergent airy, vapoury and

³⁹⁰ *Cf.* (...) Orël & Stolbova 1995: 1828 *naf- 'breath' (Egyptian; Saho 'breath' and Afar 'face', which is semantically doubtful; Somalian 'breath, soul' and Oromo and Arbore 'body' which [it would be] very philosophical to relate with 'soul', though wrong, as 'soul' comes from 'breath' and it is hard to imagine the reconstructed term giving rise to 'breath' in some daughter languages and 'body', in others) and 1865 *nif- 'smell, breathe' (Semitic *nVpaḥ- supposedly "secondary formation based on *nap-", which is impossible to prove or disprove; Egyptian nfy; Centralchadic *nif-, with *-f- prompted only by Egyptian as both examples quoted have -p). Considering Centralchadic. *-i-, Saho -a-, and Somalian -a-/ē (the other examples in both entries are irrelevant for semantic(...), and [as far as Egyptian is concerned], for phonetical reasons), there is not the least ground to reconstruct two roots.

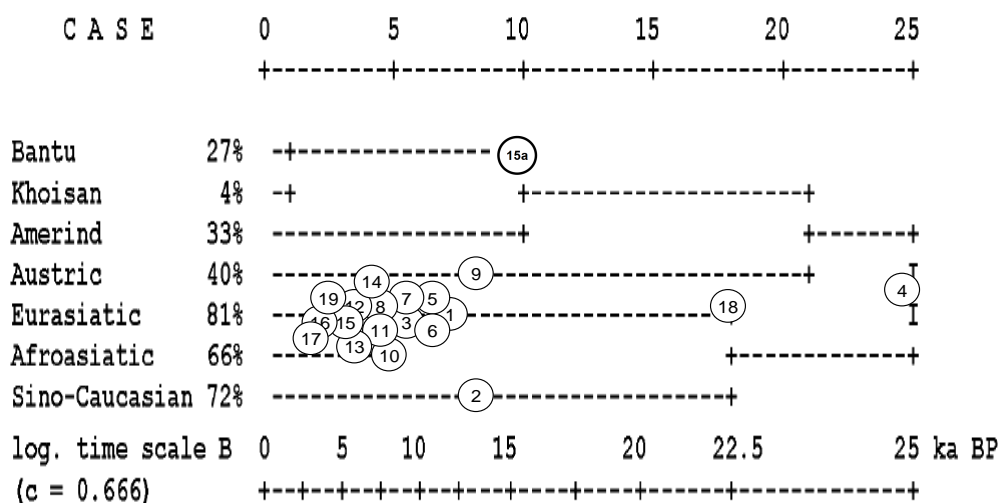
³⁹¹ Borrowing from Arabic in Berber, Chadic and Cushitic as well as from Ethiopian in Cushitic is possible. *Cf.* *nVsVp- 'blow, breathe'.

³⁹² Extremely shaky (one has to suppose: a) *sinew > vein > blood; b) *sinew > root > bone).

³⁹³ As item 15a in Fig. 9.3: *cf.* *Proto-Bantu: *-témà 3/4 'heart' 1738 (Guthrie); *-tima 3 'heart, liver', 2.1. (Meeussen); also see van Binsbergen in press (c) .

³⁹⁴ When the 'soul' semantic occurs with a different lexical item in Proto-Mongolian, as *süne-sü, 'soul', it is from Proto-Altaic *šünü 'soul' < Eurasiatic: *šUNV 'soul', which is also reflexed in Uralic but does not ascend to *Borean; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 2160 *šunje 'breathe'. *Cf.* *sun(g)V.

nebulous imagery, takes more distinct shape as we descent down the derivational tree to historic language forms. This process does not proceed with the same speed in all macrophyla, and is even out of step between the various phyla of one and the same macrophylum. As with other linguistic explorations in this book, *we are beginning to perceive the Altaic and Uralic phyla of Eurasiatic, and to a lesser extent the Sinotibetan macrophylum, as an exceptionally fertile context for the generation and incubation of religious notions that, in transformed shape, were to survive until historic times.*



soul semantics numbered as in Table 9.28

Fig. 9.3. Reconstructed attestation of 'soul' semantics in the various branches of *Borean projected against the reconstructed history of the latter's desintegration

When we project the results of Table 9.28 onto the dendrogram resulting from the cluster analysis of desintegration of Borean (Fig. 8.16, above), our hopes of identifying 'soul' semantics for the Upper Palaeolithic life worlds are considerably reduced. Only for one *Borean root (4; a manifest outlier which may easily have been misconstrued or misinterpreted) do we find such semantics listed, and only for one macrophylum (Eurasiatic, 18, another outlier) where however such semantics remains very restricted and certainly do not appear in all the major phyla. The other attestations of 'soul' semantics are only at the subphylum level of below, which makes them local and recent.

We can hardly escape the conclusion that, contrary to the suggestion emerging from the *Tower of Babel* database (notably item 4 and 18 in Table 9.28), the emergence of 'soul' semantics cannot be situated in the Upper Palaeolithic, and more likely took place in the Neolithic, < 10 ka BP. Probably, the concept of 'soul' cannot be considered part of the 'elementary forms of religious life'.

9.11. Exploring the semantics of ‘spirit / spiritual beings’ in prehistoric lexicons

‘Spirit’ does feature in Durkheim’s description of elementary forms of religious life, although he considered ‘spiritual beings’ not primary enough, as a concept, to follow Tylor and make the belief in them the determining characteristic of religion. *CVNV is one of the few *Borean forms listed as having the semantics ‘blood, spirit’, which has reflexes in Eurasiatic (*cwVnV ‘spirit; blood’) and Afroasiatic (*ʒin- blood’), but which in fact only returns the semantics ‘spirit’ in Altaic:

Altaic: *čünu ‘blood; spirit, breath’, with reflexes in Mongolian (*čisu, ‘blood’), Turkic: *d̄in, ‘1 spirit, breath 2 rest 3 to rest 4 to pant 5 to breathe 6 quiet 7 sultriness’), Tungus-Manchu: *ʒun-, ‘Tungus-Manchu: *ʒun-, ‘pulse, vein [in other words, blood]’, and Japanese *ti, ‘blood’. So it is only in Turkic that the semantics ‘spirit’ is returned, and we may postulate that this semantics did not yet attach to the original *Borean root but was developed later under the impact of world religions (especially Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam) upon a Turkic-speaking population. Meanwhile another related semantics may have been available in *Borean *CVJC, ‘shade, to blink, shine – as a designation for spiritual remains of the deceased. Swearing (as in *Borean: ‘swear, call’: *NVKV) may also be considered an invocation of invisible spiritual beings, but it may also simple be spiritually neutral insults.

Table 9.29. Aspects of the *Borean and *Borean-derived lexicon of ‘spirit’

Smoke, odour, smell have of old been recognised as means to make contact with Heaven (*cf.* Ancient Greek κνίση knisè, ‘sacrificial smell’) and to overcome, by reuniting Heaven and Earth, the hugely negative effects of the cosmogonic Separation of Heaven and Earth. Hence perhaps *Borean: *CVNKV_{1,2}, ‘smoke, smell’; *CVVV, ‘breath, smell’; *PVNV, ‘smell, breathe, smoke’; *NVPV, ‘smoke, cloud’.

Another *Borean word with possible spirit semantics is *CVJV, ‘to blink, shine, shade’, although probably we need to take ‘shade’ here literally as obstructed light, and not as ‘spirit of the departed’, etc. Largely retaining its *Borean meaning, this root has reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian and African (misc., notably Macrokhoisan *ʒo[a] ‘ashes’). While the semantics listed as ‘shade’ persist throughout the Indoeuropean reflexes (Pokorny 1959-1969: II 535 *f.*) with possible (but not explicit) connotations of ‘spirit of the dead’, and while the Greek reflex has a very interesting, religiously-inclined semantic field:

Oldgreek: skiã f. ‘Schatten’, skieró-, skiaró- ‘schattenreich, Schatten werfend, beschattet’, skaió- ‘schattig’ (...), skíro-n (? / *skíro-n) n. Bez. eines weissen Sonnenschirms od. Baldachins, der bei Prozessionen von der Akropolis nach einem Skíron (Skíron) benannten Orte an der heiligen Strasse nach Eleusis zu Ehren der Athena (Skiras) und anderer Göttinnen und Götter getragen wurde; pl. Skíra Name eines Frauenfestes zu Ehren der Demeter Kore und der Athena Polias; skānã f. ‘Zelt(dach), Bude, Schmaus; Bühne(engebäude), Szene’, skānos n. ‘Körper (= Zelt der Seele), Leichnam’

Table 9.30. Aspects of the lexicon of ‘shade’ in Oldgreek

yet all these reflexes neither suggest a religious dimension already for the *Borean level. This also holds largely true for Altaic, Uralic, Kartvelian and Dravidian (where the ‘shade’ dimension is eclipsed by the ‘shine’ dimension). Yet in Saam (Lapp), < Uralic, we have:

suojje (...) 'Schutz (vor Regen, Wind)', ? šuoggja -j- ~ šuoggje -j- (N) 'supernatural being which rejoices at people's misfortunes', sjuodjē (L) 'ein übernatürliches Wesen, das überall da ist und alles hört' ?
--

Table 9.31. Aspects of the lexicon of 'shade / shine' in Saam (Lapp)

A widespread image of spirituality is provided by the breathing of living organisms, especially of humans, and here *Borean has a rich vocabulary (notably *CVHV, *HVNV, *CVWV, *HVMSV, *PVNV, *HVNKV), sometimes remaining at the material concrete level of 'smell' and 'smoke' (*CVWV, *PVNV), sometimes shading over into 'blood' (CVHV, *CVNV, *HVNV), and in one case – as we have considered above – actually with the reconstructed (but, as we have seen, doubtful) semantics of 'soul' even at the *Borean level (*HVMSV). Although the semantics of the derived reflexes in macrophyla and phyla does suggest that some immaterial, airy, perhaps spiritual dimension did already attach to *Borean *HVMSV. It is quite possible, alternatively, that the spiritual semantics 'breath / soul' developed in the later reflexes at more recent times, and that it is only the compilers of the *Tower of Babel* database who read it spuriously back into the original *Borean reconstructed semantics.

9.11.1. Demon


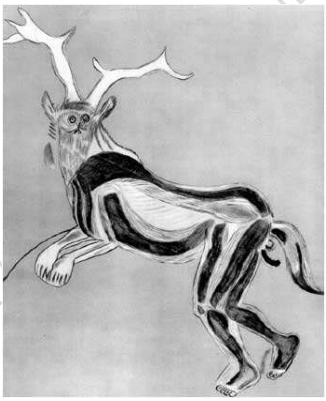
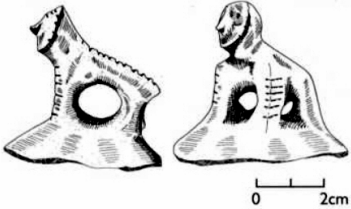


A common form of spirit or spiritual being is the *demon*, which is not directly attested in the *Borean lexicon. The semantics 'demon' have been listed for the proto-lexicons of the Sinocaucasian and Austric macrophyla, but in other languages only occur at the phylum level (e.g. in South Dravidian as derived from Proto-Dravidian semantics 'insane' – since in the Dravidian/ South Asian context, spirit possession is a common explanation for mental derangement). This state of affairs suggest the relative recent emergence of this semantics. The case however is more complex than may meet the eye. For what is a demon? *A godlike spiritual being with lesser scope and more negative connotations than a true god*. Often a demon is an obsolete former god, demoted under the impact of a new religious dispensation that has vanquished and eclipsed the earlier dispensation. In North Atlantic scholarship, the lexicographers and translators of modern times have usually been steeped in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and for such scholars any exotic god may readily have appeared to be a demon. Moreover, the vast regions where Sinocaucasian and Austric have been spoken in historical times, have seen the expansion of world religions, which may have resulted in a similar paganisation and demonisation of older gods. Under these circumstances it is impossible to ascertain what the historical status of the semantics 'demon' is. The same applies *a fortiori* to 'devil', even though 'devil worship' has been the standard expression in English non-specialist usage in South and South East Asian English (especially Ceylon / Sri Lanka) for the ecstatic cults that have been prominent on the religious scene there until today.

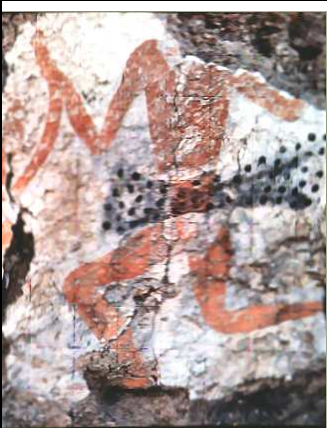




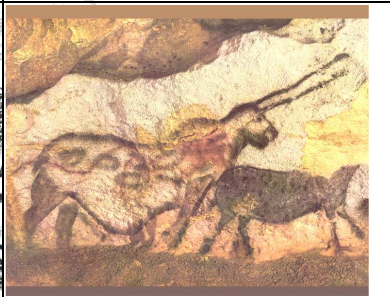


In one branch of Khoisan, Proto-Julhoan, the 'devil' semantics is also found, perhaps as a reflection of Judeo-Christian notions arriving in recent centuries, perhaps also as a reminis-

cence from South Asia, where some of the ancestors of today's Khoisan speakers are claimed to have lived ca. 10 ka BP (Cavalli-Sforza *et al.* 1994) – *i.e.* at a time when early forms of religion in the full definitional sense had probably already emerged. Further research and reflection will have to consider whether the semantics 'ghost' (not in *Borean, noR in the proto-lexicon of any macrophylum, yet emerging in the proto-lexicons of selected phyla including Altaic and Sinotibetan, Ju and !Kung) is a secondary effect of the rise of theistic religion or reveals an independent temporal and spatial dynamics of its own; also *cf.* the semantics 'corpse', whose distribution in space and time is erratic.

9.11.2. Altered states of consciousness

The 'spirit' semantics is one way of evoking unreality. Other ways are in terms of altered states of consciousness: 'sleep', 'dream', 'trance', 'ecstasy', 'divination'. Considering the great emphasis that is being laid, in the recent literature, on shamanism as a way of constructing and maintaining a cosmology, healing, producing ancient iconographies as depicted in rock art and other prehistoric artefacts, and constructing spiritual and ultimately also political power, these are immensely relevant aspects of religion. Can they be attested in *Borean?

		
<p>a.1 recent photograph <i>in situ</i></p>	<p>a.2 Breuil's hand copy</p>	
<p>a. two versions of a famous Upper Palaeolithic image from the Trois Frères cave, France, often interpreted as a shaman dressed in animal skin. Note that the original image is far less clear and articulate than Breuil's hand copy</p>		<p>b. The goddess as dog (Karanovo VI, Central Bulgarian Neolithic, c. 4500 BCE)</p>
		
<p>c. Arctic specimen of rock art from Alta, Northern Norway, commonly interpreted as depicting the transformation of a shaman into a reindeer</p>		<p>d. A Neanderthal rock installation (width 3 cm) from La Roche Cotard, France, apparently rendering a leopard's face</p>

		
<p>e. one of several manifestations of pardi-vesture at the Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Çatal Hüyük, Anatolia, Turkey, c. 8 ka BP</p>	<p>f. a pardi-vested person of apparent high rank blows an ivory trumpet; surrounded by humans (one of which also pardi-vested), an elephant, and a cervid, Tassili n'Ajjer, Sahara, Africa, c. 7 ka BP</p>	<p>g. more than life-size statuette from Hohlenstein-Stadel, Germany, c. 32 ka BP, depicting a man-lion; excavated 1931.</p>
		
<p>h. crouching quadrupeds, one with a human face, the other with arrow sign on upper hind leg; note the collar; from an incised bone at Isturitz, South-western France; cf. Fig. 9.5</p>	<p>j. One of the earliest depictions of a shaman in European literature, from N. Siberia; note the antlers, the drum and the taiga environment</p>	<p>k. a non-existent horned animal depicted at Lascaux, Dordogne, France, commonly interpreted as a shaman in animal disguise</p>
		
<p>l. overview and detail of a complex array of quadrupeds from the Trois Frères cave, France, at the centre of which a horned biped wielding bow and arrows appears to be dancing; 15 ka BP</p>		

Sources: (a1) <https://www.britannica.com/place/Trois-Frères>, with thanks; (a2) <https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/488218415827684196/?lp=true>, with thanks; (b) Gimbutas 2000: Fig. 24; (c) <http://www.donsmaps.com/norge.html>, with thanks; (d) <https://unitedcats.wordpress.com/2011/04/12/the-mask-of-la-roche-cotard/>; (e) <http://www.unc.edu/depts/classics/courses/clar241/CHhunter.jpg>, with thanks; (f) Breuil *et al.* 1954; (g) <http://www.ianslunar-pages.org/lionhead.html>, with thanks; (h) for details see Fig. 9.6; (j) Witsen 1692 / 1705 / 1785; (k) <http://www.artecoia.pt/index.php?Language=en&Page=Saberes&SubPage=ArteAlemCoa&Menuz=Lascaux>, with thanks; (l) <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/prehistoric/trois-freres-cave.htm>, with thanks

Table 9.32. Iconographic aspects of pre- and proto-historic shamanism: Pardi-vesture and therianthropy

It is mainly in Proto-Eurasiatic, and particularly Proto-Altaic and Proto-Eskimo, that the semantics denoting the specialist religious role of ‘shaman’ are listed in the *Tower of Babel* database. The same semantics are also claimed for Proto-Sinocaucasian (*sVnV (-c, z), notably Sinotibetan and Yenisseian. They also occur in Austric, e.g. Proto-Bahnaric *zew, but the highest etymon to which that South East Asian form can be relegated is Proto-Austroasiatic *caw, ‘owner, lord’, with only implied religious connotations if at all.³⁹⁵ Confinement to these few (macro-)phyla may be due to the circumstance that religious specialists in the other parts of the huge Euroasiatic-speaking region (ranging from the Iberian peninsula to South Asia and again via the Bering Strait to Greenland) are not commonly considered, by scholarly analysts, to be shamans even if by certain definitions they might be so classified – later religious dispensations, especially those associated with world religions, may have eclipsed shamanic roles and beliefs, and driven the concept to the global periphery. Or alternatively, it could be due to a circumstance (often taken for granted in popular discussions of shamanism, though not supported by me)³⁹⁶ that the shamanic form of religion emerged in Northern Asia in an Altaic or Sinocaucasian (notably Yenisseian) speaking environment and subsequently conquered the world.

A special case of the confrontation between the I and the Not-I (and by implication, a case potentially interpretable in religious terms, according to my religion definition as presented in section 8.2.3.7, above) obtains when a human puts on animal skins, antlers etc. and as a result is almost indistinguishable from the animal in question – a form of *therianthropy* (Greek θήρα *thēra* = wild animal; ἄνθρωπος *anthrōpos* = human being). Upper Palaeolithic art offers many examples of such usage, a few of which are presented in Fig. 9.32. This type of iconography has often been invoked in support of the ‘hunting magic’ hypothesis for the interpretation of rock art: the scenes were interpreted in terms of a shaman seeking to enhance the humans’ hunting success. The tension between identification and dissociation, submission and dominance, speaking to us from these images, would rather suggests other, more complex and less utilitarian forms of religious beliefs and action. In my stud-

³⁹⁵ As we shall see, a peculiarity of potentially religious concepts in the lexical material dated at the Upper Palaeolithic and immediately after, is the confusion between high-ranking humans (shamans, healers, diviners, priests, kings), and divine beings.

³⁹⁶ This common view anachronistically and uncritically projects the linguistics and geography of today’s shamanism 20 ka back in time. On the basis of a complex typological exercise involving both iconographic, ethnographic and linguistic elements, I have provisionally reconstructed (van Binsbergen 2012d: Fig. 8.1, p. 257) the emergence of shamanism as occurring c. 10-15 ka BP in a Central to West Asian context where Eurasiatic and Afroasiatic were on the verge of splitting from each other, and their joint dissociation from Sinotibetan had already taken place. Typically, the shaman travels spiritually to meet the sacred; other religious specialists (e.g. *sangomas*) are visited / possessed by the sacred (cf. van Binsbergen 1981: Ch. 2).

ies of leopard symbolism through space and time (*cf.* Appendix III), I have dealt at length with what I have called *pardivesture*: the wearing of leopard skin by humans, the first attested case of which occurred in France in Mousterian / Neanderthal times some 60 ka BP (de Lumley 1966). Wearing the coat / skin / fur of an animal is ambiguous, for it could mean that one emulates the animal and seeks to become one with it, but it is at the same time a sign of having killed the animal, a triumph that stresses difference and distance rather than merger; very much the same ambiguity attends all animal sacrifices: the sacrificer both identifies with, and violently dissociates, from the victim. This ambiguity continues to attend *pardivesture* right into historical times, when priests, kings, shamans, gods, are shown to engage in *pardivesture*. The prehistoric iconographies showing close human-animal associations have sometimes been interpreted in terms of totemism (*e.g.* Mainage 1921), but I doubt whether such a specific, narrowing label would illuminate the essential ambiguity that is at stake here, and that seems to mark, not only a decisive factor in the emergence of religion, but also in the development of the consciousness of Neanderthaloid Humans as well as Anatomically Modern Humans.

*Borean *CVMNV is translated as ‘dream, and has reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Austric, and Amerind (misc.), with a wide range of reflex semantics including ‘sleep, pass the night, night, sadness (Uralic), echo (Altaic: ‘illusion?’), drowsy / lazy / idle / swoon’ (Dravidian – coming close to induced forms of altered consciousness)

Alternative *Borean roots for ‘sleep’ are *HVMV (also night); and *HVMLV, ‘sleep, dream’, the latter with reflexes in Sinocaucasian and Amerind (misc.) (‘sleep’). In Sinocaucasian, most reflexes mean ‘dream’, but in Basque an interesting variant of intangible unreality surfaces: ‘cloud; mist; fog; vapour’.

Still on the point of altered states of consciousness, one could cite *Borean *PVKV, ‘stupid, to be mad’, with reflexes in Eurasiatic and Austric. In Altaic (< Eurasiatic), its reflexes tend to take on the semantics ‘doubt’ or ‘sadness’ (especially in Mongolian), which might have religious implications in a culture where religion is not merely a matter of community formation but also of doctrinal compliance (as in Islam and Christianity) – and where doubt, therefore, takes on heretic and anti-social overtones. In the *Borean context, the whole idea of doubting religious doctrine is hard to imagine in this prehistoric, pre-logocentric environment, and unlikely to have qualified as a sign of stupidity; probably, therefore, the *Borean root *PVKV should not be interpreted as religious.

With all the prudence that is required when handling the brittle reconstruction of Upper Palaeolithic *Borean language, I think we have adduced plausible grounds for assuming that altered states of consciousness were already part of religion in the Upper Palaeolithic and may be considered to belong to the ‘elementary forms of religious life’.

9.12. Exploring the semantics of ‘God, High God, gods’ in prehistoric lexicons

The semantics ‘god, deity, divinity, divine’ are not listed for *Borean. I will now carry out my search at the level of macrophyla and phyla, starting with Eurasiatic.

9.12.1. ‘God’ semantics in the Eurasiatic macrophylum

The concept / semantics ‘god’³⁹⁷ does occur in Indo-European, *deiw-, *dyew-, from an Eurasiatic root *d^wVjɣV, ‘day, shine’, with further reflexes in Altaic (‘gleam, shine’) and Kartvelian (‘day’), and with proposed cognates in Afroasiatic also attaching to the ‘shine’ semantics. This leads us to propose that the Indo-European form derives its semantics secondarily from ‘shine’, probably because in the Proto-Indo-European context the sun was venerated as a god. There are numerous indications that this was not just a Proto-Indo-European phenomenon – solar cults are widespread globally (cf. van Binsbergen in press (g), and there are astonishingly many *Borean forms meaning ‘sun’ or ‘shine’.

*Borean item	semantics
*PVRV	‘shine, bright’
*MVLV	‘shine, burn’
*PVLV	‘shine, burn’ (several roots?)
*PVHV	‘shine, light’
*PVCV	‘shine, sun’
*LVKV	‘shine; burn’
*CVWV	‘sun’
*KVMV	‘sun, burn’ (?)
*TVNV	‘sun, day’
*HVKV	‘day, sun’
*NVRV	‘day, sun, light’
*NVJV	‘to burn, sun’
*CVNV	‘burn, shine’
*TVWV	‘day, shine’
*HVKV	‘day, sun’
*NVRV	‘day, sun, light’
*HVLV	‘light, shine’
*JVKV	‘light, shine’
*HVCRV	‘star, shine’

³⁹⁷ #54. ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF GOD / GOTT. Remarkably, the Germanic word Gott / god, ‘god’, although already attested in Gothic, has a fairly uncertain etymology. *Tower of Babel* interprets it (Proto-Indo-European database 618, Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 529 f.) in terms of Proto-Indo-European ḡhau-, ḡhauə ‘to call’ (also cf. Green 1998: 16 f.), with reflexes in Proto-Germanic, probably in the sense of ‘invoked being’, soon semantically more specific in the context of early Christianity; or alternatively, ‘the One Who creates by Word of Mouth’, by analogy of West-Asian Marduk, and of the West and Central African theonym Nyambi, with an underlying possible etymon ku-amba-, ‘to speak’. Yet I suspect that Germanic Gott, god originates in West to Central Asia and there (like Proto-Semitic *ʔilā ‘god, heaven’, only once listed in *Tower of Babel!* – which suggests that also for this widespread Semitic word there is no convincing Afroasiatic etymology) has affinities with Proto-Bantu godo, ‘heaven, sky’ (in historical times usually modified to -yilu-. I point once more at the attestation of proto-Bantu in the West Asian Bronze Age (e.g. *Yabbok, Canaan*).

*CVJV	'to blink, shine, shade'
*CVLV	'to flash, shine'
*LVPV	'to shine, glitter, flash'

Table 9.33. The surprisingly extensive *Borean lexicon of 'sun' and 'shine'

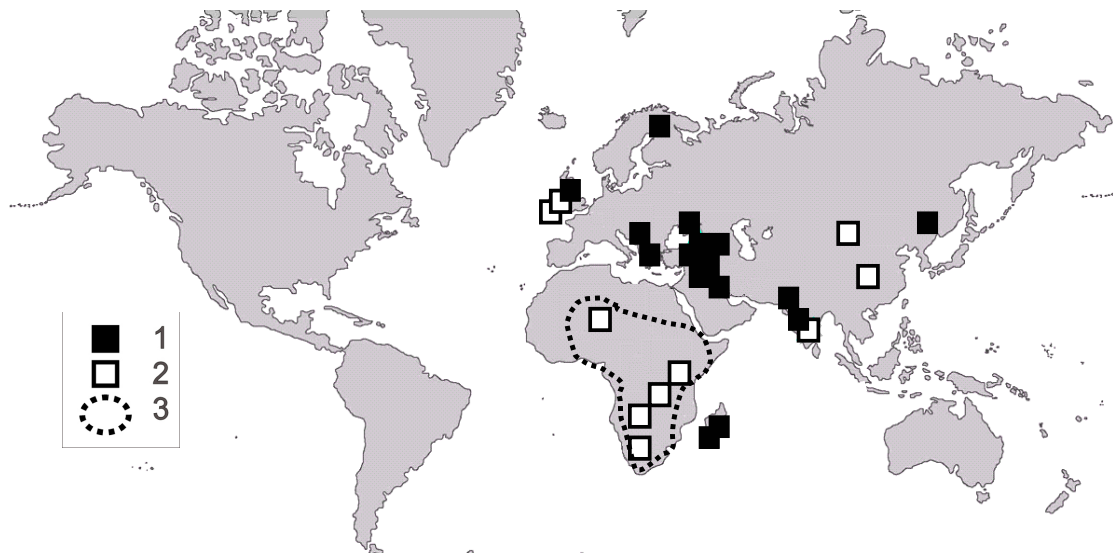
The *Kabeiroi* are gods of darkness and treasure venerated in Ancient Greek Boeotia and the isles of Samothrace and Lemnos (associated with the cult of Hephaestus and probably with metallurgy), but also with a probable link with the Indian god Kubera, cf. the Ancient Greek religious concepts of Pluto (Greek: Πλούτων, Ploutōn) and Hades (Greek: Ἅδης Háidēs). Although Martin Gardiner Bernal (1991: 499) proposed the fairly obvious link between the *Kabeiroi*, and Arabic kabīr, 'great' (< Proto-Semitic *kVbur-, 'great') – thus implicitly claiming an Afroasiatic etymology for *kabeir-o, the great authority on Indoeuropean etymology, Pokorny (1959-1969: I, 349) considers the root to be authentically Indoeuropean. Further, Proto-Indoeuropean knows a storm god *taron-, surfacing as Hittite Tarḫu- etc., Luwian³⁹⁸ Tarḫunt, and also with Iranian, Slavic and Celtic reflexes. Another Indoeuropean term for 'god' is *Perkun-, -g-, with reflexes in Old Indian, Slavic, Baltic and Germanic (Pokorny 1959-1969: II, 43 f.), associated with rain and possibly also with the forest.³⁹⁹ Obviously religious is also Proto-Indoeuropean *yag'- (Gr h-), 'to revere a deity' (Pokorny 1959-1969: I 195), with reflexes in Oldindian, Avestan, and Oldgreek, and giving rise to reflex semantics such as 'deity', 'sacrifice' and *sacred* – yet without recognised higher-level etymon above Indoeuropean. Indoeuropean has several other terms for god or for a specific god, e.g. *tī(g)wa-z (Germanic: 'Tiw / Mars'; from Proto-Indoeuropean yew-), *ēunra-z, *ēunr ('Tor / thunder / Jupiter'; from Proto-Indoeuropean *taron, 'thunder'), again none of which has known ascending etymons above Indoeuropean. Were they tabooed?

³⁹⁸ #55. ON THE TRANSCONTINENTAL UNILATERAL MYTHICAL FIGURE. In von Sicard's comparative analysis of the unilateral figure in global mythology, the Levantine god Tarḫu(nt) appears as a variant of the very widespread mytheme which that scholar designates by the generic analytical name of *Luwe* – under which it is, however, known in only a small part of the unilateral figure's distribution area as depicted in Fig. 9.4. In *Luwe* the rain and forest connotations of Tarḫu(nt) are expanded to include cattle and metallurgy – which make the figure a bizarre, hybrid and anachronistic concoction of different modes of production: hunting / collecting, animal husbandry, and petty commodity production – suggestive of thick layers of accretion and re-interpretation over the millennia. Could 'Luwe' simply mean 'the Luwian god'? This is a distinct possibility, since the 'Land of Luwia' was an established concept – it is, for instance, mentioned in Law number 21 of the *Code of the Nesilim*, a text comparable to the more famous *Code of Hammurabi*. Given however the elaboration of leopard and lion symbolism around the *Luwe* figure (van Binsbergen 2003b), we may assume that the central meaning of the name *Luwe* is simply 'lion' — the symbolic counterpart of the more subaltern and malign leopard, with its speckled coat; cf. Appendix III of the present book.

³⁹⁹ Cf. the West- and Central-African (including Nkoya) god Nyambi, associated with the forest and parent of Mvula, 'Rain'? As I have argued repeatedly elsewhere, Nyambi belongs to a belt of theonyms stretching from West Africa to West Asia and North-western Europe (including Neith, Anahita, Athena, Anat etc.), and associated with a surprising combination of female prowess and the feminine arts such as spinning and weaving. For an extensive treatment, cf. van Binsbergen 2015b: 18 f.

In the semantics ‘king, lord, God’ of Proto-Germanic: **eiudō*; cf. **eiudana*-s, ‘people’ we encounter a phenomenon that occurs very frequently in the languages of the Old World:⁴⁰⁰ fusion of divine characteristics and exalted human characteristics. All this suggests:

1. in South-western and Western Eurasia, the semantics ‘god, exalted spiritual being’ did not emerge much earlier than the rise of Indo-European (≤ 6 ka BP)
2. perhaps the semantics ‘God’ developed out of that for ‘exalted human’.



1. von Sicard’s (1968-1969) attestations of the unilateral figure outside Africa; 2. attestation of the unilateral figure from other sources than von Sicard; 3. generalised extent of von Sicard’s numerous African attestations of the unilateral figure; from: van Binsbergen 2010b, with full references.’

Fig. 9.4. Global distribution of the mytheme of the unilateral mythical being

Semantic equivalents of such ‘god’ semantics are also found in the other Eurasian phyla:

Proto-Altaic: **tʰangiri*, ‘oath, God’, with reflexes in Turkic (where the *Tower of Babel* database suggests that an original semantics ‘God’ has developed into a secondary semantics ‘sky’ – however, on long-range comparative grounds I would rather propose to reverse this process), Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu and Japanese.

With Proto-Turkic **baj* (~ -*n̄*) ‘1 holy 2 God 3 true, reliable, honest’ we hit upon a reflex of Proto-Altaic **maji*, ‘protecting spirit’, going back to Proto-Eurasian **majV* ‘to deceive, to bewitch(?)’ – as if this is a pre-theistic level out of which, under the impact of the Bronze Age logocentric package, the later theistic semantics were derived. Somewhat in the same vein, a semantics ‘God’ popping up in Mongolian

⁴⁰⁰ E.g. Proto-Dravidian: **vēnd-*, ‘king; god’; similarly in Tamil: *aṇṇal* ‘greatness, exaltation, superiority, great man, king, god’ (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: No. 0110). Proto-Southdravidian: **Ir-* ‘lord, king, ruler’, with Tamil reflexes applying to both ruler and god (Burrow & Emeneau 1970: No. 0527). Proto-Southdravidian: **sas-*, ‘straight; correct’, Tamil derivative *cemmal* ‘greatness, excellence, superiority, power, haughtiness, great person as king, god, hero; *cemm-ā* to be right, proper, be haughty, superior, be overjoyed, be majestic in bearing’. Proto-Southdravidian: **per-*, ‘big’, Tamil derivative: *periyār*, *periyōr* ‘the aged, the great, saints, kings’; *periyōn* ‘great man, god’, and: *perumān* ‘nobleman, king, elder, elder brother, god’; *pemmān* ‘god, great man’; *perumai* ‘bigness, greatness, excellence, nobleness, abundance, excess, power, celebrity, pride’; *peruvar* ‘great persons’; *pirān* ‘lord, king, master, god’; *pirāṭṭi* ‘lady, mistress, goddess’; *pen_nam*-*periya*, *pen_nam*-*perutta* ‘very large’; *eccu* ‘excess, increase’. Proto-Southdravidian: **mUd-al-*, ‘first, beginning’, yielding Tamil *mutalvan* ‘one who is first, chief, head, god, king, father’. Also, in Afroasiatic: Central Cushitic (Agaw): **ʔadar-* ‘master, lord 1, ‘God 2,’ from Proto-Afroasiatic: **ʔadir-*: ‘paternal uncle; master, lord’. And in numerous derivations from Proto-Semitic: **baʕl-* ‘husband, master, owner’ (cf. the theonym Baʕal).

enduri / undur / öndür ultimately derives from Eurasianic *wVnV, 'high, big'. Comparative religion, rock art studies and Comparative Mythology have recently stressed the shamanic dimension of prehistoric religion, and in this connection it is interesting that Proto-Tungus-Manchu: *sebe-⁴⁰¹ '1 ghost (shaman's aid) 2 idol 3 God' reverts to Proto-Altaic *sebV(nV) (~z-), 'strange, supernatural' – again without a clear theistic focus in the oldest, highest etymon level. A pre-theistic level may also be detected in Proto-Japanese: *kàmù-l,⁴⁰² 'spirit, god', hence the general modern Japanese term kami, and deriving from a Proto-Altaic root *kiamo, 'ghost, spirit', with reflexes in all Altaic branches.

In Proto-Uralic, the semantics 'sky, weather; god' (148) attach to *ilma, with reflexes in most Uralic branches, but no higher-level etymon. Proto-Uralic *numV (611), 'above; sky, god' is a similar case, and so is *juma (1268).

Equally without higher levels of derivation is Proto-Kartvelian: *γramt- (*γermat-), 'God'.

In Proto-Dravidian *pēj-[Vn] the semantics 'god' is combined with that of 'fervency', as if in illustration of Durkheim's discourse on *effervescence* in religion. *Considering the demographic and cultural influence from South Asia upon Australia in the most recent millennia, it is not impossible that there is a distinct continuity between Australian and Dravidian ecstatic expressions.* The Proto-Southdravidian reflex: *pēj-, 'devil; god; mad, fervent', brings out even more the ecstatic and largely pejorative aspect of the religious concepts it denotes (hence the popular expression with apparent colonial overtones: 'devil dances', especially for such practices on Ceylon / Sri Lanka), which are also clear from the reflexes in present-day branches:

Tamil: pēy, 'devil, goblin, fiend; madness (as of a dog), frenzy; wildness (as of vegetation)': pēyan_ demoniac, madman; pēytti, pēycci, pēcci 'demoness, woman under possession of a demon'

Malayalam: pē, pēyi, 'demon (fem. pēcci); rage, madness, viciousness': pēna ghost, spirit; pē-nāyi mad dog

Kannada: pē, hē, 'madness, rage, viciousness; growing wild (as plants), worthlessness': pētu, hēde 'demon'; pēṅkuṇi, pēṅkuḷi, hēkuḷi 'demon; madness, fury'; hēga 'a mad, foolish man'

Tulu: pēyi, 'demon'

Proto-Nilgiri: *pēn,

cf. Proto-Nilgiri: *peṅ- 'corpse'

South Dravidian etymology: South Dravidian etymology

Kota: penm (obl. pent-)

Toda: iṅ 'the dead' (iṅōr 'the world of the dead' [nōr 'place']; iṅ ṭōw 'the god of the dead' [= ōn])'

(Toda forms should be borrowings)

yielding Kota: pen, penm, 'possession of woman by spirit of dead'; Toda: ōn 'the god of the dead'; also Kota pēy, 'demon'; Toda influenced by Badaga (**Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 4438**).

Similarly Proto-Southdravidian: *maruḷ- (caus. *maruḷ-), 'confused; afraid; bewildered', whose Tamil reflexes convey a wide range of non-theistic religious notions:

Tamil: maruḷ (maruḷv-, maruḷ-), 'to be confused, bewildered, deluded, be afraid, be timid, wonder, be similar; n. bewilderment of mind, confusion, ignorance, delusion, illusion, wonder, intoxication, madness, toddy, imp. devil, possession as by a spirit'

Tamil derivations: maruḷal 'inarticulate sound, murmur of voices, fear, infatuation'; maruḷan_ 'bewildered person, person under possession of a spirit or deity'; maruḷāḷi 'priest acting as medium through whom a deity is supposed to foretell, worshipper of certain minor gods'; maruḷi 'bewilderment of mind, person in bewilderment'; maruḷkai 'astonishment, wonder, bewilderment'; maruḷci 'false understanding, perversion of mind, bewilderment'; maruḷṭu(maruḷṭi-) 'to entice, fascinate, infatuate, bewitch, threaten, menace, cause to be changed, resemble, allure, coax, cheat; n. threatening, enticing'; maruḷṭam 'that which intoxicates, toddy, cheating'; maruḷṭi 'that which intoxicates, toddy; temptress, blandishing, woman, fascinating woman'; ? varuḷṭu(varuḷṭi-) 'to charm, fascinate'; similarly in Malayalam and Kannada.

Like all Dravidian branches very rich in theistic vocabulary in more recent times (far too rich to be treated in extenso here, anyway), Proto-Southdravidian *!l-ak-, 'to shake' in its Kodagu derivatives we are reminded of the ecstatic, possibly shamanic, characteristics of much of the religion of South Dravidian speakers even in historic times: ēlak- (ēlaki-) 'to make to leave a position, uproot, (god) possesses (man who devil-dances); ēlaka uprooting from position, violent, shaking (as when possessed by a god). Thus also in Proto-Nilgiri: *tēr, 'god; possession; divination':

Kota: dēr 'god, possession of a diviner by a god'

Toda: tōr ṱō- (ṱōdy-) '(shaman) is dancing and divining'

Additional forms: Also Kota tēr 'possession of a diviner by a god'; tērkārn 'diviner'; tērkārc 'wife of diviner'

Voiced d- in Kota dēr may be due to analogy with Indo-Aryan deva-li

⁴⁰¹ Tsintsius *et al.* 1975-1977: 2, 135 (also *sebe-ki).

⁴⁰² Martin 1987: 435. Oldjapanese kamu- in compounds (kamu-nusi etc).

Also:

Proto-Gondi: *lēs-, 'to be possessed'

Muria Gondi: lēsk- 'to tremble, be possessed by gods'

Maria Gondi: lēs- 'to cast out evil spirits by means of spells'

Additional forms: Also Gondi_Mu lēske (pl. -r) medium through whom gods speak (he always shakes his head)"; Gondi_Ma lēske (pl. -r) priest, shaman"

Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 509f (...)

or

Proto-Northdravidian: *nād, 'devil; spirit; idol'

Kurukh: nād 'devil, evil spirit; idol'

Malto: nāde 'a stone set up in the name of a deity'

Additional forms: Also Kurukh nādas 'devil-worshipper; rascal, rogue, knave'; nād-xall 'any field where an idol has been set up'; Malto nādo 'relating to nāde, or a deity'; nādo-māku 'the intestines of a slaughtered animal, such as the liver, heart, etc., which are supposed to belong to the gods.'

Burrow & Emeneau 1970: 3645⁴⁰³

An apparently genuine sense of transcendence is encountered in Tamil kaṭavu! 'god' (who transcends speech and mind), from Proto-Southdravidian: *kaḍ-a-, 'to cross'; it would appear as if here we encounter a genuine emic conception of transcendence.

Regular 'god' semantics are further found, within Eurasiatic, in Eskimo, where Proto-Eskimo: *aṅalku-, 'shaman' < Proto-Chukchee *aṅaṅə-ləṅ-n 'shaman' i. e. 'man of God' (*aṅaṅ = 'God').

Table 9.34. The emerging 'God' semantics in branches of Eurasiatic

Thus we see that, although the 'God' semantics is absent from the *Borean lexicon, it does emerge insistently and in many forms in such branches of Eurasiatic as Altaic, Dravidian and Eskimo. This corroborates my suggestion that the theistic variant of religion is not even 20 ka old and dates from the relatively early phases of the desintegration of Eurasiatic.

9.12.2. The 'god' semantics in other macrophyla than Eurasiatic

After this discussion of the 'god' semantics in the Eurasiatic macrophylum, let us turn to the other macrophyla, starting with Afroasiatic.

Proto-Afroasiatic: *bin-, 'son, brother:

Egyptian bnt 'epithet of the Sun-god's son'

Proto-Afroasiatic: *g^(w)ayč- ~ *ʔa-n-guč-'chief by inheritance', yielding: High East Cushitic: *gos- 'kinship, common ancestor, relatives' 1, 'God, master' 2

⁴⁰³ #56. ON THE RAPPROCHEMENT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND SOUTH ASIA. It is amazing how close these South Asian concepts and practices are to possession, mediumship and divination, not only in Sri Lanka (which is situated in South Asia, after all) but also in South Central and Southern Africa; cf. van Binsbergen 1981, 2003a, 2012 and references cited there. One could explain this by assuming a common origin in Upper Palaeolithic Central Asia ca. 15 BP, in combination with the 'Back-to-Africa' population movement signalled above, but in addition we must reckon with the massive evidence of much more recent, tangible South Asian (and East Asian, and South East Asian) intrusions in sub-Saharan Africa in the course of the last two or three millennia; cf. van Binsbergen 2015b, 2017a. Trade in cattle and gold between South Asia and East Africa was thriving in the millennia around the beginning of the Common Era. E.g. zebu cattle, and sesame as an important food crop, had African origins but found their way by maritime means to South Asia (Rowlands 2012; Darlington 1969 / 1973).

Proto-Afroasiatic: *raʕ- 'sun, god' (discussed above as possibly having an Austric background)
Egyptian: rʕ 'sun, Sun-god' (Pyramid texts; cf. Mercer 1952) (?) (Cf. Eg rʕ 'sun; god', rather <*IVʕ-.)
East Chadic: *raH- 'god' 1, 'sky' 2
Proto-Afroasiatic: *ni(h)nay-, (elder) relative / *nan-, 'god'
Egyptian: nn 'foregod [Urgott]' (gr)
Westchadic: *nan- 'god'
Proto-Afroasiatic: *baʕ- 'sun, god'
Egyptian: bʕ 'Sun-god' (...)
Westchadic: *bwaH- 'sun' 1, 'sky' 2, 'god' 3

Table 9.35. The emerging 'God' semantics in Afroasiatic

In Eastchadic we find: *bun-H- 'God of the rain' 1, 'sky' 2, 'God'; this derives from Proto-Afroasiatic: *buʕun-, 'rain, sky', which does not acquire a theistic semantics in the other Afroasiatic branches in which it occurs (notably Semitic and Egyptian), but is one of our few theistic reflexes to revert all the way to *Borean albeit with semantics that are not specifically theistic: *PVNV, 'water',⁴⁰⁴ also in Eurasiatic *bVnV 'wash', and in Amerind (misc.) *pan 'water' (Ruhlen n.d.: 830). Given the dependence of Central African agricultural populations on rain, the adoption of a religious element may be no older than the Neolithic and to be situated at the level of Eastchadic; yet there are abundant indications,⁴⁰⁵ especially in Comparative Mythology, that water already carried religious connotations from Upper Palaeolithic *i.e.* *Borean times. By the same token, Proto-Afroasiatic *gab-, 'earth, clay' yields Oldegyptian gbb (*Pyramid Texts*, cf. Mercer 1952) 'earth, Earth-god'.⁴⁰⁶

Considering the prominence (as discussed above (Section 8.4), in regard of the shortcomings of my 2005 Kyoto approach) of solar and shining semantics already in *Borean, and their plausible religious meanings, we are not surprised to find, in Afroasiatic a number of theistic reflexes with the semantics 'sun god', *e.g.*:

⁴⁰⁴ That 'water' is at the root, in the most literal sense, of a theistic principle that becomes manifest in descendant reflexes, need not surprise us. The 'Mother of the Waters' is a very ancient, probably Upper Palaeolithic mythical concept; her epiphany is aquatic birds, and her central cosmogonic function may be reconstructed as to give birth to her Only Son and subsequently, when the latter becomes her lover, to the entire world. (It is also in such terms, *e.g.*, that Mellaart has interpreted the bucrania at Çatal Hüyük, cf. Relke 2007.) Water features as a dominant symbol, not only in prehistory as reflected in the *Borean lexicon, but also in literate Antiquity (*e.g.* Ninck 1921), and in Southern Africa in prehistoric and modern times (Ouzman 1995; Bernard 2009).

⁴⁰⁵ van Binsbergen 2010a; van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 23.

⁴⁰⁶ But without any further theistic reflexes to be found in the other branches of Afroasiatic; and although the *Tower of Babel* database claims a *Borean etymology with the same semantics, the hyperlink provided on that point does not lead to a relevant *Borean root (the most likely one being HVMGV 'dirt, earth?', but that is not presented there, and it would be very unlikely whether that could lead to Afroasiatic *gab anyway.

<p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *limaH-: shine, day Westchadic: *liHam- 'sun' 1, 'sky' 2, 'God' 3; possible links with Proto-Afroasiatic: *IV7-: 'shine' (...) Algerian leleʔa (...) Cf. also Egyptian r⁴⁰⁷ 'sun'. Egyptian: bzy 'Sun-god' (...), from Proto-Afroasiatic: *biʒ-: sun, day.</p> <p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *wan-/*wun-: 'day, sun' Egyptian: wnw (gr) 'light (n.); Sun-god',</p> <p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *(?V-)man-: 'sun, day' Egyptian ḫmny 'Sun-god' (...),</p> <p>Proto-Afroasiatic: *baʕ-: sun, god Egyptian: bʕ 'Sun-god' (...), Westchadic: *bwaH- 'sun' 1, 'sky' 2, 'god' 3, Theistic semantics relating to the sun god are also reached in Proto-Centralchadic (*fa(H*V)t-, 'sun' 1, 'God' 2, 'light' 3, 'sky' 4, 'dry season' 5); and ??*gVʒVf/b: 'sky' 1, 'God' 2, 'cloud' 3) but again without higher-level etymons.</p> <p>In Proto-Sinocaucasian the theistic semantics 'soul, breath; god, sky' appears as *ʔāmsi, with reflexes in Northcaucasian, Sinotibetan, Yenisseian, Burushaski, and Basque, and reverting to *Borean *HVMSV, 'soul, breath', which we have discussed above at length. Note that at the *Borean level, the 'god' semantics is not returned.</p> <p>Many more theistic semantics could be listed for the Northcaucasian level, but we will not do so. Close to recent theistic semantics seems to be Proto-Northcaucasian: *bi_čē (~-ä-, -ī) 'moral experience; god',⁴⁰⁸ for which however no higher-level etymon has been given.</p> <p>In the opinion of the compilers of the <i>Tower of Babel</i> database, the relative antiquity of Proto-Northcaucasian: *GwintV 'mound, hill' seems to be confirmed especially in view of the Hurritic parallel: Hurritic qund-are 'mountain, abode of gods' (see Diakonoff & Starostin 1986, 24), which makes the Eastcaucasian antiquity of the root rather probable. This also suggests that a theistic dimension entered East Caucasian at an early stage, perhaps in the Uppermost Palaeolithic / early Holocene / Mesolithic or Neolithic times.</p> <p>Another Northcaucasian proto-form with the 'god' semantics is: *biš, reflexed in Avar (Uslar 1889). In Proto-Westcaucasian we have *nēc:ʷ'god', as well as *Ła, '1 smoke 2 god, spirit 3 to suffocate' – again with the 'airy' semantics. Among the many more theistic reflexes in Northcaucasian, we may list: Proto-Nakh: *čēbV, '1 idol, god 2 heathen deity 3 priest'</p>
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Table 9.36. The emerging 'God' semantics in branches of Afroasiatic and Sinocaucasian

⁴⁰⁷ Elsewhere in *Tower of Babel* this form (the name ☉ Re^c or Ra^c, under which the Ancient Egyptian national sun god became well-known in the international literature, is derived from Proto-Afroasiatic: *raʕ-: sun, god (see Table 9.35). To relegate thus a theonym from historical times to a Proto-Afroasiatic root does not strike me as very convincing. An alternative, or cognate, solution I have proposed elsewhere (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: Table 28.4, pp. 370-372): to derive the Egyptian theonym from Austronesian, and to consider it (with a surprising number of other Mediterranean Bronze Age names) as deriving from Austric – possibly as a sign of Westbound Sunda expansion from South East Asia to Western Eurasia. The latter however scarcely explains the cognate Chadic reflexes, unless as a result of secondary expansion from Ancient Egypt into sub-Saharan Africa during the Bronze Age – a process for which we have found other indications in the present book, e.g. Section 8.2.3.6.

⁴⁰⁸ Which however does puzzle the compilers of the *Tower of Babel* database:

'An interesting Lak / Avaro-Andian isogloss. Precise meaning is hard to reconstruct, but the root probably denoted some kind of moral or supernatural experience: cf. also likely parallels in Hurritic: Hurritic piʒ-, Urartian piç- 'to be glad, rejoice' (see Diakonoff [&] Starostin 1986: 17).'

Proto-Afroasiatic: *raʕ-: sun, god:
 Semitic: *rayʕ- 'daylight'
 Egyptian: rʕ 'sun, Sun-god' (pyr) (?) (cf. Egyptian rʕ 'sun; god', rather <*IVʕ-.)
 Westchadic: *(?a-)riʔ- 'sky' 1, 'cloud' 2
 Eastchadic: *raH- 'god' 1, 'sky' 2

Table 9.35. Emergence of 'god' semantics in branches of Afroasiatic

Proceeding now to an inspection of specifically Sinotibetan as a phylum of Sinocaucasian, we see again the conflation of ruler and god in Chinese:

Proto-Sinotibetan: *Tē, 'god' (...) – in other words, 'god' semantics at the proto-phylum level
 Chinese: 帝 *tē(k)s God, emperor.
 Tibetan: the 'the celestial gods of the Bon religion' (Coblin [1986] : 164).:

Table 9.37. 'God' semantics in Sinotibetan

but equally interesting, and suggestive of a pre-theistic phase, the conflation of god and sorcerer:

Proto-Sinocaucasian: *ʔāmsi (< *HVMSV, see above), 'soul, breath; god, sky'
 Northcaucasian: *ʔāms_a (~ -ə, -i)
 Sino-Tibetan: *siā
 Yenisseian: *ʔes
 Burushaski: *-s
 Basque: *haise

Proto-Sinocaucasian: *[c]wVnV, 'ruler, god'
 Proto-Sinotibetan: *cūn (~ ʒh-), 'god, sorcerer'
 Chinese: 尊 *cūn 'honourable, of high rank; to honour'
 Tibetan: mchun, bcun 'tutelar deities, household gods'; bcun 'respectable, noble'
 Burmese: cūnh 'sorcerer, witch'.

Table 9.38. Further 'God' semantics in Sinocaucasian

The 'spirit' semantics, more general and inclusive than the theistic variant, comes up in:

Proto-Sinotibetan: *lǎ, 'spirit'
 Chinese: 神 *lǎ-n 'spirit; divine, superhuman'
 Tibetan: lha 'the gods.'
 Burmese: Lowerburmese *s-la 'soul' (...).
 Kachin: mēla2 'spirit', sumla '1 a picture, a figure.'
 Lushai: thla 'a spirit; a picture', (...) *khla.
 Kiranti: *lǎ

Table 9.39. 'Spirit' semantics in Sinotibetan

Mythical and by implication immanentist times are invoked in the Nepali entry maNba:la: 'ancient times, the period when primordial man lived together in harmony with the gods'. Very ancient cultic layers are suggested in parts of the Kiranti lexicon:

co:kmaʔ, -co:g/-co:k-, '1) do; make, build; 2) nadho: co:kmaʔ perform an offering to the jungle goddess ta:mbhuNna or to the deity of the outdoors pa:kkhabɛn by wrapping some fresh blood or a piece of cooked meat from a slaughtered animal in a leaf and leaving it at the jungle's edge or in some remote place outside; 3) mikthəkthək co:kmaʔ [mik eye + thək-thək cover, obscure] cover someones' eyes, blindfold someone; 4) a:sa co:kmaʔ hope; 5) iNlek co:kmaʔ The Kiranti entries in the *Tower of Babel* constitute a rich source of ancient religious information:

Entry: po:ro:ʔl-mi-yəmbha-mi-maN, po:ro:t-mi-yəmbha-mi-maN, 'the hanging-tail-large-tailed god', the male aspect (yəmbhami 'big-tailed') and the female aspect (po:ro:ʔlmi 'hanging-tail') are united in one long-tailed hermaphrodite god which is occasionally portrayed as a couple, residing in the deepest jungle where they determine the fate of Man, the creator(s) of mankind in the Limbu pantheon.

Entry: tatarɛn-niNwa-bhu-maN, tatarɛn-niNwa-phu-maN, 'the immaculate-minded god TatarAn, the genderless god of wisdom, knowledge and supreme intellect, whose substance is like the wind, creator of heaven and earth, a supreme deity of the indigenous Limbu pantheon.

Derivation: [tatarɛn ʔproper name + niNwa mind, intellect + *phu o pho white (cf. mikphuʔla) + maN deity]

while there is also attention for the jungle goddess, the hunting / clan goddess, the roaring god of the heavens, the ancestor gods, the rain god, to wit the prayer to invoke the latter, an irritable goddess of the household:

Entry: ya:kwa pudza 'prayer service invoking the rain god to initiate the pre-monsoon rains and grant a successful planting season'

Derivation: [ya:kwa rain goddess + pudza < Nepali pūjā prayer]

Nepali saosārī pūjā, dhul pūjā; vide ya:kwa kho:maʔ under kho:maʔ (II.1).

Entry: yuma-sammaN, 'an irritable household goddess who is born anew each dawn, matures during the course of the day and becomes an agēd woman at night only to be reborn again at dawn' [lit. grandmother-deity]

the attic of the main house is sacrosanct to her and off limits to non-family members; many taboos pertain to the attic such as not being allowed to sleep there alone; non-observance of any such household taboos arouses the anger of the yuma-sammaN who retaliates in all sorts of prankish and unpleasant ways; occasional sacrifices of female animals must be made to her, and it is imperative that the first single grain of the millet, rice and maize harvests be sacrificed to her; If neglected, she may inflict a member of the family with goiter, paralysis of one side of the face or cause some calamitous mishap; spouse of the thcba-sammaN (...)

and one who ascertains that the post-burial taboo on salt consumption is observed, the primordial mother Ri:be:m, impregnated by the primordial and original male god Ruwabhu (the planet Venus, with a trickster nature) – and the gods of Creation (pari-tsuʔu), to whom in olden times newborn infants could be sacrificed:

Entry: pari-tsuʔu, 'newborn infant sacrificed in olden times to the gods of Creation'.

Derivation: [pari 'primordial foam' + tsuʔu 'child']

Further attested are Sa:khidippa-tsiʔi [(the Primordial Earth, the God of Terran Creation) and Sirñnim the non-anthropomorphic sexless god of the Cosmic Order who emerged from the undifferentiated primordial foam or pa:ri at the Dawn of Existence; The Beginning), and the indoor deity Tophutsi in the form of a huge, dreadful serpent thicker than a man's thigh, the household incarnation or domestic avatār of the cosmic god[dess] Sirñnim; the serpent god twined about the arborescent aspect of Ruwabhu. ⁴⁰⁹

Here we once more come across the theme of the sacred fireplace, which extends all over the Old World from South Asia to Ancient Rome and Nilosaharan- and Nigercongo-speaking Africa (Fustel de Coulanges 1864 / 2009; Okot p'Bitek 1974; author's fieldnotes)

⁴⁰⁹ If there were not already many cultural and comparative-mythological indications of a fairly close affinity between South Asia and South Central Africa, these themes in Nepali religion would certainly direct our attention to such parallels. However, Ruwabhu as a male primal god and trickster does not seem to be part of such proposed continuities, – unless we may see him as somehow equivalent to the Mwendanjungula of South Central and Southern Africa. Fig. 9.4 demonstrates that the African unilateral figure in question does have South Asian parallels.

Entry: *siptilu*⁴¹⁰ 'the indoor fireplace in the Dumi household, a sacrosanct configuration of three equidistant long rectangular-prismatic stones buried upright in a circle, about one-fifth of the actual length protruding above ground and providing support for the various types of *kho*: 'vessels' used in cooking
Derivation: [*< lu 'stone'*]

the *siptilu* is sacred to the Dumi household gods and goddesses and in its fire, embers and ashes a shaman is capable of seeing the whole of the universe, the hidden schemes of the gods, the cosmic order and the future in the triangle of the *siptilu* within the square of the *ba:kkuli*; oaths are taken by the Dumi by touching one of the stones of the *siptilu* (...); Limbu *sumha?luN*; cf. *ba:kkuli*, *birmelu*, *da?lo:*, *danilu*, *payadanilu*, *ki:mbinlu*, *seyerlu*, *watalu*, *wa:ttolu*.

Table 9.40. Selected 'god' semantics in Kiranti

Another branch of Sinocaucasian is Yenisseian, spoken in parts of Siberia. Here we have, in terms of 'god' semantics (so again at the level of the proto-phylum):

Proto-Yenisseian: *ʔes , 'God, sky'

Proto-Yenisseian: *fiʔʒ 'mountain, wooded mountain ridge', yields the reflex in Pumpokol: *lici* (...) 'devil' (cf. Ket. *łitiś* 'wood devil (mountain + god)')

Table 9.41. Selected 'god' semantics in Yenisseian

Emerging in a socio-cultural and historical context that has been influenced by Buddhism, one might suppose that the 'god' semantics of Proto-Yenisseian may not be authentic but acquired later in history. However, the Proto-Yenisseian item is considered to have an etymon *ʔámsi in Proto-Sinocaucasian, and to be another scion on the stem of *Borean HVMSV, already considered at length above. *The entire etymological process here is an example of the gradual emergence, in the course of the desintegration of *Borean, of the 'god' semantics out of the concept of 'breath, soul'. We also encounter, in the Sinotibetan environment, themes that are familiar from the sangoma ecstatic cult of Southern Africa, e.g.:*

Entry: *tsi?su*

Kiranti etymology: 'the flank and the fleshy portion of the lower back, the general area surrounding the kidneys'

Derivation: [*tsi?i 'god' + su 'meat'*] [?]

this part of the body is so called because pains localized in this area are believed to be inflicted by angered deities and because the area is viewed as being particularly vulnerable, e.g. a stab with a dagger in this area is considered to be lethal.

Table 9.42. Further selected 'god' semantics in Kiranti

On the Eastern hemisphere, *i.e.* in the Old World, the most westerly branch of Sinocaucasian has been recognised to be Basque, and authors like Cavalli-Sforza *c.s.* (1994) propose that this was the language of the authors of the Franco-Cantabrian rock art of

⁴¹⁰ The three *sacred* cooking stones in the centre of the cooking house, which are so conspicuous a feature of sub-Saharan African life, appear also in Kiranti:

ha?luN, 'one of three long rectangular-prismatic stones buried upright in a circle within the domestic Limbu fireplace, about one-fifth of the actual length protruding above ground and providing the points of support for the *kar?hi* or wok when cooking'

Derivation: [*ha 'tooth' + luN 'stone'*]

soot of the *ha?luN* may be used to anoint the forehead in order to ward off evil spirits during night-time outings or nocturnal forays; children may anoint themselves with *ha?luN*- soot even during the day; cf. *sumha?luN*.

Upper Palaeolithic South-western Europe. Also the Basque lexicon has a theistic dimension, which may be due to Basque having been spoken, for the past two millennia, in a theistic socio-cultural environment dominated by other macrophyla notably Eurasiatic > Indoeuropean, and their varieties of Christianity – but which (in view of the installation of that theistic element at the very heart of the Proto-Basque lexicon) I propose to be at least 10 ka older.

Proto-Basque: *iainko, 'God',⁴¹¹ with reflexes in all the recognised Basque branches. **'The forms Ink(o)a occur in oaths: Ala Inkoa!, Ala Inka! 'By God!'. Azkue also cites Jaungoiko (Bizkaian, Gipuzkoan, ANV [Acción Nacionalista Vasca?]), but possibly this longer word ('lord who is on high') is a folk-etymology which attempts to rationalize the old name [Jainko] into something more obviously Christian' (Trask 1997: 323). The etymology remains mysterious'. In addition, ancient sources report on a Basque sky god, {Urcia} (*horceia).⁴¹²**

Table 9.43. Selected 'god' semantics in Basque

We now proceed to Austric. Here there are very few theistic semantics, but plenty on 'spirit' or 'soul' semantics, which are presumably more elementary and older. *E.g.*

Proto-Austric: *bV7ni, 'spirit'
 Proto-Austroasiatic: *PVŋ, 'spirit'
 Proto-Austronesian: *buni, 'invisible nature spirit'
 Proto-Thai: bɔːŋ 'a blood-thirsty spirit', and

Proto-Austric: *IVŋ, 'stomach, womb', from *Borean *LVNNTV, 'intestines', with reflexes in Eurasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Austric and Amerind (misc.).
 Proto-Austroasiatic: IVŋ 'stomach, soul'
 Miaoyao parallels: Yao liŋ.3 spirit, soul
 Proto-Austronesian: (Ache kandōng 'womb'); the latter **may be < Sinotibetan** (which has been under logocentric influence for millennia)

So it looks as if an originally anatomical designation shaded over into spiritual qualities, which were retained in the later reflexes.

Neither do we have proper theistic reflexes in Proto-Westkatuic (a subbranch of Austroasiatic), but we do have suggestions of an older pre-theistic level: *jaːŋ, 'guardian spirit'. Similar semantics (augmented with 'devil' and 'god' – perhaps as a later semantic intrusion from world religions) are recorded abundantly for another Austroasiatic language group, Bahnaric, notably the West and South branches. Here the 'spirit ceremony' is much in evidence.

Table 9.44. Selected 'god' semantics in Austric

The final macrophylum covered by the the *Tower of Babel* material is Khoisan. As was to be expected in the light of the extremely archaic connotations which researchers in historical times have (although probably unjustifiably) projected onto

⁴¹¹ One would be tempted to associate this theonym (also cf. Basojaun) with such other designations of primal gods circulating in West and South Eurasia: Janus (Italic), Oannes (whom the Hellenistic writer Berossus describes as the aquatic founder of Mesopotamian / Sumerian civilisation, at the Persian Gulf; Jacoby 1923-1927: No. 680), and Ganesha (South and South East Asia). However, there is no linguistic support for such a suggestion of continuity within the *Tower of Babel* context or elsewhere; also cf. Meillet 1959; Ernout 1956.

⁴¹² Apparently {Urcia} (*horceia) was an ancient name for the sky-god, [Vasorum et Iberorum!! – 'of the Basques and the Iberians' – WvB] like Jove / Jupiter, Zeus, etc., thus *horce-egun or *hošt-egun 'Thursday'. See the discussions by Michelena (1961: 130, 363-4) and Trask (1997: 277-79). There is similar alternation of -rc- / -št- in a few other Basque words, e.g. *herce / *hešte 'intestine', *borc / *bošt 'five' (/ 'knee'). The latter word we also encounter as a Basque term for divination!

the Khoisan speakers, non-theistic semantics dominate here. *E.g.*

<p>Proto-Ju: *gllao-ã, 'spirit, ghost' Jul'hoan : gllàòã (n2 -si) // gllàòã-žù-à (n1 -si) 'devilish person'; gllàòã-mà, pl. gllàòã-m'í (n2) 'little devil, imp'; gllàòã-č'í (n5 -si) 'grass sp.' Jul'hoan (Snyman 1975): gllãöwã 'devil' !Aullen : gllãúwa !Kung (Lloyd 1911) : gllanʔa !Kung (Vedder 1910-1912): gllãuâ !Kung (Wilhelm 1921-1922): gllanʔna 'soul' // gllãnʔua 'bad spirit' !O!Kung (Bleek 1956) : gllãüa !O!Kung (Snyman 1975): gllãüwã 'God'. Also Heillikum gllauá-i pl.; Bleek 1956: 526, 529; Dickens 1994: 216; Snyman 1975: 60; Snyman 1980: 39. (...). And:</p> <p>Proto-Taa : *ʔnõäh, 'spirits of an individual (malevolent)' !Xoong : ʔnõhã 2 ll, pl. -tê 2 ll !Xoong derivatives : ʔnõhã qhàn 2 ll, pl. ʔnõhã qhã-tê 2 ll 'a species of plant (<i>Tephrosia sp.</i>), lit. the spirit's lower leg'; ʔnõhã tã / ʔnõhã tàʔma 'earth god' (Traill 1981: 70).</p> <p>Nonetheless, theistic semantics are also present:</p> <p>Proto-Ju: √glaru 'the gods' (praise name) Jul'hoan : glárú-à-sì (n2) (Dickens 1994: 203). And</p> <p>Proto-Ju: √!xu 'God' Jul'hoan : !xù (n2) // !xù-žù-à (n1 -si) 'Christian'; !xù-lámá (n3 -si) 'Sabbath'; !xù-ʔxanù (n4 -si) 'bible' (Dickens 1994: 320)</p> <p>Despite the negative expectations kindled by the Khoisan speakers's essentialisation as primitive, the theistic repertoire turns out to be well developed, even to the extent of distinguishing a specific god of heaven, and one of earth:</p> <p>Proto-Taa : *kù (?), 'sky god, heaven, sky' !Xoong : kùu ʔèe 3 e ll; kujke (...) (Maingard 1958: 100; Traill 1981: 172).</p> <p>Proto-Taa : *ũhbu, 'earth god' !Xoong : ũhbu-kú 3 e ll, pl. -tê 2 u ll (Traill 1981: 196).</p> <p>Proto-West Khoe : *nʔári, 'god; sky' Naro : nʔári-kxʔái 'sky' (V.); n!ári, n!ádi 'God, sky' (...) !Gwi : n!odima'god' (...) (a loan from Bantu – WvB) //Gana : n!odim 'god' (...) (Barnard 1985: 32; Tanaka 1978 : 41).</p> <p>In this connection we also encounter once more the <i>equation of human leader with god, e.g.</i> in Proto-Ju: √kao, 'boss, lord, rich person, leader, God' Dickens 1994: 224 Jul'hoan : kàòhá ~ kàòxá (n1 -si); thus also: Proto-Ju: √!l'ai- 'rich man, leader, boss, God' Dickens 1994: 337 Jul'hoan : !l'ái-hà ~ !l'ái-xà (n1 -si) // !l'ái-hà-dí ~ !l'ái-xà-dí (n1 -sĩ) 'rich woman, woman leader, woman boss'</p>
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Table 9.45. Theistic aspects of the Khoisan lexicon

Despite the absence of theistic semantics in *Borean, we find to our surprise a proliferation of theistic terms throughout the macrophyla into which *Borean desintegrated, and often installed fairly high up in the proto-lexicon of phyla and sub-phyla. I am far from a specialist in long-range linguistics, and hesitate to offer an explanation on this point. The early proliferation of theistic elements in the lexicon could be explained by the assumption (*à la* Wilhelm Schmidt's *Urmonotheismus*) of an implied substrate of theism already in the *Borean heritage itself – but screened from both perception and effective transmission by taboos. Beside this risky 'genetic' hypothesis another explanation would be that of *early diffusion*: as if the idea of an anthropomorphic supernatural being, once formulated, proved so attractive and so constitutive of

further social and linguistic development that it was rapidly diffused across the boundaries of early macrophyla into which Borean was desintegrating. We shall return to this question shortly.

9.12.3. Prayer

One of the characteristic religious actions is prayer (used more than a dozen times in *Les Formes*), and one of the defining characteristics of a god is that humans pray to her or him. On this point, *Borean has two reconstructed roots

*PVRV, 'to ask, to pray', and

*MLV, 'to say, pray'.

However, if we conclude that these *Borean forms necessarily relate to humans addressing supernatural beings as in present-day prayer, we are not necessarily right. After all, also in modern languages the expression 'pray' is often used for verbal requests from one human to another, instead of human requests from deities.

*PVRV has reflexes in the two macrophyla Eurasiatic (*pVrXV) and Sinocaucasian (*[p]VrV), but it is only in the Eurasiatic phylum of Proto-Altaiic (which we shall encounter below as one of the likely cradles of theistic religion!) that a religious meaning 'to pray, bless' comes to be fore, all other reflexes in both macrophyla lacking a supernatural dimension, at least in historical times.⁴¹³

*Borean (...): *MLV.⁴¹⁴ 'to say, pray', has reflexes in Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic (*mVI- : Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1409 *mVI- 'think' (Cushitic, Semitic)), and Amerind (misc.): *mali 'talk' (Ruhlen n.d.: 730). The Eurasiatic proto-form *mVIV is listed as having the semantics 'to pray', but in none of the descending phyla a semantics 'prayer' can be unmistakably detected. The Indo-European reflex means 'to beg, to ask' (Pokorny 1959-1969: II, 284 f.), which may just be social practice between humans and does not imply a religious dimension. The Altaic proto-form is *mjóle, 'to present, gift'.⁴¹⁵ The Proto-Uralic form is *mele (*mēle), 'reason, understanding'. The Kartvelian⁴¹⁶ proto-form is *madl-, 'gratitude, grace'. By and large there is no reason to interpret *Borean *MLV as evidence of the existence, at the *Borean level, of a concept denoting religious action 'praying [to a god]'.

Table 9.46. The semantics of 'praying' in *Borean and selected descending (macro)phyla

⁴¹³ Illich-Svitych 1967: 357, 1976: 3, 111-125; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1765 *[p]iRo-(Kä) 'to ask' (but Kartvelian rather *pVrV). (Adams n.d.: 371). Pokorny 1959-1969: II 44 f.; Ramstedt 1952 / 1959: 53, 150, Vladimirtsov 1929: 181-182, Poppe 1960: 12, 60, Illich-Svitych 1976: 3, 119-124; Tsintsius 1984: 39; Dybo 1996: 14. Despite Poppe 1966: 197, 1972, 100; Doerfer 1985: 23.

⁴¹⁴ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1409 *me(y)IV 'mind, be clever' (Uralic - Semito-hamitic / Afroasiatic).

⁴¹⁵ The basic meaning of the root is "to present (or obtain) a gift"; a metaphorical change "present a gift > condescend > pity" must have occurred in Tungus-Manchu.'

⁴¹⁶ Klimov 1994: 186-187.

9.13. Spiritual beings: The prehistoric emergence of theistic beliefs

As we have seen, ‘spirit’ (*CVNV) is attested in *Borean, along with a considerable number of *Borean roots standing for ‘breath, to breathe’ – which, considering the airy implications, may be considered to be semantically close to ‘spirit’. Next to *Borean ‘spirit’ we have *Borean ‘soul, breath’ (*HVMSV), which we discussed extensively above, and which indicates that a vocabulary for expressing spiritual dimensions was already in place but may not already have given rise to the notion of individual personal spiritual beings different from humans and animals and with exalted powers, in other words, no ‘gods’ yet. Going back to this *Borean basis, the semantics ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’ are richly attested in all macrophyla. Also found in *Borean are numerous variants on ‘to shine’ / ‘brightness’, and for the main luminary, ‘sun’ – which suggests some form of solar worship. By the logic of range semantics, the form *CVJV means not only to ‘blink, shine’, but also ‘shade’ – which in more recent languages often appears as a designation of ‘deceased persons, ghosts’.

According to the *Tower of Babel* data we have considered above, several macrophyla (Afroasiatic, Sinocaucasian) have specific proto-forms for ‘god’, but not so Eurasiatic (although its constituting phyla have ‘god’ semantics among their proto-forms) nor Austric,⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Above we listed:

Proto-Afroasiatic: *ra^ʕ-: sun, god:
 Semitic: *ray^ʕ- ‘daylight’
 Egyptian: r^ʕ ‘sun, Sun-god’ (pyr) (?) (cf. Egyptian r^ʕ ‘sun; god’, rather <*IV^ʕ-.)
 Westchadic: *(*ʔa-)riʔ- ‘sky’ 1, ‘cloud’ 2
 Eastchadic: *raH- ‘god’ 1, ‘sky’ 2

If we are to maintain my suggestion (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 371) as to the Austric background of this root, we have an interesting puzzle: ‘god’ semantics are absent from Proto-Austric, yet one of the few items with ‘god’ semantics in Afroasiatic is proposed to have an Austric background. I can see various possible solutions to this puzzle, but I lack the linguistic competence to pick the right one:

- (a) The Austric Hypothesis in general must be rejected;
- (b) the connection between Egyptian rā^ʕ and Proto-Austric *raŋ ‘bright, light’ must be dismissed – or simply be attributed to a common origin in *Borean *NVRV, ‘day, sun, light’ regardless of any assumption of actual direct language contact between Northeastern Africa and South East Asia;
- (c) ‘god’ semantics, originally available in Proto-Austric, was tabooed there hence invisible;
- (d) ‘god’ semantics, originally available in Proto-Austric, was expelled for religious or ethnic reasons from the Indo-Pacific region along with the humans who carried them;
- (e) the connection must be dismissed, for Austric (thought to have originated in Taiwan c. 5 ka BP) was not yet sufficiently developed to be carried to Western Eurasia on the wings of westbound Sunda expansion and to engender there the name of what is attested as a primal god from the 5th dynasty onward (mid-3rd mill. BCE);
- (f) While Austric was in *statu nascendi*, ‘god’ semantic and the attending lexicon was brought to South East Asia from Northeastern Africa by Egyptian maritime expansion – this is the well-known ‘*Children-of-the-Sun*’ model propounded a century ago by the Manchester diffusionists Elliot Smith (1915 / 1929) and especially Perry (1923); cf. my critical study van Binsbergen, in press (g)

while Khoisan forms a borderline case;⁴¹⁸ the African macrophyla Nigercongo and Nilosaharan, and Amerind (misc.), are not systematically treated in the *Tower of Babel* database.⁴¹⁹ If we may go by my finding concerning the bifurcation of *Borean into a Central Continental Group (Eurasian, Afroasiatic and Sinocaucasian) and a Peripheral Transcontinental group (Nigercongo, Nilosaharan, Khoisan, Amerind (misc.) and Austric) as in Fig 8.16 above, it would appear as if the ‘god’ semantics specifically arose in the Central Group, shortly after the disintegration of *Borean, to be dated (depending on the kind of time scale we adopt, see legend to Fig. 8.16) *between 25 and 20 ka BP. This could be considered the moment of birth of theistic religion in the narrower sense*, probably out of the conceptual data available within the *Borean semantics of ‘soul, spirit, waters, sun, moon and stars’, – and ultimately leading to the fully-fledged religious forms of the Bronze Age.

The emergence of theistic religion may also have entailed *divination* as a way of ascertaining the will of the god(s); such divination has no conspicuous lexical attestation in *Borean, and only appears in the proto-lexicons of selected Eurasianic phyla (notably Altaic),⁴²⁰ but does manifest itself

⁴¹⁸ No ‘god’ semantics is listed in the main Khoisan entries of *Tower of Babel*, ‘long-range etymology’, for Proto-Macrokhoisan, but we did encounter and tabulate a semantics ‘gods’ for the constituent (sub-)phyla.

⁴¹⁹ Bantu is a phylum within Nigercongo. Remarkable is the discrepancy between two widely used listings of Bantu proto-forms: that by Guthrie n.d. (who does not list a single Proto-Bantu form with semantics ‘god’, and only one with semantics ‘spirit’: ‘-dímò 3/4 ; ‘spirit’ 619) and Meeussen (1980 and n.d.), whose listing is surprisingly extensive:

dungu 1, 3 ‘intelligent’ (adj.); ‘God’ 6.2.
-jambí 9 ‘god’ 4.2.
-Kadunga ‘god’ 6.2.
Cuku 1a ‘god’ 6.5.
-dí, mu 3 ‘god, spirit, darkness (ancestral spirit)’

Does this mean that the Bantu phylum (whose *Borean antecedents I am arguing elsewhere: van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011; van Binsbergen, in press (c)) has a relatively excessive theistic presence in its proto-lexicon? From an Afrocentrist perspective this would be a welcome suggestion, corroborating early African initiative in global cultural history. Yet I think this impression, implied in Meeussen’s listing, is erroneous. The Bantu-speaking area, extending from Cameroon and Kenya to the Cape, has been recognised to be fairly heterogeneous. As a result, Guthrie’s reconstruction of Proto-Bantu is greatly contested. The double figures following the semantics in Meeussen’s listings stand for sub-groups of Bantu. Despite the weak methodological status of Guthrie’s reconstruction, he is probably right in denying Bantu a proto-form with theistic semantic. Nigercongo belongs to the Peripheral, not the Central branch of desintegrating *Borean, and the proto-forms which Meeussen adduces are somewhat suspicious, since they directly derive from theonyms found among Bantu speakers in historical times. They may well have arisen from contact with Asian / Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist or with North Atlantic / Christian religious forms, such as existed in sub-Saharan Africa from at least the 1st mill. CE if not earlier.

⁴²⁰ #57. ON DIVINE POSSESSION IN DRAVIDIAN-SPEAKING SOUTH ASIA, AND IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. In Proto-Nilgiri, a branch of South-Dravidian, the root *kul-əg ‘to shake’ is used for the behaviour of a diviner [apparently when in trance; or when using a cleromantic oracle of elements that need to be shaken for the divine influence to be imparted onto them – WvB], < Proto-Dravidian, *kul-, 1 to shake 2 to fear, < Eurasianic *kole, ‘to fear, trample’, also reflexed in Altaic. One gets the impression that the actors’s conception of the principal effect of possession by a god is that the subject is overtaken by mortal fear. By analogy, among the *sangomas* of Southern Africa (whose cult is historically related to the ecstatic cults of South Asia including Dravidian speakers (van

- a. in the proto-lexicon of Afroasiatic (*bVr, ‘evil spirit, sorcerer, diviner’, with reflexes in Semitic, Westchadic, Centralchadic, and Eastchadic, always with the connotation ‘evil spirit’)⁴²¹ and
- b. in Sinotibetan (proto Sinotibetan: *pa, ‘magician, divine(r)’, *rēŋ, ‘intelligent, perspicacious’, > Chinese 靈 *rēŋ intelligent, spiritual, divine, supernatural; sorcerer, diviner.
- c. Meanwhile, we should not overlook, in the immense Khoisan linguistic cluster: Proto-Ju, *lxu, ‘divining blocks’ – the Khoisan-speakers’ equivalents of the hakata four-tablet oracle of Southern and South Central Africa (cf. van Binsbergen 1994, 1995); and Proto-Sandawe: *||uma, ‘to foretell’ – but without manifest link to the *Borean level.

It is with considerable relief that we can now end our quest for linguistic evidence on the ‘elementary forms of religious life’. Considering the great efforts of plodding through incredibly extensive linguistic material for months, even years, the results are meagre: we have a rough indication of the emergence of theistic religion in space and time – while realising that what Durkheim was after was not in the first place theistic religion. Concerning his central claim that the distinction *sacred* / *profane* is at the heart of religion, we have been able to explode it on empirical linguistic grounds: the concept of ‘separation’ does go back to *Borean, but the specific concept of *sacred* let alone *profane* does not in the least.

Binsbergen 2003a: ch. 8; 2015: 101, 101n; 2017: 155-156, 167-168, 175, 184, 222n), there are two kinds of adepts:

- (1) those possessed by ancestral spirits who in themselves were adepts in life – these are the articulate *sangomas* who dance and sing in their gaudy black/white/red uniforms; and
- (2) those possessed by the High God Mwali herself or himself, who are so overwhelmed by the divine presence inside them that their main spiritual manifestation is catatonic, speechless rapture – these are the *Wosannas* in their black uniforms.

Elsewhere (van Binsbergen 2003a: 167, n1) I have dwelled on the possible connection between this cultic designation from Southern Africa, and the *New Testament* expression ‘Hosanna’, found in:

Matt 21:9, 15; Mark 11:9-10; John 12:13. The expression only occurs in the Greek of the New Testament, as *hōsanná*, although this is a graecisation of the Hebrew ‘O save us’, *ho shiya’ na*, cf. Ps. 118: 25-26; Strong 1989. This rules out an influence upon the South Central African expression *wosanna* from Old Testament times, but leaves the remote possibility of a Jewish or early Christian (Gnostic?) influence from the beginning of the Common Era, and *a fortiori* the possibility of a modern Christian influence. For remarkable claims concerning comprehensive borrowings from Ancient Judaism in South Central Africa, cf. von Sicard 1952, 1944: 165, 1948: 103. For discussions of an ethnic group in that region apparently retaining fragmented and eroded elements of Ancient Semitic religion, language, food prohibitions, etc., cf. van Warmelo 1966; von Sicard 1952: 140-170; Parfitt 1992. Although notorious for his contentious claims of continuity and communality between cultural and linguistic domains encompassing much of the Old World, von Sicard denies explicitly that there could be an etymological link between the biblical and the South Central African *hosanna*, probably because of the words’ uniquely Greek form.

My negative reading in this case is corroborated by further Bible commentaries, e.g. Thayer 1902; Cheyne 1899-1903; Anonymous, ‘Hosanna’.

⁴²¹ Another common term form of Semitic divination, *tayir* or *tayar* (‘bird’), simply derives from the winged animals considered in that practice; cf. Faḥd 1966.

9.14. Why did theistic beliefs arise in Asia c. 25-20 ka BP?

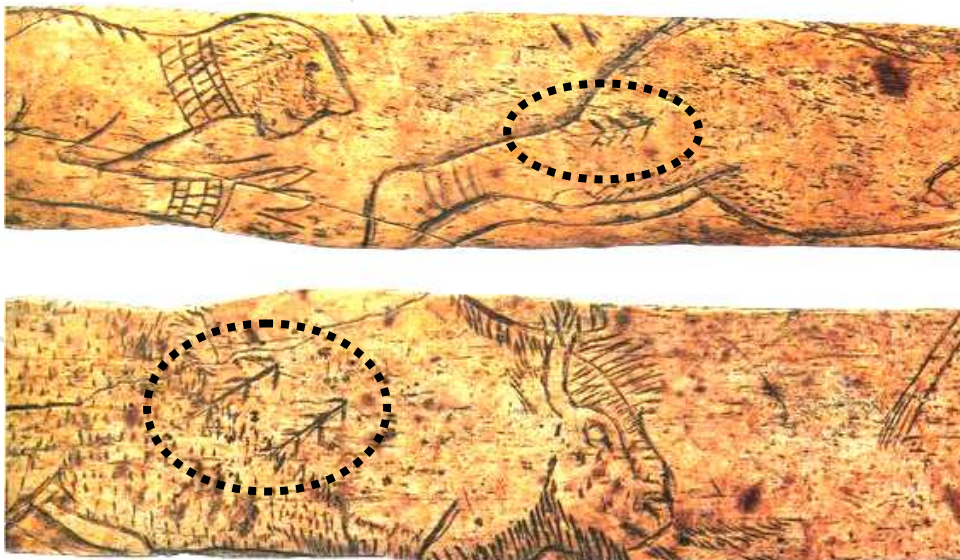
I submit that a plausible iconographic indication of early theistic beliefs is to be found in the Mal'ta / Buret (Siberia) female statuette depicted in Fig. 9.5.



Source: <http://donsmaps.com/malta.html>: 'The Mal'ta - Buret' venuses and culture in Siberia', with thanks

Fig.9.5. Mal'ta / Buret (Siberia) female statuette; the leafed branch on the right-hand shoulder would suggest this to be a non-human, a goddess

The faceless personage has a detailed leafed branch on her right shoulder, not as if she is carrying the vegetal spoils of her morning's collecting activity, but as if she represents in general the life-giving forces of what we now call Nature. Puzzlingly, a similar possibly vegetal evocation (but usually interpreted as a man-made arrow) appears on the flanks of a bison and an anthropomorphic quadruped from Isturitz, Pyrenées Atlantiques, extreme south-western France (cf. Fig. 9.6).



source: <https://i.pinimg.com/564x/43/fe/eb/43feeb6b93cfa95b7ba5efa2c70aeb5e.jpg> , with thanks

Fig. 9.6. Depiction of anthropomorphic / therianthropic quadrupeds (*recto*), and bison (*verso*), with arrow signs or leafed branches, Upper Palaeolithic from Isturitz

But while pondering over this puzzle, a more pressing question needs to be considered: *if theistic religion arose in the Central, Continental language branch ca. 25-20 ka BP*, – so more or less in the Upper Palaeolithic context of which the Mal'ta / Buret culture of Lake Baikal could be an example – *why there and why then?*

Mal'ta / Buret culture is well-known for its portable art, especially 'Venus figurines' (cf. Soffer *et al.* 2001). If the origin of theistic religion is to be found near this context, we may be inclined (*pace* Gertcyk 2016) to see the Upper Palaeolithic Venus figurines not as depictions of real humans, least of all as sexually stimulating pin-ups for lonely hunters away from the village (such an anachronistic, ethnocentric suggestion has been made; cf. devastating criticism of this view in Isabella 2012), but as representations of the divine. I would expect a change in mode of production – a dramatic intensification of mammoth hunting, or extraordinary opportunities at fishing, or the opening up of new major routes for migration and trading,⁴²² or the earliest forms of proto-pastoralism or agriculture, or a major revolution in shamanism for instance through the discovery of the mechanisms of heaven and thus the elevation of celestial objects to divine beings, or enhanced forms of socio-political stratification (in the light of the equation of 'god' and 'high-ranking human'), or a breakthrough in the development of full articulate speech – but at this point I will refrain from further speculations, and leave the answer to my timely question to archaeological specialists on the region and period to which Mal'ta / Buret belongs.

Two remarkable phenomena attend the earliest attestations of theistic semantics:

1. the conflation of 'human socio-political leader ('king') with 'god', and
2. the conflation of 'officiant' and 'spirit',

An example of the latter is the following:

Proto-Bushman : *ŋlo(N): spirit; magician
Proto-Ju : *ŋlom
Bushman > Ju : Bushman > Ju
Proto-Taa : *ʔlnōã ⁿ

Table 9.47. Conflation of 'officiant' and 'spirit' in Proto-Bushman (a division of the Khoisan macrophylum)

While (1) suggests the gradual emergence of a transcendent sense of the supernatural from emerging patterns of social differentiation and inequality among humans, (2) suggests the emergence of the shaman with her or his altered state of consciousness, and the idea of a transcendent spirit with an existence independent from its human incarnation or possessed subject. It would be easy to formulate historical hypotheses on this basis, but I suggest we have reached the limit of our material and leave further explorations to our colleagues and readers.

So far my provisional analysis on the basis of lexical material for 'god' semantics. A similar analysis could be conducted for other religiously-relevant semantics, such as 'spirit', 'di-

⁴²² The Mal'ta / Buret region was in many respects a bridge between Western Europe and the New World, as is indicated by its genetic continuity in these two directions (Raghavan *et al.* 2014).

vin(e)', 'divin(ation)', 'ghost', 'death' and 'life' (the latter of particular interest because it is one of the few undeniable absolute oppositions with which humans have been confronted also in *Borean times). But although I have painstakingly collected, tabulated, and processed nearly all the relevant data, I shrink from reporting on this very extensive material in the context of the present book. After perusing it, my informed impression is that the conclusions to be drawn on the basis of the 'god' semantics will be largely corroborated. But for these non-theistic dimensions of religion, the hard work of arguing such a case in detail by reference to the actual linguistic material remains to be done.

9.14.1. Evolution of mind and religious transmission (Mithen)

Although above I admitted such ignorance of cognitive science that I have no option but to give that highly pertinent subject a wide berth in the present book, I must make an exception for the work of the archaeologist / anthropologist Stephen Mithen, because it seems to be one of the few serious attempts (albeit as yet unsuccessful) to answer the question posed just now: *why did the emergence of theistic religion take place when it apparently did*: in the Upper Palaeolithic (or, for that matter, as Mithen prefers, in the transition from Middle to Upper Palaeolithic)? In the present section, I shall engage with Mithen's work, not so much because of his actual answers, but mainly because it helps us to pose what seems to be the right kind of questions.

*Borean root	semantics	remarks
*KVCV	'man'	
*MVNV	'man'	
*CVCV	'meat, animal'	'good to eat, rather than good to think' (cf. Lévi-Strauss); or perhaps the distinctive feature of humans was that one is not allowed to eat them?
*KVRV	'young of animals'	
*TVLV	'young animal, plant'	
*MVLV	'a kind of horned animal'	
*PVRV	'a kind of horned animal'	
*MVNCV	'animal hair'	the *Borean lexicon for 'hair' is amazingly extensive (see Table 9.57); however, *MVNCV is the only word apparently reserved for animals)

Table 9.48. The *Borean lexicon of 'man' and 'animal'

In a path-breaking 1997 article (with which I nonetheless largely disagree!), summarising much of his work until then and particularly his 1966 book, Mithen (1997a) has the following to say:⁴²³

'The early human mind – that of archaic H[omo] sapiens, Neanderthals, H[omo] erectus – was structured, I have argued, on the basis of four 'intelligences', or bundles of mental modules. Three of these, those concerning the social world, making and using

⁴²³ I mark with extra spacing Mithen's original passages which I particularly disagree with. Passages that I strongly **agree** with, I quote in **bold**. I apologise, and express my gratitude, for the exceedingly long quotation from Mithen's text – little of which, however, could be spared for my present purpose.

artefacts, and interaction with the natural world, were essentially isolated from each other.⁴²⁴ This isolation explains the rather odd character of the early Palaeolithic record in which we see evidence for very complex and sophisticated behaviour within these domains, but very simple behaviour at the 'domain interfaces' (Mithen 1996a, 1996b). For instance, while Neanderthals clearly possessed great technical skill in producing artefacts such as Levallois points, and to have survived in Pleistocene Europe must have had an intimate knowledge of the natural world, the design of their hunting weapons appears remarkably simple. The recent discovery of 400,000 year old hunting spears at Schöningen, Germany (Thieme 1997), further indicates the absence of technological innovation during the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic as these appear as well designed as anything produced by the Neanderthals. This lack of innovation and the absence of multi-component hunting weapons, notably projectiles, arises, I have argued, from an inability to integrate their knowledge of tool making with that of the natural world. *The substantial development in cultural behaviour that we see in the archaeological record which begins at c. 100,000 years ago, and becomes dramatic after 50,000 years ago*⁴²⁵ *derives from a new ability by Homo to integrate their intelligences, a capacity I have termed cognitive fluidity. This appears to be restricted to modern humans, although some traces of cognitive fluidity may be present within the minds of the last Neanderthals* (Mithen 1996a: 209-210). *This change in the nature of intelligence is, I suggest, related to changes in the nature of language and consciousness (see also the idea of off-line thinking in Bickerton [1996]). Such cognitive fluidity had enormous adaptive benefits. By being able to integrate technical and natural history knowledge, tools could be designed to markedly improve the efficiency of hunting, plant gathering and food processing; by being able to integrate technical and social intelligence, artefacts could be designed to mediate social relationships providing new means to manipulate other individuals to ones' advantage. Yet other consequences of such cognitive fluidity have no clear adaptive benefits and can be thought of as spandrels,*⁴²⁶ *inevitable by-products of such adaptations. For instance by integrating social and natural history intelligence **beliefs could arise that entities exist which are half human and half animal**, as clearly evident in the*

⁴²⁴ #58. RAIDING NATURE FOR MATERIALS, BUT STILL UNABLE TO APPLY THESE MATERIALS IN NATURE? Attractive though Mithen's approach is (and also van Binsbergen & Wiggermann (1999) in their approach to Ancient Mesopotamian magic distinguished *four* domains of control; the figure four has a magical contagion about it, cf. van Binsbergen 2012f, 2012d), still the neatness of his categorisation remains questionable. The raw materials for the making of artefacts did not spring in the hands of *Homo faber* as a result of *creatio ex nihilo* ['creation from scratch'], but from the latter's interaction with the natural world, on the basis of considerable environmental knowledge, quality distinctions, find strategies, experience, practical culture. How is looking for the best possible haft for a stone axe, or the best possible resin to hold the axe in place, or suitable flint and auxiliary materials for stone knapping, fundamentally different from using the implements thus made in the hunting pursuit of game? How could such procuring of raw materials from Nature be absolutely compartmentalised from taking game from Nature?

⁴²⁵ Mithen is not alone in suggesting this dating, which differs by some 30 ka from the one I have suggested above. Already a decade earlier, Chase & Dibble (1987), in a by now classic article, situated the origin of symbolic thought at the transition from the Middle to the Upper Palaeolithic. Mithen's originality lies in offering a theoretical model for the kind of changes involved. However, that model in itself does not yet explain what brought about these changes. His suggestion that it has to do with changes in the linguistic domain does carry conviction but is very little specific.

⁴²⁶ *I.e.* auxiliary building elements, notably in the construction of an arch. Mithen borrows the (imprecisely metaphorical) use of this term from Gould & Lewontin 1979, with further discussion by Dennett 1995 and Houston 1997.

first representational art.⁴²⁷ **And by integrating technical and social intelligence, inert objects could be attributed with ideas, feelings and intentions, 'living' entities could exist which did not need to feed, which were not born and could not die. This mixing up of natural categories is the essence of a supernatural being** (Guthrie 1993, Boyer 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Mithen 1996c).⁴²⁸

The human mind does not, therefore, have an evolved module/domain for supernatural beings or indeed any types of religious knowledge. *This inhibits the cultural transmission of religious ideas.* When an individual is told about a social relationship between two other humans, that information is embedded into content rich modules about human social relationships allowing many inferences to be drawn from a limited amount of information (Boyer 1994a). If we are simply told that those individuals are a boy and a girl and that they are 'in love' we can accurately guess how they are likely to be interacting with each other, what they will be doing, their feelings, how they will react in a host of circumstances. But if we were told about someone who was 'in love' with a supernatural being, no such inferences could be drawn. Perhaps we are told that supernatural being is invisible but exists in all places, that he once took human form and walked on water, that he died and then came alive again. Well, such details are of little help. What can it mean to love such a being?⁴²⁹ How is a person supposed to communi-

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... 'entities exist which are half human and half animal' (Mithen 1997).

Such a statement is predicated on the assumption (very questionable in the light of my analysis of 'range semantics') that the *emic* distinction between human and animal was already firmly in place, but was only compromised when the four domains began to intersect. As was also brought out by my long-range research on leopard-skin symbolism in space and time, therianthropy is admittedly a very conspicuous and important aspect of early iconographies. Do we encounter here images of beings which are half human half animal? It would be more correct to say that they *are both human and animal*, because the distinction could not yet be made so very strictly. Not unlike the modern concept of humans as mammals, therianthropy is a way of thinking about 'being human' to the extent to which that is also 'being animal'. No specific word for 'human' has been reconstructed for *Borean, but there are two words for 'man', with the ambiguity of 'person of the male gender' and 'human'; also there are various reconstructions for the semantics 'animal', but apparently hardly with the explicit semantics 'animal as contrasted with human' (see Table 9.48). Similar indications of incomplete distinction between humans and animals we find in flood myths, which take the narrative back to Upper Palaeolithic times when the Separation of Water and Land, and a handful of millennia later that of Earth and Sky ('the Waters Above'), was installed as the dominant mytheme of Anatomically Modern Humans – and when the undoing of that Separation through a Deluge was the most obvious way of thinking pre-Creation, watery chaos. Typically, in flood myths around the world (cf. Isaak 2006; van Binsbergen with Isaak 2008; and extensive references cited there) animals speak and behave like humans have done in historic times – humans that are non-animals do not yet seem to exist in Flood-myth times.

⁴²⁸ We note that Mithen here avoids the question with which we, in the wake of Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, and Kant, have occupied ourselves throughout this book: *where do the so-called natural categories come from?* If the essence of a supernatural being is the mixing of 'natural' categories, this implies a number of things:

- (a) the prehistoric actors have a conscious and consensual knowledge of natural categories;
- (b) on the basis of their contemplation of these categories, prehistoric actors construct a new category, 'supernatural', in essentially the same way as specialist philosophers and theologians do today.

All this is pretty nonsensical, especially in the light of theoretical analysis of transcendence (without which no supernatural), and the defective thinking tools available in the Palaeolithic (notably: range semantics).

⁴²⁹ #59. *MITHEN'S MISCONCEPTION OF ANCIENT THOUGHT ON MAN-GOD INTERACTION AND ON (WHAT TODAY WE CALL) THE SUPERNATURAL.* With what no doubt was meant as superb irony,

cate with or behave towards such a being? So *the cultural transmission of religious ideas is difficult when compared to ideas about an evolved domain of human behaviour, such as social interaction or (for hunter-gatherers) animal behaviour.* Boyer (1994a) has discussed this and noted that those religious ideas which survive the rigours of cultural transmission are those which have a link to a domain of intuitive knowledge. As he has recognised, while concepts of supernatural beings have, by definition, elements which are 'super natural', such as abilities to be omnipotent, invisible or ever-lasting, they also frequently have human like features, such as suffering jealousy and desires. The gods of ancient Greece provide a typical example⁴³⁰ — supernatural beings who quarrel and deceive each other in a very human-like manner. By having these human like qualities, concepts of supernatural beings can be more easily transmitted and understood, than if

the last few sentences conjure up (timelessly and anachronistically, for way outside the prehistoric context that so far was Mithen's frame of reference – and competence!) the Christian beliefs about Jesus, and the exhortations to love him, peculiar to the Christian faith. Even granting the possibility that not all belief is authentic and that not only love but also hate and violence have resulted from Christianity, *what it means to love such a being* can be ascertained from genuine, existential encounter with such Christians – which is easily done because they are outnumbering the current USA population. Even if we do not share these beliefs and attitudes (although raised a Roman Catholic, I stopped sharing them over half a century ago), clearly about one billion of today's global human population do, more or less – which is irony in the opposite direction. *What is happening here to the principle of epistemic charity?* Who is Mithen to trivialise and ridicule the beliefs of others? Again, I find Mithen's somewhat colloquial formulations imprecise to the point of caricature. Is the 'supernatural' he uses, an *emic* or *etic* term – his own, or the one of the prehistoric actors? How could the concept of 'supernatural' be consistently thought in a world of range semantics, where absolute distinction (e.g. between natural and supernatural) are blurred? If theistic beings, invisible and with superior powers, could be thought as interaction partners (and social interaction was always a familiar domain), why would not the specific forms and consequences of such interaction also be thinkable as mere extrapolations of what happens between humans? In many pre- and protoliterate cultural situations humans commonly believe they strike deals / contracts with gods, land spirits, saints, of a *do-ut-des* type: 'please give me a son, and I will sacrifice a cow in your honour'; please cure my son, and I will build a shrine for you', etc. In other words, *because of the obvious possibility of extrapolating common interaction patterns between humans* (and what else is meant by Mithen's insistence that the religious is a spandrel) *I am doubting Mithen's conclusion:*

'So the cultural transmission of religious ideas is difficult when compared to ideas about an evolved domain of human behaviour, such as social interaction or (for hunter-gatherers) animal behaviour.'

On the contrary, *my according a crucial place to religion in the construction and perpetuation of society because religious rites offer a context for the controlled and fairly unchanged intergenerational transmission of cultural content (a view inspired by Durkheim, yet a substantial departure from Durkheim) is precisely because – if explicitly taught and sanctioned, e.g. in initiation schools – it is amenable to simple, faithful, uneroded transmission – the opposite of what Mithen claims.* Although Mithen seems to be on the right track, he does not yet get to where he seems to be heading. Mithen positions himself as a philosopher in abstract rigorous debate with other philosophers – in this case Palaeolithic actors. He decides what is plausible and well-formed, without first investigating the rules that appear to have governed Palaeolithic thought.

⁴³⁰ This is a poor, for anachronistic, not to say demagogic, example. The Ancient Greeks, separated from us by barely two millennia and in many ways our cultural forebears (*pace* Martin Bernal...), cannot be typical for prehistoric mythological thought. The Ancient Greek gods are very far removed from preliterate 'elementary forms of religious life' – they were saturated with logocentricity, perhaps not originally so (*cf.* Harrison 1903, 1927 / 1977; Onians 1951; Snell 1955; Nilsson 1961; Burkert 1983) but certainly since the period (from the 7th c. BCE on) in which the Greeks themselves produced the emic written sources on which most of our knowledge about them is based.

all features were supernatural and unable to be grasped by any domain of intuitive knowledge. **As archaeologists we can never reconstruct the specific ideas that past people held about their religious beings**, although we may be able to invoke what appear to be universal features of religious beings to suggest what ideas may have been present (Mithen 1997). But the difficulty of transmitting religious ideas also has enormous implications for the archaeological record which cannot be fully understood without understanding the human mind as a product of evolution. There are two cultural means which are widely used to facilitate the transmission of religious ideas and which have major impacts on the archaeological record. First, religious ideas are often transmitted in a context of ritual – the rote repetition of movement and utterances in sequences that must be conformed to precisely. Such ritual is essential: religious ideas cannot be transmitted in an informal manner⁴³¹ if people are to share religious concepts because there is no evolved domain of religious ideas within the human mind. Without ritual, religious ideas might exist within individual minds but a religious institution, based upon shared religious concepts, would be impossible. **A second means by which the cultural transmission of religious ideas is achieved is even more fundamental for our understanding of human behaviour: the use of material culture. The last century of Palaeolithic archaeology has supported Durkheim's (1915: 307)⁴³² assertion that “the princip[al] forms of art seem to have been born out of religious ideas”** (here I reject the idea that there are 'art objects' prior to those of the Upper Palaeolithic, finding the arguments of Bednarik [1995] for 'concept mediated marks in the Lower Palaeolithic' unconvincing [Mithen 1996d]). Throughout human history religious behaviour has involved visual symbols. Why should there be such a close connection between the two? Well, as Leach (1976) argued, we transform religious ideas into material form so that we can perform operations on them which are beyond the capacity of the

⁴³¹ #60. *ON THE INTRA-GROUP CIRCULATION AND TRANSMISSION OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS*. This shows Mithen as the armchair analyst that he is. As a fieldworker, my own extensive experience concerning the circulation and transmission of religious ideas in small pre-literate groups, and from such groups to me as outsider (e.g. van Binsbergen 1991, 2003a: chs 5-8), has been very different. In the first place, in many religious teaching situations, e.g. the *sangoma* lodges of Southern Africa or the *ashrams* of South Asia, there is very little explicit and formal teaching – teaching is by example only, the meanings and concepts remain largely implicit, for the adept to find out for herself or himself. In typical non-logocentric, traditional non-Western settings, even today, also outside the specialist circles of lodge leaders, of their followers, of prophets, etc., most religious ideas are managed and transmitted informally and incompletely verbalised – a situation which Vic Turner for one (cf. the Louvain School) had to face, and come to terms with; and in very many respects (culturally, linguistically, politically, artistically) the Zambian Nkoya people, who to my great good fortune have been my research companions since 1972, are continuous with the Ndembu Lunda whom Turner studied. In the second place we must appreciate the importance of public utterances and of material objects in religious transmission: for such transmission to be controlled and sanctioned, and to have their contents preserved more or less intactly, what we absolutely need is public, overt religious behaviour, and tangible material ritual objects. *Only what people materially and publicly express, can be subjected to social and specialist control*. What people just think cannot be controlled, and is likely to meander off in all directions. But contrary to what Mithen suggests, these overt, public utterances need not be limited to ritual – also plain conversations, gossip, rumour, casual curses, exclamations, words uttered in sleep, do serve.

⁴³² ‘C'est un fait connu que les jeux et les principales formes de l'art semblent être nés de la religion et qu'ils ont, pendant longtemps, gardé un caractère religieux.’ (Durkheim 1912 / 1960 / 1990: 544, with original reference to Culin 1902-1903 / 1975).

mind'. (Mithen 1997: 71f.)⁴³³

Mithen does not hesitate to pinpoint what he believes is the explanation for the emergence of theistic religion:

'The evolutionary understanding of the emergence of religious ideas that I have summarised above explains why this is necessary: religious symbols, and more particularly the images of religious beings, serve to anchor religious ideas within the mind. Ideas about social relationships, the natural world, and stone artefacts did not need anchoring in hunter-gatherer minds as each of these related directly to an evolved domain of mental architecture which made them easy to learn, understand and transmit. Religious ideas had no such domain and the archaeological record of modern humans is replete with religious symbols.' (Mithen 1997: 73f.)

In other words, according to Mithen religious *images* exist because without them the Middle-to-Upper Palaeolithic *mind could not handle the very idea of religious beings*. What he seems to be implying is that religious beliefs are the by-product of having religious images, and not the other way around.

Be this as it may, I am in agreement with the idea of religion being, *from one point of view*, a by-product of mental procedures and transformations in the Middle-to-Upper Palaeolithic. This, incidentally, in the specific application of an old and central idea of religious studies, foreshadowed already by Marx's *Thesen über Feuerbach* (written 1845):

4. Feuerbach geht von dem Faktum der religiösen Selbstentfremdung, der Verdopplung der Welt in eine religiöse und eine weltliche aus. Seine Arbeit besteht darin, die religiöse Welt in ihre weltliche Grundlage aufzulösen. Aber daß die weltliche Grundlage sich von sich selbst abhebt und sich ein selbständiges Reich in den Wolken fixiert, ist nur aus der Selbstzerrissenheit und Selbstsichwidersprechen dieser weltlichen Grundlage zu erklären. Diese selbst muß also in sich selbst sowohl in ihrem Widerspruch verstanden als praktisch revolutioniert werden. *Also nachdem z. B. die irdische Familie als das Geheimnis der heiligen Familie entdeckt ist*, muß nun erstere selbst theoretisch und praktisch vernichtet werden (Marx, *Thesen über Feuerbach*etc., my italics.

4. Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-estrangement, of the duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world, and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular basis lifts off from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm can only be explained by the inner strife and intrinsic contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must itself be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionised. Thus, for instance, *once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family*, the former must itself be annihilated theoretically and practically.

⁴³³ What kind of operations? And how could they be beyond the capacity of the mind, especially in a context where 'imagination' is argued (Bloch 2008) to be invented for this very purpose? What is so very different about the following two sets of Anatomically Modern Humans:

- (1) on the one hand Mithen and Leach, on the other hand
- (2) preliterate people in the Upper Palaeolithic.

How can the (2)'s 'graven images' (cf. *Deuteronomy* 7:5 and 25; 12:3) allow religious operations to be performed upon them which the minds of (2) allegedly do not have the capacity for – but which the minds of (1), our anthropological contemporaries, are perfectly capable of grasping and of committing to discursive language? In a world of the imagination (which is of course the realm of the mind), operations may be conceived, performed and understood which perhaps materialise in the specific practices surrounding graven images, but which cannot exist independently from the mind.

But one of the many points that remain to be explained, even for Mithen, is

- what kept the four domains apart from each other during most of human-kind's history? (the period since the Upper Palaeolithic covers only c. 1 % of the existence of humans on Earth)
- why did the interpenetration of the four domains come about in precisely the Upper Palaeolithic?

We cannot hope to thresh out these fundamental problems of human history and culture within the scope of the present book, and will now proceed to discuss what the emergent religious imagination may have thought up in the way of theistic beings and images.

9.14.2. The emergence of theistic religion, conjoined with that of agriculture?

With the emphasis on the Middle-to-Upper Palaeolithic transition, I situate the emergence of theistic religion rather much earlier than other common claims, which link that emergence with the rise of agriculture. The uncertainties of food production, dependence on the annual calendar, and (at least for agriculture) the concentration on limited parts of the landscape as fields, led conceivably to a personalisation and concentration of religious imagery and activity (e.g. Cauvin 1994, which was greatly applauded and widely cited). The prominent British / French anthropologist Maurice Bloch (2008), in an admittedly Durkheimian (Bloch 2008: 2055) argument,⁴³⁴ rejects Sperber's 1985 influential suggestion to the effect

'that religion-like beliefs are to be accounted for by a subtle mix of intuitive human capacities based on evolved neurological modules, and certain, very limited, representations that, because they go against the core knowledge that the modules suggest, are therefore "counter-intuitive" and "intriguing".

Instead, Bloch stresses, Durkheim-like, that religion involves imagined statuses and communities, such as clans and nations, neurologically seated in the capability of imagination:

'It is proposed that explaining religion in evolutionary terms is a misleading enterprise because religion is an indissoluble part of a unique aspect of human social organization. Theoretical and empirical research should focus on what differentiates human sociality from that of other primates, i.e. the fact that members of society often act towards each other in terms of essentialized roles and groups. These have a phenomenological existence that is not based on everyday empirical monitoring but on imagined statuses and communities, such as clans or nations. The neurological basis for this type of social, which includes religion, will therefore depend on the development of imagination. It is suggested that such a development of imagination occurred at about the time of the Upper Palaeolithic "revolution".' (Bloch 2008: 2055).

This rather converges with my own dating of the emergence of theistic religion, yet one would have problems with Bloch's suggestion: for (and this is again the problem of *emergence*) what then was the form of social organisation, if any, of human-

⁴³⁴ Maurice Bloch's mother, Claudette Raphael, a biologist, was reputedly a niece of Durkheim.

ity before the Upper Palaeolithic; and if imagination only dated from c. 40 ka BP, whereas the extremely accomplished state in which we have reconstructed *Borean as a language form not much later than that time suggests that articulated language is much older than that. The latter suggestion is also borne out by the findings of Comparative Mythology with detailed suggestions as to the mythical (imaginative!) contents of Pandora's Box, from 200 to 80 ka BP. Clearly, the time frame of religion, and of imagination, must have been much more extensive.

9.14.3. *Let us grant that theistic religion started c. 20-25 ka BP, can we imagine then what the earliest gods were like and how they were conceptualised?*

If theistic religion can be taken to have emerged c. 20 ka BP, our next step would be to try and determine how the proto-gods may have been conceptualised. Probably they left manifest iconographic traces in the archaeological record. In our discussions of the archaeology of religion, above, we have already seen how tricky it is to identify such divine images, and to attribute to them a meaning that is not mere modern wishful thinking. I have argued that the interpretation of prehistoric images lacking a contemporary, *emic* meta-text would be much easier and more convincing if we had a list of a limited number of items which, for systematic reasons, could be intersubjectively considered to present key themes in prehistoric thought and myth. Having myself suggested, provisionally, some of the proto-mythemes circulating in the Middle Upper Palaeolithic, our best bet here would be to allow ourselves to be inspired by this list of NarComs / mythemes. I repeat that list here in simplified form:

NarCom	Required lexical components attested in *Borean?	hints at possible representations / symbols
01. The separation of Heaven and Earth N.B. It is important that we realise that the idea of such Separation is in itself already a departure from the indecision of range semantics, and an important step towards the installation of the capacity for thinking true, absolute distinction.	(+)	halves of nuts, kernels cleaver, axe
02. The Re-Connection of Heaven and Earth (after separation)	(+)	any vertical element, tree, pole, altar, mount, mountain, shrine, rope
03. What is in the Sky	+	lightning; rainbow; rain; sun; moon (<i>cf.</i> NarCom 09); stars
04. The Lightning Bird (and the World Egg)	+	bird, especially fowl-like
05. The Mantis	(+)	mantis
06. Escape from the Ogre	+	cave, hole, darkness, monster
07. From the Mouth	+	spittle; rain; kiss
08. The Stones (as Earth; under CITI VI revised as the stones – meteorites – forming the connection between Heaven and Earth)	+	stones, rock, pile, herm, menhir
09. The Moon	+	moon, moon phases, animals with rebirth

		connotations such as snakes (which shed their skins), water
<u>10. The Earth as primary (10 was subsequently revised towards cattle in the Neolithic)</u>	+	land, shrine, pile rock cattle
11. The Primal Waters and the Flood	+	water; rain; flood; Mother of the Waters ; aquatic birds
12. From the Tree (in subsequent CITIs diversified into 12a 'The world and humanity from the tree' and 12b 'the leg-child')	+	tree, plant, basket, <i>leg child</i> (see below)
13. The Cosmic / Rainbow Snake / Serpent	+	snake, rainbow, unilateral being?
14. Twins; 14a. Twins, Two Children, Duality	+	everything that comes in pairs
15. The Spider (subsequent transformed into 'the feminine arts' in CITI VI)	(+)	spider, web
16. Shamanism, bones	(+)	bones, skull, pole, stars
17. <u>Speckledness / granulated surface texture / leopard / scatter strew / spot</u>	+	granulated / speckled surfaces: leopard; polecat; speckled birds; speckled animals ; the star-spangled sky (also see Appendix III)
18. <u>Honeybees, honey beer</u>	–	bee, swarm, honey, reed
19. <u>The Cosmogonic Virgin and her Son / lover</u>	(+)	Mother of the Waters male child
20. <u>Contradictory messengers bring death</u>	(+)	cameleon hare runner

If NarCom is underlined, this means that it probably already belonged in Pandora's Box; grey shading: negative case as to presence in the *Borean lexicon

Table 9.49. Proposed NarComs, their attestations in the reconstructed *Borean lexicon, and their possible iconographic representations

It is tempting to provide all mythemes in Table 9.49 with lengthy explanations, but at this point, near the end of this book's journey, that would be beyond our scope. Let me make an exception for the mytheme of the *leg child* (item 12b). This is a common motif, indicating a mythical figure who was born, not by passing through the normal birth channel, but through a thigh, armpit, waist, occiput or any other part of the human body except the birth channel. The typical case is from Ancient Greek mythology, where Dionysus was sewn into his father Zeus's thigh, and born from there, after his mother Semele had been burned to death under the hot splendour of Zeus' lightning.⁴³⁵ For reasons that I have not yet given sufficient thought, an amazing number of mythical protagonists worldwide appear as *leg children*, including Ancient Egyptian Seth born from his mother's side,⁴³⁶ Thoth from his father's skull (Bonnet 1952: 702 f.) cf. Greek Athena⁴³⁷ from her father's skull⁴³⁸ (and when Hephaestus, who incidentally was the

⁴³⁵ Strabo, *Geographia*, xiii; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historiae*, iv. 5; Euripides, *Bacchae*, 295; Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homerii Iliadem*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* iv. 11.; further, secondary sources: Kern 1905; Fauth 1977; Otto 1965; Willis 1994: 104.

⁴³⁶ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 12; *Pyramid Texts* 205, see Mercer 1952.

⁴³⁷ Greek Athena is claimed by Bernal 1987 to be none other than Egyptian Neith, but this claim is contested (van Binsbergen 1997b / 2011a and extensive references cited there especially including Egberts 1997), since what seems to be involved is not so much an *interpretatio graeca* of an originally Egyptian religious figure, but the continuity, over an enormously extending region ranging from West Africa to Southern Europe and West

one to split Zeus's skull⁴³⁹ in sexual arousal ejaculated against Athena's thigh so as to produce Erichthonius, this makes the latter also a leg child although he was reputedly borne by Gaia / Earth.)⁴⁴⁰ Tswana: Tintibane (Brown 1926); Algonquin: Malsum brother to Glooscap killed his mother by being born from her armpit, and by the same token the Japanese fire god Kagutsuchi, even though born along the normal passage, killed his mother Izanami by burning her genitals at birth (also *cf.* the Ancient Indian fire god Agni (Gonda 1943: 312), while in Uralic mythology a similar role is reserved for *iron*.⁴⁴¹ Also an amazing number of culture heroes in Oceania including New Guinea are leg children.⁴⁴² It is quite possible that the motif has spread westward from South East Asia on the wings of Sunda expansion; anyway, there are (as I did not yet realise when writing against Oppenheimer 1998: van Binsbergen 2007c / van Binsbergen with Isaak 2008) several other uncanny parallels between the mythologies of Oceania and those of Western Eurasia – such as the invention of the sail, and the incessant mating of the primal gods blocking their divine children's birth passage. The parallels are too extensive and too detailed to attribute to hazardous parallel invention; however, this not the place to decide whether they must be explained by West-East borrowing (*i.e.*, Pelasgian diffusion), by East-West borrowing (*i.e.*, Sunda diffusion), or by reference to a common origin – which could be anywhere in the Old World or the New World. The archaeological attestation of bananas (originating in New Guinea, and only transportable by painstaking attention to the shoots) in 1st mill. BCE West Africa is sufficient indication of the fact of East-West contact along Sunda lines; and cloves in an Anatolian grave c. 1000 BCE are a similar case (Wright 1982). For the leg child, at least one African case has been attested (Werner 1933: ch. 14). The overarching Narrative Complex, 'From the Tree', appears to be an original cosmogonic / anthropogonic mytheme from Pandora's Box; it made it possible to imagine (not unlike immaculate, virgin birth, which is still a modern myth) non-genital human conception and parturition, and apparently was revived in a narrative context when after the Flood the world needs repopulating. The leg child mytheme may be pressed into service, either because the alternative would be incestuous (hence the motif frequently occurs in Flood myths – flood survivors are often close kin: siblings of complementary genders), or because ordinary, genital reproduction would require two parents rather than the unique and dominant one (*cf.* Zeus, and the Christian God) favoured by myth. While covered under layers of 6th-7th c BCE Rabbinical male supremacy, Eve being born from

Asia, of goddesses with a name phonologically featuring *[a]n[t], and associated both with warfare and feminine arts such as weaving and spinning. In other words, the relation between Neith and Athena seems to be one of a shared common origin, not of direct genetic dependence.

⁴³⁸ Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 886 *f.*, 929 *f.*

⁴³⁹ Pindar, *Olympian Ode*, 7. 33 *f.*; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 1. 20; Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*, 2. 27.

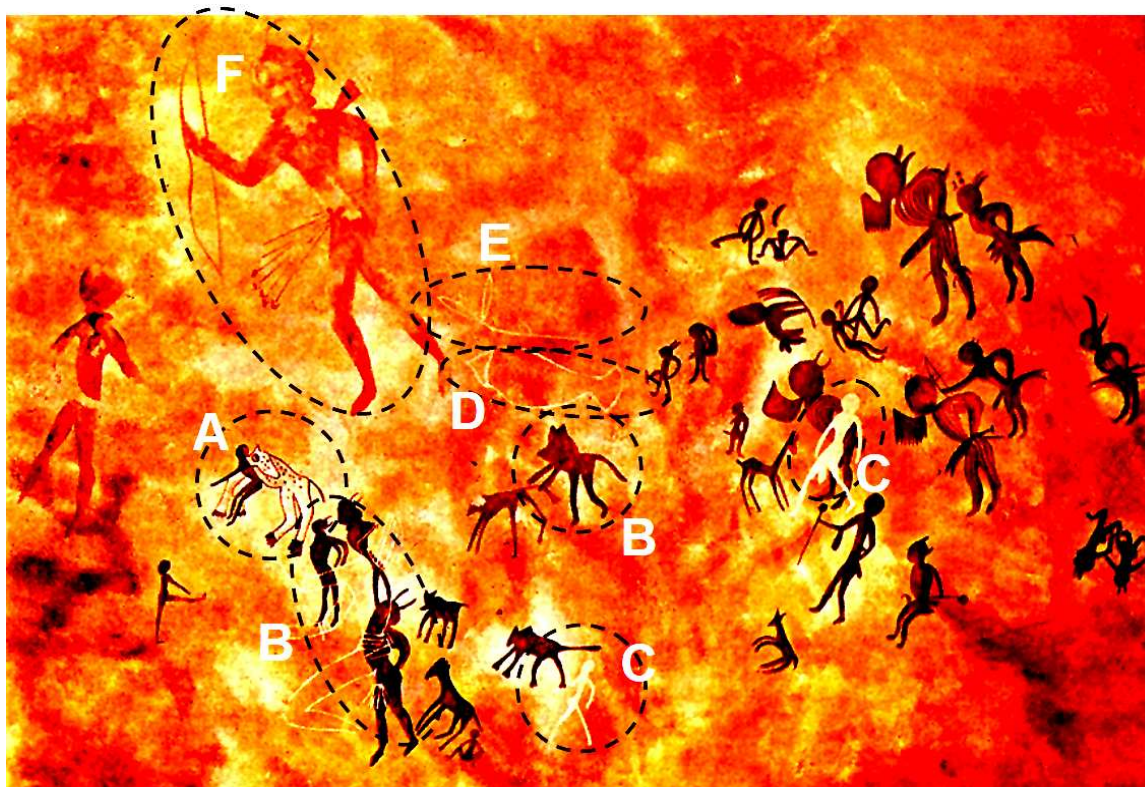
⁴⁴⁰ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, III, 187; Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 166; Pseudo-Hyginus, *Astronomica*, 2. 13. For all these classical sources I am partly indebted to Atsma, *s.v.* the various gods involved

⁴⁴¹ Tamminen 1928; Lönnrot 1866; van Binsbergen 2017a: Chapter 11, pp. 413-438, and references cited there; also *cf.* the Yoruba iron god Shango.

⁴⁴² Cotterell 1989; Willis 1994; Cressey 1999; Berndt 1966.

Adam's rib (*Genesis 2:21 f.*) also makes even her a *leg child*.

After this digression, let us return to Table 9.49. The listings (+ or -) in its central column only assess whether *the required lexical components* in which the NarCom *could* be expressed, are present in the reconstructed *Borean lexicon. The *Borean reconstruction produces separate words, not sentences or phrases, and therefore could never directly yield a NarCom like 'The Separation of Heaven and Earth'. These entries must therefore be treated with the greatest reservation. It would take us too far from our focus on Durkheim if we were to provide here the full data supporting the Table listing concerning these *Borean attestations.⁴⁴³ It would be splendid if the Narrative Complexes (NarComs) distinguished in terms of that model, could actually be attested in the *Borean lexicon. Such attestation would not really *prove* the validity of my Aggregative Diachronic Model of Global Mythology in the strictest sense, but if the NarComs I believe I could distinguish had turned out to have no *Borean attestation at all, this would certainly have been an important indication that I was not on the right track towards reconstructing aspects of the mythology of the Upper Palaeolithic.



As common in the rock art of this region, various styles from successive periods have been superimposed, so that the intended composition of the painting is not open to direct observation. In the right half of the picture, the 'large-headed' ('Martian', 'space helmet') style predominates, in the left-hand side the style is more realistic and probably later. Note the leopard, or pardinvested human (A), abducting a highly pigmented human, centre left. Also note other apparently therian-tropic figures (B) near the leopard: bipeds, but with tails and animal ears. Also note the figures in slender white lines (C); most white-lined figures seem human, but one can also make out a fish (D – aquatic themes abound in the Tassili art although Tassili is now a desert environment) and a creature (E) rendered as a long straight line and two large narrow ears – by

⁴⁴³ I have relegated this detailed analysis to a chapter in my forthcoming book *Collected Studies in Comparative Mythology* (van Binsbergen, forthcoming (c)).

comparison with other rock art, cf. Figs 9.9 and 9.10, below) one might suggest: the Horned / Rainbow Serpent. Right top appears a disproportionately large hunter (F) with unmistakable bow, arrows and quiver – he might be the great mythical hunter, not proposed in any of the NarComs, but perhaps similar to the one Rappenglück (1999) believed to detect on a prehistoric artefact and identified by him with the mythical hunter Orion⁴⁴⁴; such a mythical hunter is also widely attested in African mythology, e.g. in the West African Sunjata epic, and in the myths of South Central Africa where the hunter Chibinda woes and dethrones the legendary queen Luweji (Turner 1955; Hoover 1980; van Binsbergen 1992b).

Source: Lhote 1963

Fig. 9.7. Human and animal figures from Tassili n' Ajjer, dated c. 7 ka BP



source: Christoforou 2018, with thanks; by analogy with widespread gesticulatory conventions as attested in iconography from the Neolithic and after (c. 25 ka later!) the figure is often considered to make a gesture of adoration – which suggests a theistic religious orientation, somewhat prematurely by my dating suggestion in this chapter

Fig. 9.8. Ach Valley tusk fragment, Geißenklösterle cave in the Swabian Alps of

⁴⁴⁴ #61. ON THE MYTHICAL CHARACTER ORION. The name Orīon, with its aquatic etymology (it is commonly considered to have the Oldgreek word for 'urinating' as its etymon), fits the water-centred prehistoric mythical world rather well. Another mythical hunter is Nimrod, whose name has leopard / speckledness/ evil connotations. The literature on Orion is very extensive, and makes that mythical figure one of the most interesting subjects of Comparative Mythology and archaeoastronomy. I can only cite the following selection: Atsma 2008, s.v. 'Orion'; Bal 1893; Behlmer 1975-1986; Bouché-Leclercq 1899; Fontenrose 1981; Gottheil 1927; Küentzle 1884-1937; Lansing 1885; Müller 1834; Rappenglück 2003; von Geisau 1979; Wainwright 1936; Wehrli 1939; Wendel 1935. Non-scholarly, but sensational, and with an enormous best-selling impact, has been: Bauval & Gilbert 1994, *The Orion Mystery: Unlocking the Secrets of the Pyramids*; cf. its equally non-scholarly precursor *The Sirius Mystery* (1976), by the Assyriologist Temple, who (most counter-paradigmatically) invokes extraterrestrial intervention to explain the (in themselves solid) facts of his argument.

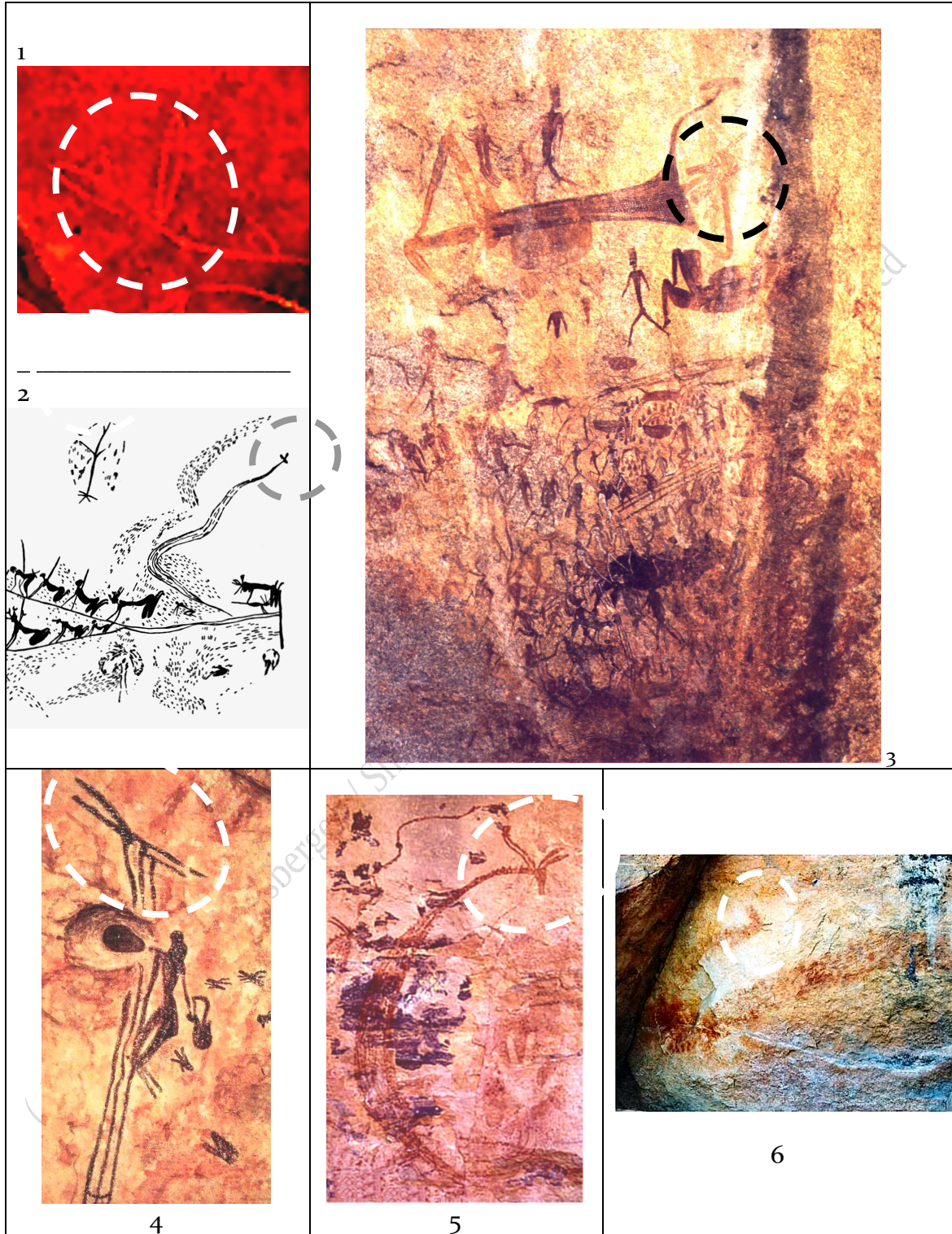
South-western Germany. c. 32 ka BP, claimed by Michael Rappenglück to represent the asterism of Orion

Against only one *Borean term for 'sky' (rather than 'heaven' – apparently the conception of heaven as an enormous vast expanse was an innovation, perhaps associated with naked-eye astronomy, of Upper Palaeolithic shamanism) there are several for 'earth', and only a few for 'star', 'moon', 'luminary'. The *Borean world-view was *down to earth* in the most literal sense. The many terms for animal species with little differentiated semantics might suggest a totemistic orientation of this world-view. Several *Borean roots have the semantics 'snake', and since in later language forms this semantics is close to that of 'dragon', 'serpent', 'rainbow / Rainbow Serpent', in the light of the prominence of the rainbow and its serpentine connotations in Comparative Mythology we may be justified to suspect in *Borean times the presence of the rainbow as a spiritual being receiving some form of veneration; Comparative Mythology suggests such a mythical being to have had also aquatic connotations. This line of analysis will not be pursued any further in the present book, since it is the focus of another writing project of mine now nearing completion: *Shimmerings of the Rainbow Serpent*.

Overlooking the central column of Table 9.49 as a whole, I am pleased to conclude that the extensive *Borean attestations of the core material of my Aggregative Diachronic Model of Global Mythology suggests that model to be not totally devoid of merit.

Even if we take recourse to a much more accomplished Comparative Mythology than my own oblique contributions to that field, *e.g.* the work of Michael Witzel, Jim Harrod and Yuri Berezkin, and prehistorians like Anati, Leroi-Gourhan and Lewis-Williams, this would not yet allow us to read prehistoric iconographic with any degree of certainty. Yet it looks as if we are beginning to make progress on this point. For example, the tableau from Saharan rock art depicted in Fig. 9.7 is no longer totally inaccessible, as my caption indicates. One of its little conspicuous elements, a line ending in a fork (E), suggests non only the conventionalised iconography of a Horned Serpent, but especially connectivity with Southern African and even North American and Australian cases (Figs. 9.9 and 9.10).⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ #62. *ON THE HORNED SERPENT*. In addition to the specific cases displayed in Fig. 9.9, the 'Horned Serpent' has been recognised as a mytheme and an iconographic element in a great variety of prehistoric and traditional settings, suggesting it indeed to be a very ancient symbol, reverting to Pandora's Box or at least to early stages in the Out-of-Africa dispersal of Anatomically Modern Humans. Cf. Soukopova 2011: her Fig. 10 (another Saharan attestation); Green 1981 (Roman Britain); Reich & Brandl 1985 (Ancient Mesopotamia: a manifestation of Tiamat, pre-cosmogonic chaos goddess); Rands 1954, Howard 1960, Phillips *et al.* 2006 (North America); Jacobi 1925 (interpreting the symbol as a Jungian archetype, by implication timeless and universal).



Sources: 1. Fig. 9.7 E, above; 2. from Marandellas near Salisbury / Harare, hand copy by Mansfeld, from Frobenius 1954 / 1933: Fig. 31; 3. from Zimbabwe, Garlake 1995; 4. from the Cuevas de la Araña, Eastern Spain: Lommel 1966: 48; 5. Tacon, Australian Museum, at: <http://www.amonline.net.au/fishes/fishfacts/images/rainbows2.jpg>, with thanks; 6. http://www.nt-tech.com.au/enright/images/rainbow_serpent.jpg, with thanks

Fig. 9.9. The Horned Serpent as apparently standard iconography of the

mythical Rainbow Snake, in the rock art of three continents: Sahara (1); Zimbabwe, (2, 3); Eastern Spain (4); and Australia (5, 6)

Not unexpectedly, further versions of this horned-serpent iconography may be found in South African rock art, *e.g.* in Fig. 9.10.



From Smith *et al.* 2004: 515, Fig. 12, with thanks; scale bar 30 mm

Fig. 9.10. The Horned Serpent in mixed San and Khoekhoen rock art in the Eastern Cape, South Africa

These are mere glimpses of what may have been prehistoric depictions of theistic prehistoric religion, but they have to be treated with the greatest caution. Let us therefore leave this theistic topic and proceed to a discussion of magic and one of its important aspects across the ages, divination.

9.15. Magic, divination, sorcery

Durkheim's perspective was implicitly logocentric, literate, heavily informed by the history of world religions (especially Judaism) in the last two millennia, and by the assumption, common among scholars at the time, that here is a fundamental difference between religion and magic (*cf.* Frazer 1890-1915 / 1911-1915); Durkheim treated magic under the heading of 'the negative cult'. *Les Formes* dealt with only one religion of one human group. Numerous are the references, in the vast expanses of the *Tower of Babel* data base (which has near-global coverage for nearly all language families known today) to magical beliefs and practices such as divination, magic and sorcery. Here we cannot overestimate the probable influence of later religious dispensations especially world religious (propounding a – usually literate – orthodoxy which has often served to demonise earlier dispensations that were more closely continuous with the *Borean pattern) to be imposed on latter-day speakers of languages hypothetically descended from *Borean. As a result, reconstruction of *Borean magical semantics on the basis of reflexes attested in historical times is particularly risky.

In many past and present cultural contexts, the magical act *par excellence* is that of tying (Eliade 1947), and here the *Borean lexicon is well equipped – as stands to reason considering how essential the act of tying is in fact for prehistoric / pre-modern technologies – hafting an axe head to its handle; building shelters, walls, houses from arboreal or skeletal material; transporting the meat of large animals back to base camp; knitting, netting, weaving, basketry etc. We have a considerable choice in *Borean: *KVVN ‘tie (also bind)’; *KVRTV ‘tie (also knot)’; *TVLV ‘tie (also net)’; *TVKV: ‘tie (also weave)’. Meanwhile, however, the sheer presence of such roots does not mean that magic has actually been attested in the *Borean lexicon, and we had better rest our case.

However, there are alternative, more indirect ways to come somewhat closer to the presumable presence of magic and divination in the *Borean life world. Below we shall trace the rich ramifications of nearly all the NarComs I distinguished a decade ago on totally different grounds, when I did not yet have access to the reconstructed *Borean lexicon. We are inclined to situate in the Upper Palaeolithic those of the NarComs for which we have no specific reason to situate them in more recent historical periods. It is remarkable that nearly all these NarComs turn out to have been put to *divinatory use* – understandably, for the basic cosmology of the world is enshrined in a life world’s major myths, in other words divination is a way to communicate with the structure of reality as socio-culturally mediated, and to insert and reconfirm the collective or individual existence and fate in that reality. The data are presented in Table 9.50. Inspection of the *Borean lexicon provide only a very indirect and inconclusive test, yet I venture to suggest that magical, particularly divinatory religious beliefs and practices are likely to have existed among the elementary forms of religious life in the Upper Palaeolithic.

As I wrote in *Before the Presocratics*’ (2012d: 179 f.)

‘We have seen that the various element cosmologies studied above have often been used for divination. We shall now probe into the joint history of element cosmologies and divination, seeking to delve even deeper than the Upper Palaeolithic, if possible. Unexpected indications concerning the antiquity of element systems come to light when we manage to plausibly reconstruct some of the mythological contents of Pandora’s Box.⁴⁴⁶ Starting with a sample of African cosmogonic myths recorded in historical times, I have presented a distributional argument identifying the mythemic nuclei (‘Narrative Complexes’) in these African myths, and attempted to trace their prehistoric trajectory through space and time after the Out-of-Africa Exodus; the reconstruction method is a form of argued distributional triangulation, and has so far been executed and written up entirely without any explicit or conscious reference to divination. If a Narrative Complex occurs in sub-Saharan Africa, New Guinea, and Australia, it is likely to have found itself in Pandora’s Box, because for reasons of ecological adaptation Anatomically Modern Humans, in their first sallies Out of Africa, c. 60-80 ka BP, initially seem to have kept close to the Indian Ocean shore until reaching New Guinea and Australia (which before the Early Holocene global rise of the sea level by 200 m could have been completed with dry feet except for a 70 km patch of open sea South of Timor – proof of humans’ early nautical abilities; cf. Bednarik 1997, 1999), but without populating

⁴⁴⁶ van Binsbergen 2006a, 2006b; Table 6.1 below [meant is: in: van Binsbergen 2012d], cf. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 above [meant is: in van Binsbergen 2012d] [original footnote]

the other continents yet. Meanwhile Table 6.1 [in van Binsbergen 2012d, largely incorporated in Table 9.50, below)] suggests that divinatory patterns as recorded in historical times, and their implications in terms of element systems, echo so unmistakably the specific reconstructed contents of Pandora's Box, at the onset of the Middle Palaeolithic, that we may persuade ourselves to link the two moments in time, and thus acquire an inkling of what may have been a surprisingly rich divinatory life in the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic, in Africa as well as in other continents where Anatomically Modern Humans gradually took the, element-relevant, contents of Pandora's Box. This step is admittedly not without risks: even if the complex reconstruction underlying Table 6.1 was executed without any conscious thought of divination and element systems, still the same author who processed these data and compiled the Table has been so preoccupied with divination and element systems over the past quarter of a century, that it cannot be ruled out that that domain of empirical analysis inadvertently seeped into the Comparative Mythology project, rendering them somewhat dependent upon one another. However, that is a risk I am prepared to admit, and yet to take.'

Narrative Complex (NC) (nuclear mytheme) (no.) reconstructed to have been in Pandora's Box	Nar-Com No.	proposed use of this mytheme in Middle and Upper Palaeolithic proto-divination as suggested by <i>divinatory patterns in historical times</i>	proposed 6-, 5-, or 4-element in transformation cycle	attested in *Borean [
The Lightning Bird (and the World Egg)	4	lightning as omen fowl as divinatory animal (Hastings 1908-1921, II, 55ab, iv. 820b-826b (Roman divination); III, 697ab (cock omen).	Air, Aether, Fire	*LVNV semen, egg bird, fly: *PVHV; bird; bird: *CVKV, *HVVV; small bird: *CVPV; a kind of gallinacean bird: *KVRV; a kind of bird: *CVLV, *CVMV, *KVLV, *KVMV, *KVVV, *KVPV, *KVTV, *LVKV, *SVKV, *TVRV to flash, shine: *CVLV; to shine, glitter, flash: *LVPV (produces 'lightning' in Proto-Austic, Proto-Amerind (misc.), and also in Proto-Turkic<Altaic<Eurasitic); strike fire *CVKV; light, fire *HVKV; light, shine: *HVLV, *JVKV, *PVHV; light, bum *HVRV; glittering: *KVLV
What is in the Sky: (notably: sun, Rainbow Serpent / snake lightning, rain, moon, stars, the celestial axis)	3	See NarComs 4 and 13	Air, Aether, Fire	See NarComs 4 and 13
The Stones (as Earth; in the Late Palaeolithic / proto-Neolithic probably revised to become 8a. The Stones / Meteorites as Connection between Heaven and Earth)	8	psephomancy (divination by pebbles); (Horowitz & Hurowitz 1992) divination from stones and rocks (Hastings 1908-1921: XI, 866b-867a.)	Earth; Aether, Air; Metal (e.g. sidereal iron)	*CVCV, *HVMCV, *HVNLV, *HVRV, *LVNV, *PVNV, *RVMCV, *TVHV, *TVLV; also mountain: *CVNV, *KVVV; also rock: *KVLV; the mytheme 'stone'; is also connected with Restoring the Separation of Heaven and Earth, in the sense of meteorites coming down from Heaven, and re-connecting with Earth
The Moon	9	moon as omen, (Hastings 1908-1921: XII, 64b-65a); proto-astrology	?	*TVLKV (also luminary in general)
The Earth as primary (NC 10 was subse-	10	earth omens, proto-geomancy	Earth	earth: *TVHV, *TVKV; also dust: *TVRV; also mound: *PVMV; dirt, also earth?: *HVMGV; mud, clay, dung: *PVNV (also gum, resin...), *KVRV;

quently revised towards 'The Earth as the Source of Cattle, in the Neolithic)				also <i>cf.</i> snake
From under the Tree (subsequently diversified into 12a 'The world and humanity from the tree', and 12c 'The Leg-Child')	12	divination by trees, branches, twigs; (Hastings 1908-1921: II, 832, XII, 455b-457); cleromancy with wooden tablets etc.	Wood	tree: *PVJV, *WVTV; (specific kind): *HVJWV; *KVJWV; *NVKV; *HVLMMV; (big): *TVNV; (coniferous -, resin): PVNCV; (leaf -): *PVLV; (also stick): *KVRV; (also wood): *TVRV; trunk, stump: *TVMKV
The Cosmic / Rainbow Snake	13	snake as divinatory animal, snake omens (Hastings 1908-1921: I, 526b-527a, and XI, 406b. Confusion with Earth possible because of homonymy: Starostin & Starostin 1998-2008, 'Indo-European etymology' note that Proto-Indo-European: *dg'hem- 'earth' (Pokorny 1959-69: I, 662 f; Buck n.d.: 16) is '[h]ard to distinguish from the reflexes of *g'hem- #3258. All Italic forms (Latin humus, etc.) may in fact belong there'; the reference is to Proto-Indo-European *g'(h)em-, *g'(h)mēy- 'snake, worm' (Pokorny 1959-69: I, 790).	Aether, Air; Earth	snake: *HVNKV (as epiphany of heaven and of earth), *NVTV, *PVCV, *PMMV, *WVRLV (also lizard), *LVRV (also worm) snake, worm, *LVRV (Although in many contexts (e.g. medieval English) no clear distinction is made between snake and worm, I refrain from listing all the nearly ten *Borean forms with 'worm' semantics where 'snake' is not explicitly specified. rainbow: Proto-Mongolian *solon[nasale gja < Proto-Altai *ziola 'to shine, blaze' < Eurasiatic *CVIC 'to burn, flash' < *Borean *CVLV, 'to flash, shine'; this suggests that *CVLV (> Austric > Proto-Austronesian 'lightning, moon') was also a *Borean expression for 'rainbow' Proto-Japanese *nuN etc. < Proto-Altai < Eurasiatic *IVw[nasal n]V 'dawn, noon' suggests ancient semantic link with rainbow Proto-Eskimo *a[gamma]ju- 'rainbow, meteor' < Eurasiatic *aga, 'rainy weather', might suggest underlying semantic of rainbow *Borean *CVJV 'blink, shine, shade', produces > Sinocaucasian > Proto-Northcaucasian > some branches 'rainbow', which suggests that also the *Borean root may have had rainbow connotations *Borean *LVLV 'arrow, harpoon' > Sinocaucasian > Sinotibetan > Kiranti > Tulung 'rainbow', suggests possibility of rainbow semantics in *Borean
<i>idem</i> continued				*Borean *HVRCV, 'rain, pour', > Sinocaucasian > Basque '1. sky, 2 storm 3 thunder 4 Thursday 5 rainbow 6 cloud', which suggests similar connotation for the *Borean parent form Proto-Austroasiatic jV[nasal n], rVn 'dragon', produces rainbow in many later reflexes, which comes close to recent Sinotibetan dragon semantics; in Proto-Austroasiatic this yields the semantics 'demon' of course, many other words in many other languages with rainbow semantics cannot be relegated to macrophylum level or to *Borean

<p>The Spider (subsequently transformed into 15a 'The Feminine Arts' in proto-Neolithic times)</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>spider as omen and divinary animal (Hastings 1908-1921: I, 52 8a)</p>	<p>? (Aether, Air)</p>	<p>'spin, twist': *PVNV (but apparently no later reflexes produce a semantics 'spider') there is also a form of *PV_xNV_x that means 'female' – spinning and weaving are feminine tasks!)</p> <p>'spin, wind, to': *KVRV > Eurasiatic *KVrV 'bind' (but apparently no later reflexes produce a semantics 'spider')</p> <p>'worm', *KVRV, with reflexes in: > Eurasiatic: *KorV⁴⁴⁷ > Afroasiatic: *kVwr- (Berber, Chadic) > Sinocaucasian: *(x)kārā</p> <p>(although not hyperlinked in the <i>Tower of Babel</i> database (but the similarity with *KorV is noted in the <i>Tower of Babel</i>/database under Eurasiatic *KorV), I suspect this is also the etymon of / or may have been confused with other *Borean *KV_xRV_x consonantal homonyms, as etymon of: Eurasiatic *kVrV, 'a kind of insect', > Proto-Altaic *k'järe, 'a kind of insect',⁴⁴⁸ > Proto-Korean: *kār-kēmiii, 'a kind of spider')</p> <p>'weave, plait, weave, rope (?), to', *RVCV; the reflexes in Eurasiatic and Sinocaucasian evoke the semantics of 'strap, lattice', but apparently nowhere come close to 'spider'</p> <p>'weave, plait, weave, to', *HVPV > Eurasiatic: *HUbV > Indoeuropean: *Hwebh-, whence 'spider' in Tokharian B (Adams n.d.: 483) and Oldindian > Afroasiatic: *ʔVbaw- > Sinocaucasian: *pVHV (*HVpV)</p> <p>not traceable to *Borean is: Eurasiatic: *ʔVrV, 'a kind of insect', whence Proto-Altaic *ara, 'a kind of insect' > Proto-Mongolian: *arajalžin spider⁴⁴⁹ [cf. Proto-Northcaucasian: *χarVcwV / *caχwVrV, 'spider'; and Proto-Indoeuropean *araksn-, 'spider', whence Greek arakhna, spider']</p> <p>'weave, tie': *TVKV; the reflexes in Eurasiatic, Sinocaucasian, Austric and Amerind come nowhere near 'spider' semantics</p> <p>*PVRPV, 'butterfly'⁴⁵⁰, with reflexes in: > Eurasiatic: *pVrPvV 'butterfly',⁴⁵¹ > Proto-Altaic: *p`ép`a⁴⁵² 'a kind of insect', > Proto-</p>
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⁴⁴⁷ Illich-Svitych 1967: 338, 1976: 1, 358; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 942 *kuʔrVt/dV 'worm, parasitic insect' (Turkic+Proto-Kolami-Gadba [a Dravidian language – WvB]); Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1140 *KUR[E] 'worm, maggot'; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1177 *k[u]R[ʕV]dV 'stinging insect'; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1180 *kirKV 'stinging insect' (Kartvelian *krkil- + Tungus-Manchu + some Semito-hamitic / Afroasiatic); Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1183 *KURmV 'worm, insect'.

⁴⁴⁸ An expressive root, often reduplicated and with not quite regular correspondences, esp. in the Korean-Japanese area. Cf. also *k'jōro (with possible contaminations).

⁴⁴⁹ Ramstedt 1935: 12. There is some confusion between this form and *haba-kai id. (v. sub *p`ép`a) - which resulted in a mixed form *hayalžin, reflected in Middlemongolian (Lewicki 1949: 12) xa'alžin - however, the Dagur form definitely points to a 0-Anlaut in Proto-Mongolian

⁴⁵⁰ Bengtson & Ruhlen 1994: 45 *palpal (+ IP).

⁴⁵¹ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1795 *pārPvV ~ *pārPVR/IV 'butterfly' (+ very dubious Semitic). Cf. Northcaucasian *pārVpātV 'butterfly, moth'.

⁴⁵² An expressive root (possibly denoting originally some kind of locust or grasshopper), with some

				<p>Mongolian: *haba-kai, 'spider' > Afroasiatic: *bil(bil)- > Sinocaucasian: Northcaucasian *pärVpätV > Austric: Tag. *papaló ~ paparó > Amerind (misc.): *pal(pal), *penpen 'butterfly' (Ruhlen n.d.: 103-104)</p> <p>*KVMV, 'a kind of insect', ⁴⁵³ > Eurasianic *KUMV, 'a kind of insect'⁴⁵⁴ > Proto-Altaic *kumi (~ -o,-;ju-) (cf. also *kiuma 847, *kajamV 700) 'a kind of insect',⁴⁵⁵ > Proto-Tungus-Manchu: *kumke, 'louse' > Literary Manchu: xelmeku, xelmexen 'spider'⁴⁵⁶; and Proto-Korean: *kəmii, 'spider'⁴⁵⁷ and Proto-Japanese: *kümüâ 'spider' ⁴⁵⁸ > Proto-Dravidian: *kur[V]m-, 'spider'</p> <p>Proto-Kartvelian: *bab-, 'spider', no Proto-Eurasianic etymon; which also applies to a considerable number of 'spider' semantics in Dravidian and Eskimo; the same applies to 'spider' semantics in Semitic (several), Proto-Centralchadic, East-Chadic, Proto-Westchadic, etc. as phyla within Afroasiatic. A similar situation in Sinocaucasian (e.g. Proto-Northcaucasian), Proto-Austric (notably Proto-Austroasiatic) and Khoisan: many forms with spider semantics that cannot be linked to the *Borean level</p> <p>'fly, flea': *PVLV > Eurasianic: ⁴⁵⁹ *pVIV</p>
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tabooistic changes in Turkic and Mongolian.

⁴⁵³ With reflexes in: Eurasianic: *KUMV; Afroasiatic: *kaml- (?); Austric: Proto-Austronesian *kuma 'harmful insect' (not in B); Amerind (misc.): *kumpa 'fly' (Ruhlen n.d.: 284); *kama 'snake; worm' (Ruhlen n.d.: 660); Peiros 1989: 129.

⁴⁵⁴ Uralic: *kürmV 'gadfly' (Toivonen 1955-: 246) [: Saam. N gur'bma 'larva of *Oedemagena tarandl*, L. kur'mä 'Dassellarve, Larve der Hautbremse', Rédei *et al.* 1986-1991: 805]; Finnic-Volgaic. *karma ~ *kärma 'Fliege'; ? Samoyedic *kür 'fly'

Kartvelian: *krkil-; also Georgian kvirt-, kruit- 'wasp'

Dravidian: *kur[V]m-; Proto-Gondi-Kui *kurṭum 'leech'

Eskimo-Aleut: *qura-

Other similar forms: Proto-Altaic *kjäre; Proto-Kartvelian *grqčil- 'flea'; Proto-Dravidian *giringil 'cricket'(1569); cf. *kVrV]

Illich-Svitych 1967: 338, 1976: 1, 358; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 942 *kuʔrVt/dV 'worm, parasitic insect' (Turkic. + Proto-Gondi-Kui); 1140 *KuR[E] 'worm, maggot'; 1177 *k[u]R[ʔV]dV 'stinging insect'; Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1180 *kirKV 'stinging insect' (Kartvelian *krkil- + Tungus-Manchu + some Semito-hamitic / Afroasiatic); Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1183 *KuRmV 'worm, insect'.

⁴⁵⁵ Ramstedt 1949: 105, Lee 1958, 119, Martin 1966: 242, Illich-Svitych 1976: 1, 309, Starostin 1991:290; Dybo 1996: 9, Leksika 1997: 184. An expressive root: cf. *kiuma, *kajamV.

⁴⁵⁶ Tsintsius *et al.* 1975-1977: 1, 430, 431, 481. + in Manchu is probably secondary (tabooistic contamination with xelme 'shadow').

⁴⁵⁷ Nam 1960: 32, Martin *et al.* 1967: 84.

⁴⁵⁸ Martin 1987: 463

⁴⁵⁹ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1694a.

⁴⁶⁰ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 1776.

⁴⁶¹ (...) In Proto-Sinotibetan - a confusion with *pāHV q.v. Starostin 1989: 61 *pVrV.

⁴⁶² Ruhlen n.d.: 482.

				<p>> Afroasiatic : *pVy/ʔVI-> Proto-Centralchadic: *(ʔa-) fly- 'spider' 1, 'flea' 2, 't. of ant' 3, 't. of worm' 4, 'tick, mite' 5</p> <p>KVMCV, 'ant, insect', ></p> <p>> Afroasiatic : *kVC-am/n-> Proto-Higheastcushitic: *kissan- 'spider'</p> <p>> Sinocaucasian : *(x)qāmstV</p> <p>> Amerind (misc.) : *kaci 'ant' (Ruhlen n.d.: 8)</p> <p>CVCV, 'a kind of insect'</p> <p>> Afroasiatic : *ʔačuč- insect, louse (+ Omotic) > Semitic: *ʔVt (V)t- 'moth' > Hebrew <i>šakkābiš</i> 'spider' (...); > Proto-Westchadic: *ʔuSaS-'ant' , Cf. Geruntum <i>šišā</i> 'spider'</p> <p>> Sinocaucasian : Northcaucasian *čēlčū insect, moth (cf. also *cīmc_V)</p> <p>'snake, worm', *LVRV, with reflexes in:</p> <p>> Sinocaucasian : *ʔ_āfrV 'snak', > Proto-Yenisseian: *jVʔra, 'a small insect, worm > Ket: <i>oləngəs</i>, pl. -n 'spider'</p> <p>> Austric : Proto-Austroasiatic *Cə[o:] 'earthworm', Proto-Austronesian *SulaR 'snake'.</p> <p>*PVRV, 'bee, insect', with reflexes in:</p> <p>> Eurasiatic : *pVrV⁴⁶⁰</p> <p>> Afroasiatic : Arabic <i>faraʔ</i>- 'lice' (?), Chadic *pVr- 'fly, mosquito'</p> <p>> Sinocaucasian : *pōrV⁴⁶¹ > Commonbushaski: *phirán, 'moth 2 spider'</p> <p>> Amerind (misc.) : *polunk (? *poru-) 'mosquito, wasp, bee' ⁴⁶²</p> <p>The many different *Borean equivalents suggest that in *Borean times the spider had already been a centrally established cosmological figure for a very long time. The lexical range even suggests a degree of tabooisation, as if euphemistic circumscription entered the semantic dynamics.</p>
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The literature on the numerous forms of divination through space and time is enormous, and cannot be adequately represented here. I limit myself to a minimum selection for only a few items. Rich sources on the comparative study of divination are: Le Scouézec *et al.* 1965; Hastings 1909-1921. Remarkably, 'water' turns out to be the missing guest in this Table. Yet the contemplation of water surfaces is a common divinatory technique, world-wide; so is the use of water in ordeals, where drowning or floating is taken as indicative of the alleged witch's guilt.

Table 9.50. The divinatory and element-cosmological significance of the reconstructed mythological contents of Pandora's Box, Africa, 80-60 ka BP and earlier

A specific use to which I have put the various NarComs as identified in my Aggregative Diachronic Model of Global Mythology, has been to argue the existence of an element cosmology based on cyclical transformation, of the type: water destroys fire, fire destroys wood, and so on, so that essences have no absolute and immutable existence, and do not absolutely differ from one another (a mode of thought commensurate with range semantics), but constantly, under specific conditions, (which become more and more specific and articulate as we approach the most recent millennia) are constantly shape-shifting and turning into one another. I have argued this world view as an important dimension of human thought since Upper Palaeolithic times in my book *Before the Presocratics* (2012). Now, in view of the fact that a cosmology in principle

may amount to a religiously underpinned world view, and may induce to specific religious beliefs and practices, it is fitting, in the present connection, to assess the very considerable extent to which the elements of that transformative cyclical cosmology are actually attested in the *Borean lexicon. This is set out in the following Table 9.51.

element	*Borean term
Water	'water': *HVKV, *HVN, *KVHNV?, *PVNV, *WVTV, *TVKV (also 'pond'); *CVLV (also 'pour'); *CVVV and *JVMV (also 'sea'); *KVTV (also 'submerge') 'flow, stream, spring' etc. (in many archaic settings venerated as a source of living water) *NVRV, HVV, *TVRV (also 'drink'), *CVRV (also 'drip'), *PVLV (also 'gush'), *LVJV (also 'liquid'), *TVNV (also 'melt'), *PVRV, *PVNV 'liquid': *CVVV, *HVRV, *LVT, *CVTV (also 'drink'), *LVJV (also 'flow') 'wet': *MVVV (also 'water'), *HVLV (also 'waters'), *MVKV, *MVRV, *LVPV (also 'soft') 'sprinkle': *PVCV 'urine, urinate': *SVKV 'wash': MVCKV; (also 'pour'): *LVNV, *PVKV
Earth	'earth': *TVHV, *TVKV; also 'dust': *TVRV; also 'mound': *PMMV; 'dirt', also 'earth'?: *HVMGV; 'mud, clay, dung': *PVNV (also 'gum, resin...'), *KVRV; also <i>cf.</i> 'worm / snake', and: 'dry'
Air	*HVKMV ('sky, cloud')
Fire	'fire': *CVCV, *HVHV, *PVHV, *TVHV; (also 'burn'): *HMMV, *HVNKV; (also 'light'): *HVKV; (also 'to strike fire'): *CVKV; 'fireplace, burn': *PVPV
Metal	no *Borean term listed; <i>cf.</i> 'stones': *CVCV, *HVMCV, *HVNLV, *HVRV, *LVNV, *PVNV, *RVMCV, *TVHV, *TVLV; also 'mountain': *CVNV, *KVVV; also 'rock': *KVLV; the mytheme 'stone' is also connected with Restoring the Separation of Heaven and Earth, in the sense of meteorites coming down from Heaven, and re-connecting with Earth
Wood	'wood, tree, wood': *TVRV; and <i>cf.</i> 'tree': *PVJV, *WVTV; (specific kind): *HVJVV; *KVJVV; *NVKV; *HVMV; (big): *TVNV; (coniferous – , resin): *PVNCV; (leaf –): *PVLV; (also 'stick'): *KVRV; (also 'wood'): *TVRV; 'trunk, stump': *TVMKV

Table 9.51. The availability of *Borean terms makes it conceivable (but no more than that!) that element cosmology already obtained in *Borean times

Once more I draw attention to the interesting connection between this Table 9.51 (with possible *Borean indications of a very ancient element cosmology on which in the Eurasian Bronze Age the cyclical transformation of elements was to be based), and the listing of NarComs (Tables 8.8, 9.50). Of the five elements listed in the above Table 9.51, as many as four feature as the central items in NarComs in Table 9.50. Although with Durkheim, 'morale' usually has the meaning of 'spiritual' (like in his central definition of religion), still his approach to religion lays much emphasis on morality, hence by implication on evil – as typical of the individual dimension which the social is to keep at bay. The *Borean lexicon does not allow us to explore evil magical practices in the way of sorcery,⁴⁶³ for the simple reason that these are not attested there – perhaps because evil had not yet been invented as a concept, or, more likely, be-

⁴⁶³ The recurrent problem here is that we cannot simply project our present-day, science-informed notion of natural laws, Nature, and the supernatural onto the actors' emic world of 25 ka BP. What is strange, amazing, miraculous to us, need not have been so to them. In *Borean, what comes closest to the semantic complex attending magic and sorcery, is perhaps *TVLV, 'to deceive'. Yet it is possible that the idea of 'miracle, infringement of natural laws' is older than the logocentricity which emerged in the Bronze Age. *E.g.* Table 9.52; also *cf.* Schlesinger 2010.

cause its expression was tabooed. Perhaps some light may be cast on this issue once we trace the later reflexes, though the descendent macrophyla, of the concept of evil, to which we now turn.

Proto-Indo-European: *kewəd. 'miracle, sorcery' Old Greek: kŭdos n. 'Ruhm, Ehre, Ansehen, Herrlichkeit', kŭdró- 'ruhmvoll, kŭdnó- 'id.' Slavic: *čŭdo, gen. -ese 'чудо'; *čŭdъ; *kŭdo, gen. -ese 'колдовство, чары', *kŭdъ Pokorny 1959-1969: I, 368 f.
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Table 9.52. The semantics 'miracle' in Indo-European

9.16. 'Further instalments on the problem of evil': Indications of moral categories in *Borean

Having found the Upper Palaeolithic life world to be probably furnished with magic and divination, let us now finally turn to the moral dimension of whatever religious forms may have obtained in the Upper Palaeolithic. Religion in its manifestations in historical times also tends to entail a value system which allows the evaluation of conditions, events and actions in terms of better or worse, good and evil. Even though we did not list moral or evaluative terms in our *emic* overview of Table 9.6, it is fitting to assess whether there is linguistic evidence as to their universality or rather their more limited distribution.⁴⁶⁴

At this point we must be heedful of a methodological point I brought up in Chapter 8. Because later religious dispositions would have tended to demonise the earlier ones they were supplanting, the lexicon may be expected, as we ascent the etymological tree towards *Borean, to display an increasing tendency towards the demoniacal and the evil. Spiritual beings that had demoniacal / evil connotations by the (relatively recent) time the attending lexicon was recorded for scholarship including inclusion into the *Tower of Babel* database, may not necessarily have had such negative connotations in the earlier period when they dominated the religious scene. The diachronic linguistic study of evil is

⁴⁶⁴ #63. *ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL*. The heading of this section is a pun. In Christian theology, 'the problem of evil' has been the common designation for what presents itself there as an unsolvable puzzle: how can an omnipotent and exceedingly benevolent God yet allow evil in the human world? This apparent *aporia* is predicated on two, probably false, assumptions:

- (1) two attributes (omnipotence and exceeding benevolence) ascribed to God with inevitably insufficient empirical grounds, and
- (2) the unnecessarily absolute distinction between good and evil.

In cosmologies that accord evil an equal and independent place next to goodness, *e.g.* Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, the apparent *aporia* disappears. In African Studies, the designation 'problem of evil' (already used as a chapter title in Mary Douglas' *Natural Symbols*, 1970) was hijacked and given a new meaning when, around 1970 CE, Terence Ranger and his associates (including myself) began to look at the transformations of Central and Southern African societies in recent centuries as transformations of time-honoured African interpretations of misfortune in ancestral and witchcraft / sorcery terms. *Cf.* van Binsbergen 2015b: 200 f., and references cited there.

thus wrought with virtually insurmountable difficulties.

Still I was somewhat surprised to find an abstract conceptualisation of ‘evil’ already to occur in *Borean, where to *HVKV the semantics ‘bad’ is attributed. This root has reflexes in Eurasiatic (*ʔVkV), Afroasiatic (*ʔk) and Sinocaucasian (*HāgwV). This suggests that the root dates from before the disintegration of the Central or Continental branch of *Borean, but after its fission from the *Borean parent body – the latter being estimated (cf. Fig. 8.16) at between ca. 23 and 18 ka BP. In all three macrophyla mentioned the reflexes⁴⁶⁵ of this root *HVKV have an unmistakably moral dimension, e.g. ‘anger, wrath, wickedness, hate’. Here I define ‘moral’ as: evaluating human behaviour in terms of ‘good’ or ‘bad’, preferably by reference to more or less culturally fixed, intersubjective standards. In terms of this definition, ‘wickedness’ is directly moral, whereas ‘anger’, ‘wrath’, and ‘hate’ are implicitly moral in the sense of implying the actor’s appeal to standards of good and bad. This moral dimension seems to be absent with *Borean *TVRV, ‘bad, dirty’, in whose macrophyllum reflexes (in Eurasiatic and Afroasiatic) ‘material pollution / dirtying’ prevails.⁴⁶⁶

The third *Borean root associated with ‘bad, evil’, *PVCV, in its reflexes steers a middle course between moral (especially in the Eurasiatic reflexes) and material imperfections / blemishes (especially in the Afroasiatic reflexes: ‘rotten, corrupted, spoiled’ – the latter meaning the opposite of good, but not necessarily in relation to human moral behaviour but e.g. of food)⁴⁶⁷

Finally, the fourth *Borean root with ‘bad, evil’ semantics, *CVKV⁴⁶⁸ (with reflexes in Eurasiatic and Amerind (misc.)), in its Eurasiatic reflexes at least does display a moral, religious dimension: ‘harm, deception’, and in Proto-Dravidian *sōk- even attains a semantics that is unmistakably religious: ‘to be possessed; devil’. Admittedly, such semantics may have developed *after* the reflex had already been incorporated in Proto-Dravidian under its probably more initial, probably moral but perhaps not yet theistic dimension. Yet we may take the ‘possessed; devil’ semantics as an indication that at the time of the emergence of Proto-Dravidian from among the Eurasiatic macrophyllum (estimated at roughly 7 ka BP), beliefs in possession and evil spirits were already in place among the Proto-Dravidian speakers, thought to be inhabiting the Iranian Plateau at the time. The counterpart of ‘bad’ is ‘good’, and we are no longer surprised to find also this abstraction to be abundantly attested among *Borean semantics, as in the following Table.

⁴⁶⁵ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 18.

⁴⁶⁶ Dolgopolsky n.d.: 563, *dUr[ʔ]V ‘dirt’ (Indoeuropean) and 563a *dArʔV ‘ashes’ (Dravidian); [also an unreferenced mention of Blažek appears here in the *Tower of Babel* database.]

⁴⁶⁷ Dolgopolsky 1969, 307, Dolgopolsky n.d.: 169 *bVG[ç]V ‘bad, wicked’ (Kartvelian + Arabic bayīḥ- ‘hate’), 259 *bu(ʔ)VsV ‘bad’ (Indoeuropean, Mongolian + Semito-Semitic / Afroasiatic).

⁴⁶⁸ Amerind (misc.) : *čaka ‘bad’ (Ruhlen n.d.: 36).

semantics	*Borean	inspection of lower-level reflexes suggests the following religiously relevant aspects
be good, fit, be good, to	*KVNV	probably moral overtones
good	*HVKV	–
good	*NVKV	–
good	*WVNLV	–
good, fit	*TVKV	probably moral overtones
good, love, good	*HVJV	–
good, new	*MVRV	–
good, take care ?	*HVCV	probably moral overtones

Table 9.53. The lexicon of ‘goodness’ in *Borean

Sometimes the semantics take a morally rather neutral aspect such as ‘fitting’, sometimes with moral overtones ‘love, to take care’.

Given our disappointing failure to find *Borean evidence for the concept of the *sacred*, which Durkheim accorded such a central place in religion, we are surprised at this point to find moral judgment more centrally and conspicuously in place in *Borean times. May we surmise that the group-centred intuitions which guided Durkheim’s theorising were, after all, one-sided and out of touch with the reality of elementary forms of religious life? Or should we rather take more seriously, and more literally, his intuitive emphasis on the morality underlying the formation and perpetuation of social life? Is morality, after all, more than just a common concern of religion, and instead the proper touchstone of human religion, and of humanity tout court? This is a perennial theme in the study of religion and in moral philosophy. What we find, much to our surprise, is that not the social or the *sacred*, but the moral aspect of religion may be traced to Upper Palaeolithic *Borean, and perhaps even further back in time!

9.17. Looking, beyond Durkheim, for selected further religious concepts in *Borean

The same *Tower-of-Babel*-based method by which I have above explored the distribution, in space and time, of Durkheim’s central paired concepts *sacred* / *profane*, ‘forbidden’ semantics (the Durkheimian *negative cult*), and some of the other concepts he attributes to the ‘elementary forms of religious life’, may also be employed to penetrate deeper into such ‘elementary forms of religious life’ as Durkheim could only secondarily guess at on the basis of a vicarious, second-hand use of the ethnography of just one remote but contemporary example.

Here our first step is to determine what would be aspects of prehistoric religion to be expected to crop up in the *Borean lexicon, regardless of any theoretical, synthetic pronouncements that make up Durkheim’s religion theory. In the first place, therefore, we will need a viable list of likely religious concepts and procedures, at the *emic* level of prehistoric actors. But the problem is: how to draw up such a list? (Another problem is *how to protect ourselves from the avalanche of new data which the confrontation of such a list with the extensive *Borean lexical material would produce!*)

One answer is that we construct such a list on the basis of a plausible theory of prehistoric

/ pre-literate / pre-modern religion. Any consistent and elaborate approach to ancient religion and mythology (for instance, Eliade's, or Witzel's, or Anati's) could serve this purpose and furnish the basis concepts for us to identify in the *Borean lexicon. One application of this approach (and I shun from further experiments on this points) we have already considered in Chapter 8, when I introduced my Aggregative Diachronic Model of Global Mythology. We would expect the mythemes listed there to feature in the prehistoric actors's conscious expressions (otherwise they could no tell myths about them!), and there is therefore a fair chance that these concepts also appear in the *Borean lexicon. I have pursued this line of enquiry in Tables 9.49-50, and the results are somewhat gratifying: the reconstructed *Borean lexicon turns out to cover most of the lexical material needed to discuss such mythemes. This is only a very indirect corroboration of the validity of my model, but given the high levels of conjecture to which we are used when probing into prehistoric though, we may yet speak of a modestly positive result.

A second possible answer we have already implemented when we have taken key concepts from specifically Durkheim's theory and investigated their attestation in the *Borean lexicon. The results of this exercise were fairly positive, yet only partially so, and were particularly negative especially in relation to Durkheim's central paired concepts *sacred / profaned*.

A third approach, then, would be the following: on the basis of comparative religious studies, comparative anthropology, and encyclopaedic treatments of the subject, and the kind of insights into prehistoric religion discussed above in our above overview of the archaeology of religion,⁴⁶⁹ we draw up an additional list of basis religious concepts and practices not yet considered in this chapter so far, yet likely to be emically relevant in *Borean times. On the basis of such a list we may then assess which elements in that list actually crop up in the reconstructed *Borean lexicon. Some obvious candidates for such a list are to be found in the following Table 9.54:

No.	topic	attested in *Borean?	comments
1	breath	+	See above, <i>s.v.</i> spirit
2	burial / grave / corpse / cult of the dead	(+)	Death, dead, see above; the other topics not attested in *Borean
3	divination	(+)	See above, <i>s.v.</i> 'magic'
4	divine trickster	-	In many Flood myths major totemic animals appear as divine tricksters; the topic seems to be a candidate for an much extended list of NarCom, but not yet implemented
5	exorcism, <i>cf.</i> healing	(-)	See above, <i>s.v.</i> 'spirit'; perhaps tabooed.
6	fertility	-	perhaps tabooed, but see topic (7)
7	genitals and sexuality	+	
8	ghost	(-)	<i>Cf.</i> above, <i>s.v.</i> 'spirit'
9	hair	+	'hair' semantics are massive attested in *Borean, but for no obvious reason

⁴⁶⁹ *E.g.* Hastings 1909-1921; Eliade 1987; Lenoir & Tardan Masquelier 1997; Jones & Eliade 2005; Nichols *et al.* 2010. Quite a few of the pivotal terms already appear with Spencer 1877, vol. I.

10	head-hunting, <i>cf.</i> skull	(+)	*KVPV, 'skull'. Head-hunting might be considered a NarCom in its own right 'the skull complex' (but has not been yet); it could also be subsumed under the 'shamanism / the bones' NarCom, <i>cf.</i> van Binsbergen 2014a
11	healing, <i>cf.</i> exorcism	(-)	See above, <i>s.v.</i> 'spirit'; perhaps tabooed.
12	initiation, <i>cf.</i> rebirth	(-)	If initiation practices were among the main mechanisms to preserve and transmit myths and beliefs from generation to generation, such practices are very likely to have existed in *Borean times. Perhaps unattested as a result of taboos? For the identity of initiation and rebirth, <i>cf.</i> van Gennep 1911 / 1909.
13	life	(+)	See above, 'dead'; 'liver' (in many cultures considered the seat of life, hence the name) is attested in *Borean
14	music, drum, rattle	-	The lack of attestations in *Borean is amazing; tabooed concept?
15	offering	(-)	<i>Cf.</i> sacrifice, see above 'god'; perhaps tabooed
16	pole	(+)	The semantics 'pole' is not directly attested, but there here are many *Borean words with the semantics 'stick, branch, tree'
17	rebirth, <i>cf.</i> initiation	(-)	
18	reed	+	In the analysis of Flood myths, <i>reed</i> frequently appears at a cosmogonic / anthropogonic principle; it could constitute another NarCom, but this has not yet been implemented as such. The Ancient Egyptian royal titlature links reed and bee.
19	skull, <i>cf.</i> head-hunting	+	
20	spirits of the wild	(-)	See above, 'spirit'
21	year / calendar	+	Two *Borean words for 'year'

In the preceding Table: grey: negative result; see the footnotes in regard of line 1 (breath⁴⁷⁰), 3 (divination; Table 9.48, *cf.* Table 9.55), line 7 (genitals and sexuality; Table 9.56), line 8 (ghost),⁴⁷¹ line 9 (hair),⁴⁷² line 10 (head-hunting, *cf.* skull),⁴⁷³ 16 (pole⁴⁷⁴) and 18 (reed)⁴⁷⁵

Table 9.54. Selected additional topics in the study of prehistoric religion, and their attestation in the *Borean lexicon

Proto-Altaic etymology *kǝmò ('ghost, spirit') Proto-Mongolian: *keme-, '1 to divine on bones 2 to speak, explain (arch.)' Written Mongolian: keme- 1,2 (L 450)

⁴⁷⁰ Eurasianic *ʔanqV 'breath' > Uralic BF *aŋe 'spirit, ghost' 'spirit' (from Eurasianic 'breath' to Uralic 'spirit').

⁴⁷¹ In *Tower of Babel*, these semantics only appear at the phylum level, and sporadically: Proto-Indo-European *bhorm-, *morm- 'fear, terrible ghost' (Pokorny 1959-1969: II 308'; Proto-Indo-European *drak- g 'spectre, evil ghost', allegedly from Eurasianic *HVIV 'to take'. Indo-European *Ans- 'deity' (which acquires semantics 'ghost' in Oldindian) and *drak-, g 'spectre, evil ghost', (> Old Greek 'dragon, serpent')

⁴⁷² The abundance of 'hair' semantics in *Borean is amazing, and for the time being beyond my explanation; see Table 9.57.

⁴⁷³ There have been claims (*e.g.* von Koenigswald 1960) that head-hunting (*cf.* van Binsbergen 2014a) was already practiced by the Sinanthropus, and by the Neanderthaloids which that author himself excavated at Ngandong, Java, Indonesia, 1931-1932 (Augusta & Burian 1963). Such an argument attributes the same *emic* reasons that have been advanced for present-day attestations of this practice. Across more than half a million years, this appears to be stretching the analogy argument in archaeology beyond all proportions.

⁴⁷⁴ The pole (perhaps as material expression of the proto-mytheme of the Re-Connection of Heaven and Earth) is a very widely distributed material item in religions. The concept 'spirit pole' seems to exist in Proto-Austric *kVŋ. Also *cf.* the celestial axis, as another, imaginary pole with concrete nocturnal manifestations.

⁴⁷⁵ The *Borean lexicon of grass / reed is fairly extensive, *cf.* Table 9.58.

Khalkha: xemē- 2 Kalmuck: kemε:- 1 Ramstedt 1935: 224., derived from Proto-Altaic kiamo, 'spirit', whence also Japanese kami
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the parallels with Southern Africa deserve further exploration

Table 9.55. Aspects of divination and 'spirit' semantics in Altaic

penis	*PVCV
penis	*PVLV
genitalia	*KVTV
genitalia, female genitalia	*MVTV

Table 9.56. The lexicon of 'genitalia' in *Borean

semantics	item	semantics	item	semantics	item
'hair'	*CVKV	'hair'	*TVRV	'hair, feather'	*PVTV
'hair'	*CVRV	'hair (feather; whiskers)'	*PVLCV	'hair, hair of head'	*PVRV
'hair'	*KVCV	'hair (feather; whiskers)'	*PVLCV	'hair, head'	*KVRV
'hair'	*LVHV	'hair long), tail, (long) hair'	*PVNCV	'hair, rope'	*NVJV
'hair'	*NVNV	'hair of head, eyebrow (> eyelid)'	*CVMV	'hair, skin, hair'	*TVKV
'hair'	*NVRV	'hair of head, hair,	*PVRV	'hair, tail'	*CVPV
'hair'	*PVNV	'hair, animal hair'	*MVNCV	'hair, top of head, hair'	*TVMV
'hair'	*PVVV	'hair, beard'	*KVLV	'hair; feather'	*KVMV

Table 9.57. The lexicon of 'hair' in *Borean

grass	*KVCV
onion, odorous grass	*CVNV
grass, a kind of	*WVLV
grass, reed	*CVMV
reed, grass, reed	*CVMV
reed? ; leaf; reed?	*HVRLV

Table 9.58. The lexicon of 'grass / reed' in *Borean

Table 9.54 shows the limits of our method – considering the relative paucity of relevant *Borean data, the best we can do is realise that there are themes and insights to be explored beyond the central topics of Durkheim's analysis, and still in all likelihood belonging to the 'elementary forms of religious life'. The emerging picture adds nicely to the image of elementary religion as sketched by Durkheim. While some of his most central concepts, especially *sacred / profane*, could not be confirmed by reference to the *Borean lexicon, there is a fair chance that the following need to be considered in a revised summary of 'elementary forms of religious life':

breath, burial / grave / corpse / cult of the dead, divination, genitals and sexuality, ghost, hair, head-hunting, *cf.* skull, life, offering, pole, reed, skull, *cf.* head-hunting, year / calendar

Other themes could not be easily attested in *Borean, perhaps because they

genuinely did not form part of Upper Palaeolithic religion, but probably only because our method so far is not powerful and discriminating enough to perceive them across the mists of time:

divine trickster, exorcism, *cf.* healing, fertility, healing, *cf.* exorcism, initiation, *cf.* rebirth, music, drum, rattle, rebirth, *cf.* initiation, spirits of the wild

There is much room for further exploration, now that our long-range linguistic method for the retrieval of emic elements of religion in prehistory is in place. However, such exploration will have to be postponed until new finds and some now unforeseeable methodological innovations greatly augment the extent of our data on prehistoric religion.

Having reached the end of our exploration of the manifestations of Durkheimian central notions of 'elementary forms of religious life' in prehistoric lexicons, we end up with a mixed bag. Some of the Durkheimian concepts do have (reconstructed) lexical attestations going back to Upper Palaeolithic / *Borean times, and thus seem to corroborate Durkheim's theory especially in its emphasis on the moral and social dimension of religion, and his explorations concerning the soul, spirit, prohibition, purity, altered states of consciousness, perhaps divination, as aspects of elementary forms of religious life; but others do not, including particularly the paired concepts *sacred / profane* to which Durkheim accorded such paramount importance, even universality. Such a result would in principle be enough to flounder his religion theory on empirical grounds, despite the profound insights it appears to give in the working of society and of the human mind. However, in this book's argument on Durkheim's religion theory, corroborative and vindicatory elements have largely prevailed over critical and dismissive elements, and on that note we now proceed to the conclusion.