

# Mythographic and Linguistic Evidence for Religious Giving among Graeco-Aryans during the Chalcolithic Age (c.3rd millennium BCE)

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*Wedding of Peleus, by Cornelis van Haarlem (1562-1638)*

Working Draft

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# **Mythographic and Linguistic Evidence for Religious Giving among Graeco-Aryans during the Chalcolithic Age (c.3rd millennium BCE)**

## **Abstract**

Historical inquiries into religious giving are generally limited to the point at which a society becomes literate and begins keeping written records. With the analytical tools of linguistics, though, plausible inferences may be also drawn regarding the religious rituals and giving practices of pre-literate societies. This paper examines linguistic and mythographic evidence indicating that Prometheus in Hesiod and Mātariśvan in the *Rig Veda* are cognate figures, pointing to the existence of a Proto-Prometheus dating to at least the last point of Graeco-Aryan unity, around 2500 BCE. One of the strongest points of correspondence between Prometheus and Mātariśvan is their role in founding the ritual of sacrifice to the Gods with burnt offerings; a ritual also closely associated with the private provision of public feasts in both archaic Greece and Vedic India. Establishing the existence of a Graeco-Aryan Proto-Prometheus, therefore, also implies the existence of religious giving in that society.

Key words: Prometheus, Mātariśvan, Indo-European linguistics, mythography.

## A. Introduction

Originally, the legend of Prometheus belonged to the entire community of Aryan peoples and documented their talent for the profound and the tragic; indeed, it is not unlikely that this myth is as significant for the Aryan character as the myth of the Fall is for the Semitic character, and that the relationship between the two myths is like that between brother and sister.

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, §9, trans. Guess & Speirs

Historical investigations into social organisation, religious beliefs and giving behaviors are generally limited by the point at which cultures and civilisations developed writing, become literate, and begin preserving written records of such activities. Indeed, the very differentiation between 'history' and 'prehistory' is demarcated by the time at which a culture begins keeping written records. Before this event, there is only *mūthos*,<sup>1</sup> preserved by the conventions of oral culture, and rightly regarded as suspect by most historians. Thus we have much more concrete knowledge about the social, religious and giving practices of Sumerian civilisation, which developed the first writing system – cuneiform – in the 30<sup>th</sup> century BCE, than we do of archaic Greek civilisation prior to its adoption of the Phoenician alphabet and creation of its own system of writing in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

Every major archeological discovery of ancient tablets, and translation of the writings they contain, has come with a huge corresponding advance in historical knowledge of the civilisation concerned, including our own. The discovery and translation of Assyrian tablets by Henry Rawlinson and Archibald Sayce in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, fundamentally altered our understanding of the historical origins and formation of the earliest books of the *Old Testament*. Similarly dramatic advances occurred in the historical knowledge of bronze age Greeks and Hittites in the wake of the discovery and translation of Linear B tablets from mainland Greece and cuneiform tablets at Boğazköy, Turkey in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Not only did these discoveries reveal the previously unknown history of the Mycenaean and Hittite empires, but also their linguistic and cultural relation to the Indo-European language family. The Mycenaean, for example, were revealed to be early forerunners of the Greeks, and the

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the transliterated Greek word, *mūthos*, instead of 'myth' to indicate a difference in how the Greeks understood the term. For most English speakers, myth refers to an untrue story, whereas for the archaic Greeks, *mūthoi* was often considered to contain more 'truth' than *lógoi*, which tended to be associated with how clever people spoke in the Law Courts. For more on this subject, please refer to Bruch Lincoln (1999, p. 3ff.).

'mythical' accounts of Homer were shown to have been based at least in part upon historical events. The Hittites, on the other hand, were upgraded from being a minor tribe, based on the scant references to them in the *Old Testament*, to being one of the three great civilisations of the Middle East during the Bronze Age, alongside the Egyptians and Babylonians. Furthermore, linguistic analysis of the Hittite language revealed them to be an early offshoot of the Proto-Indo-European language family.

Recovering historical information on civilisations with a purely oral culture is fraught with difficulty, particularly with regards to their social and cultural practices, as opposed to the archeological remains of their material culture. Fortunately, though, this task is not entirely insurmountable. In particular, advances made in the field of Indo-European linguistics over the past century, in combination with corresponding advances in comparative mythographical analysis, have made it possible to draw plausible inferences as to the religious beliefs and associated cultural practices of various pre-historic Indo-European tribes. This paper does just that by comprehensively examining the Promethean *mūthos*, the earliest version of which is recounted by Hesiod (c.700 BCE), and subjecting it to exhaustive linguistic and mythographic analysis in order to make the case for positing the existence of an Indo-European Proto-Promethean figure in Graeco-Aryan mythology, dating to at least as early as the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE; i.e. during the middle of the European Chalcolithic (Copper) Age. Based on calculations of the degree of language divergence between Greek, Old Persian and Old Sanskrit, the Graeco-Aryan tribes are thought to have first become geographically separated from one another around 2500 BCE, to become the Greek and Aryan (or Indo-Iranian) language groups (West M. L., 2007, pp. 7-8).

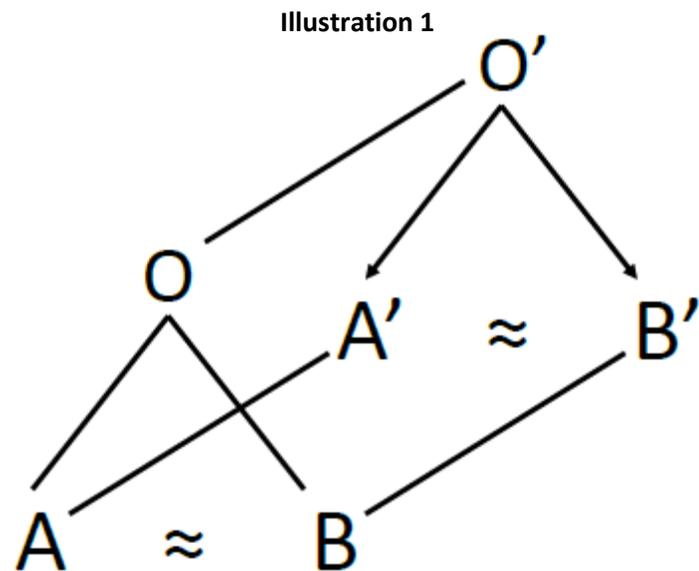
The hypothesis that there was a single common language from which the Indo-European family of languages originally evolved, was first explicitly proposed by Sir William Jones in a lecture he delivered on Feb. 2, 1786. In that lecture, he observed:

The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothic* and the *Celtic*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*; and the old *Persian* might be added to the same family. (Jones, 1824)

Jones' Indo-European hypothesis subsequently spurred a great deal of research in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leading many philologists to search out parallels between words in the various languages identified as having Indo-European roots. This comparative linguistic analysis has led, not only to extensive reconstruction of the Indo-European language, but also to reconstructions, albeit more tentative, of the primary mythologies and religious practices communicated by its culture (cf. Jackson, 2002; Serith, 2007).

One of the primary methodologies employed by scholars in reconstructing the Indo-European language is what Watkins describes as "genetic filiation as determined by the application of the Comparative

Method." (1995. p. 5) By this method, intrinsically similar words (A' & B') from two languages (A & B) known to be genetically related to a single language (O) are systematically compared, tracing the process of their respective changes such as to allow for the reconstruction of the original word (O') from which each evolved, as depicted



in Illustration 1. The objective, then, is to demonstrate how O' simultaneously evolved into the cognate words A' and B' given what is known of the morphology of grammar and word structure within languages A and B. Employing this methodology, Indo-European linguists have, over the past century, reconstructed hundreds of words in the Indo-European language as it existed some four to five thousand years ago (cf. Gamkrelidze & Ivanov, 1995; Mallory, 1997).

Similar advances to those in made linguistics have also been made in Indo-European mythography, although the latter remains dependent on the former. The dependence of mythographic analysis on linguistic evidence is necessitated by the relatively rapid and less predictable nature of the changes that occur in the myths people tell. As West aptly observes:

Comparative Indo-European mythology remains and is bound to remain a poor relation of comparative Indo-European philology. [...] For people more readily change their gods and mythologies than they do their declensions and conjugations, and more capriciously. (2007, p. 24)

Given the capriciousness with which people tell their *mūthoi*, then, mythological analysis should ideally be buttressed by more solidly grounded linguistic evidence in order to increase its veracity. One of the more successful examples of this synergy is the linguistic reconstruction of a religiously important Indo-European term – \*D(i)yéus – from its descendents: the Greek word Ζεύς, the Sanskrit word D(i)yáus, and many other cognates in other European languages, such as Jupiter in Latin. A comparison of the various grammatical derivatives of these terms in their respective languages reveals a close parallel structure, as shown in Table I, derived from West (2007, p. 166), that allows for a precise reconstruction of not only the original Indo-European noun, but also its various grammatical declensions, as follows:

<b>Table I - Coganates of Zeus in Greek, Vedic Sanskrit and Reconstructed Mature Indo-European</b>			
Word Case	Greek	Vedic Sanskrit	Reconstructed Mature Indo-European
Nominative	Ζεύς (Zeus)	D(i)yáus	*D(i)yéus
Vocative	Ζεῦ (Zeu)	D(i)yaus	*D(i)yeu
Accusative	Ζην (Zēn)	D(i)yām (Dívam)	*D(i)yém
Genitive	Διός (Diwos)	Divás	*Diwós
Dative	Διεί (Diwei)	Divé	*Diwéi
Locative	Δί (Diwi)	Dyávi/Diví	*Dyéwi/Diwí

The comparative methodology of linguistics not only reconstructs the original sound and grammatical structure of the Indo-European word, though, for it also implies the existence of the referent to which the word referred. The reconstructed Indo-European word, \*D(i)yéus, for instance, not only shows that the Indo-Europeans had such a word in their vocabulary; it also demonstrates that they were cognizant of its referent, understood as a god of the day-lit sky. From this, it may also be inferred that the Indo-Europeans also had a deity in their pantheon, \*D(i)yéus ph<sub>2</sub>tēr,<sup>2</sup> that shared at least some features in common with the Greek deity, Zeus Pater, and his Vedic counterpart, D(i)yáus Pitā.

On the basis of the startling findings generated in the field of comparative linguistics in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars proceeded to draw a number of parallels between various Greek and Vedic gods. One of the more notable of these scholars was Adalbert Kuhn (1812-1881), who is considered the founder of the school of comparative mythology based upon the methods of comparative philology. In 1859, Kuhn published a book, *Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des*

<sup>2</sup> With the "h<sub>2</sub>" signifying a "fricative a-colouring laryngeal", a consonant sound in Proto-Indo-European that is extinct in all present day Indo-European languages.

*Göttertranks* ('The Coming of Fire and the God-drinks') in which he purported to give an account of the basic principles of Indo-European religion. In this work, he adopted a parallel first drawn by Roth (1855) between Prometheus and Mātariśvan in Vedic mythology, that Kuhn buttressed with what he believed were etymological cognates to Prometheus in Sanskrit literature. Initially, Kuhn's analysis enjoyed wide support from scholars, among them Cox (1870, pp. 421 & 433, n. 2), Steintal (1877), and, most notably, Friedrich Max Müller, (1889, pp. 452-3) (1897, pp. 810-813). Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though, the philological formulations employed by Kuhn were called into question by linguistic scholars such as Bapp (1896, p. 6) and Macdonell (1897, p. 91). As a result, the hypothesis that the Promethean *mūthos* was of Indo-European origin subsequently fell into discredit among prominent classical scholars such as Sikes (1906, p. xiii) and Seymour (1907, pp. 41-2). The current scholarly consensus against the Indo-European Prometheus hypothesis is reflected in the dismissive observations of Robinson and Rose, who assert that Prometheus simply means "the forethinker," and that "all other etymologies of his name are merely fantastic;" (Prometheus, 1979 [first publ. 1970]). So far has the Indo-European hypothesis of Prometheus' origin fallen into disrepute, in fact, that scholars tend to avoid the subject altogether, and only very rarely and reluctantly engage it (cf. Jackson, 2002, p. 85). Nevertheless, the work carried out by Indo-European linguists over the 20<sup>th</sup> century now allows for a serious reassessment of the validity of Roth's and Kuhn's hypothesis: that the Promethean *mūthos* is, at its root, Indo-European in origin.

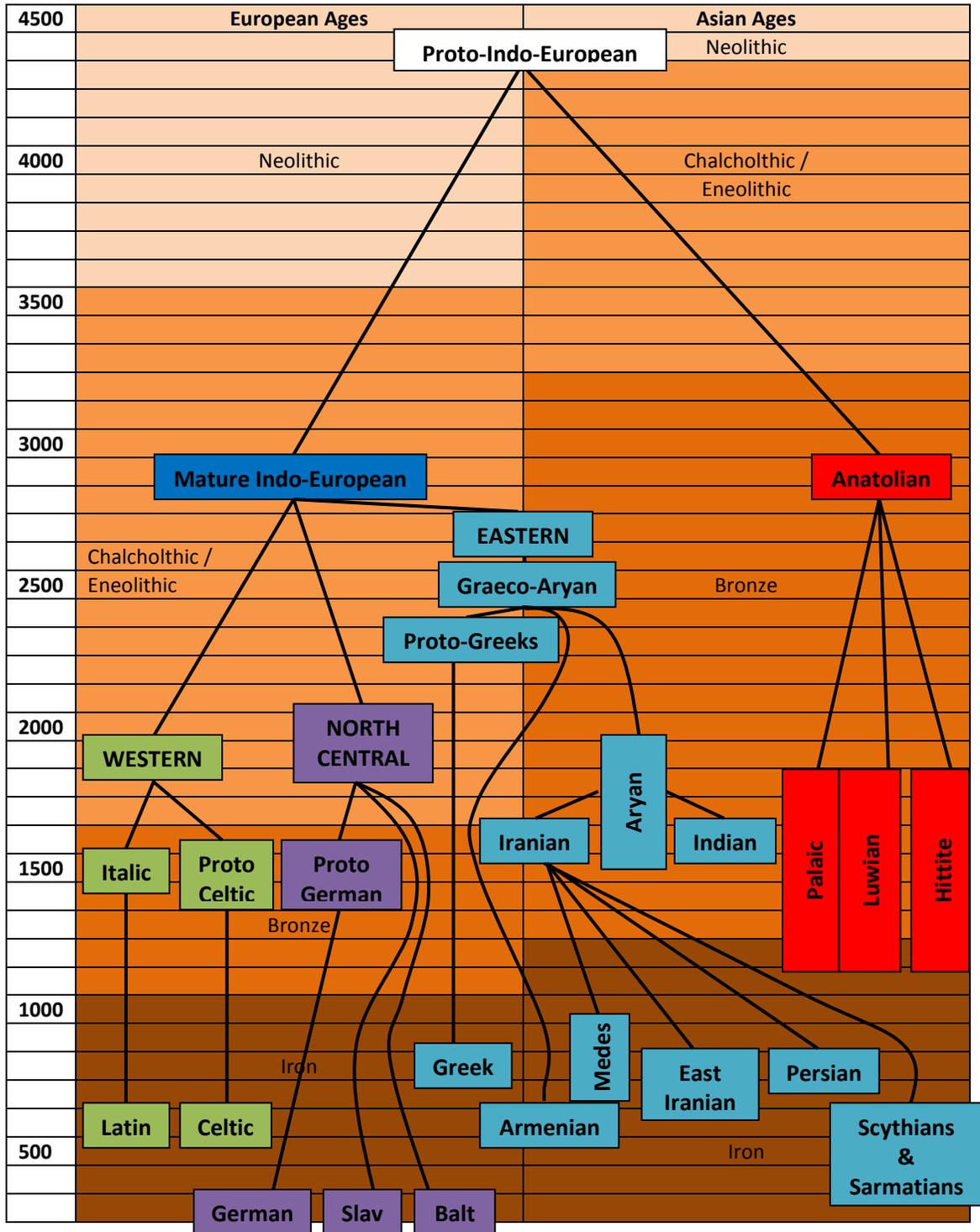
This paper, then, undertakes a detailed re-examination of the hypothesis initially advanced by Roth and Kuhn, that Prometheus and Mātariśvan are cognate mythic figures that point to the existence of an Indo-European Proto-Prometheus from out of which each evolved. What this examination finds is that the critiques leveled at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by Bapp, Macdonell and others, at Kuhn's linguistic evidence for the existence of an Indo-European Proto-Prometheus, have themselves been superseded by the subsequent work of 20<sup>th</sup> century linguists, most notably Narten (1960) and Schmidt (1975). This paper thus undertakes a fundamental reappraisal of Roth's and Kuhn's hypothesis in light of more recent advances in the field of Indo-European linguistics. It further examines mythographic evidence that supports the hypothesis that a proto-Prometheus mythic figure existed in Indo-European mythology prior to the last point of Graeco-Aryan unity, around 2500 BCE.

Establishing the existence of a Graeco-Aryan Proto-Prometheus has enormous implications for the historical study of religion, philanthropy and civil society, given the parallel roles that

Prometheus and Mātariśvan play within their respective mythic traditions. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Prometheus initiates the tradition of ritual sacrifice to the gods in the form of burnt offerings. Ritual sacrifice to the gods was a ubiquitous rite, widely attested in both ancient Greek and Vedic literature (*Iliad* 1.442, 23.864; *Rig Veda* 6.8.4; *Atharvaveda* 11.7.9). What is not often realised, though, is that the ceremonial victims for these rituals were often provided through private contributions and/or by public religious endowments; and furthermore, that the ritual sacrifice was often closely followed by a public festival in which the parts of the sacrificial animal(s) were distributed to members of the society who participated in the public feast that followed.

Given the status of both Prometheus and Mātariśvan within their respective mythic traditions, as the founders of the tradition of ritual sacrifice to the gods via burnt offerings, establishing the existence of a Graeco-Aryan Proto-Prometheus thus provides indirect evidence for the existence of private religious giving for public welfare in Indo-European society, dating at least as far back as the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. This is a significant finding, as more traditional historical accounts of the development of religion and society tend to associate religious rituals requiring individuals to give to the public good with the rise of agriculture, more settled agrarian societies, urbanisation, and the additional surplus these generated. What the analysis of this paper shows, by contrast, is that the religious rituals of private giving, ceremonial religious sacrifice, and public distribution were already present among semi-nomadic Graeco-Aryan tribes, then in the process of making the transition from being a Neolithic society of hunter-gatherers to a semi-nomadic, Bronze-age pastoral society, primarily based upon the herding of livestock. Furthermore, identifying the specifically Indo-European elements of the Promethean *mūthos* allows for a much more informed analysis of how it evolved in archaic Greece; particularly during the Classical age, when it became assimilated with figures from Semitic *mūthos*, and Prometheus became the original 'philanthropist', as described in *Prometheus Bound* (lines 11 & 28).

Illustration 2 - The Indo-European Language Family Tree



## B. The Hesiodic Prometheus

The earliest extant versions of the Promethean *mūthos* in ancient Greek literature occur in the two poems considered most likely to be among the authentic works of the archaic poet, Hesiod: *Theogony*, and *Works & Days*. Many serious doubts about the life and works of Hesiod have been raised by modern scholars, though, including: when he lived, his temporal relationship to Homer, the authenticity of the authorship of at least one of the two major works attributed to him, and even whether Hesiod himself was an actual person, or is merely a poetic fiction invented by the actual author of *Works & Days*. Given the importance of these questions to the proper consideration of the Indo-European origins of Hesiod's Promethean *mūthos*, they are briefly addressed here. Generally speaking, though, I conclude that Hesiod lived much later, but that the source material he employs is much older, than is generally presumed.

The dates assigned to Hesiod's life widely range among ancient authors. Tzetzes (c.1110-1180) assigns his flourit to the 11<sup>th</sup> Olympiad, i.e. 736-3 BCE (*Chiliades* 13.649), while Herodotus assigns it to sometime around 850 BCE (*Histories* 2.53); Archemachus of Euboea, by contrast, thought Hesiod to have lived sometime during the 11<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Archemachus 424 F 3). To the degree that modern scholars accept the idea that Hesiod was an actual person, the date supplied by Herodotus usually forms the starting point for assigning a date to his life. The most definitive modern analysis of the dates for Hesiod's life and works, conducted by West (Prolegomena, 1966), estimates that he lived no earlier than 750, and no later than 650 BCE. West further argues that Hesiod composed *Theogony* first, sometime between 730 and 700 BCE, and *Works & Days* thereafter, sometime between 730 and 690 BCE (Ibid, pp. 45-6).

Among the various works attributed to Hesiod, the only one for which his authorship is undisputed is *Works & Days*. The other major work attributed to him – *Theogony* – is sometimes thought not to be an authentic work, based on the testimony supplied by his own Boeotian countrymen, as recorded by Pausanias (9.31.4). Scholars who accept this testimony, such as Lambertson (Introduction, 1993) and White (Introduction, 2002), generally assume that *Theogony* was written after *Works & Days*, and was later attributed to Hesiod by the cult-society of poets to which he is thought to have likely belonged. During the late classical age, the members of a formal cult-society dedicated to the Helicon muses are known to have regularly gathered to recite their poetry at the base of Mount Helicon, near where Hesiod describes

himself as having grown up: in the town of Ascra (*Works & Days*, 699-710), and close to the larger city of Thespieae, in Boeotia.

It is possible to reconcile the conflicting scholarly opinions, both regarding Hesiod's authorial authenticity of the two most famous poems attributed to him, and the order in which they were composed, if the nature of his authorship is more carefully considered. If *Theogony* is understood to be a poem that heavily borrows from source material that Hesiod originally heard recited by fellow poets at Mount Helikon, but which he later compiled, perfected, and wrote down with the newly developed tool of writing, and thereby distributed in a form similar to the version we now possess, it is possible to see how his own countrymen, already familiar with the original oral tradition, might have had cause to deny his authorship of the poem. The rest of Greece, on the other hand, being only familiar with the written versions of Hesiod's poems, would have naturally attributed their authorship to him. In this conception, *Works & Days* would be a later, more original work of Hesiod, in which he further develops his inherited material, and inserts a more distinctive voice culled from his life experience.

In terms of Hesiod's temporal relationship with Homer, most modern scholars maintain that he lived later than the great epic poet (cf. Schmitz, 1967, p. 440; Janko, 1982, p. 189). However, these assertions ignore the fact that particular elements mentioned in the works attributed to Homer are now known not to have been developed until the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, including: military tactics described in *Iliad* 13.126 ff. and 16.211 ff. (Snodgrass, 1964, pp. 176-82); and Odysseus' clasp as described in *Odyssey* 19.226 ff. (Lorimer, 1950, p. 511 ff.). Also, as West convincingly argues, Homer was likely not even a distinct person, but was rather invented as a personality, probably sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, with his name grammatically derived from *Homerídai*, the poetic society that recited and preserved 'his' works ('The Invention of Homer', 1999). As Durante observes, several ancient Greek texts refer to *Homerídai* as meaning "Place of Union" ('Il nome di Omero', 1957). West further notes the existence of a cognate word in Vedic Sanskrit – *sam-aryám* – that "is used in the context of festive gathering, and, at least in some passages, refers to the priest-poets' 'meeting' in poetic competition." (1999, p. 375) Employing the comparative method of linguistic analysis best summarised by Watkins (1995, pp. 3-11), West reconstructs the unattested archaic Greek word *\*ῥμαρος* (*\*ōmaros*) or *\*ῥμαρις* (*\*ōmaris*), signifying an assembly of all the people – a social event that would have presented a natural venue for poets to recite their works – an institution that "would presumably go back to the time of Graeco-Aryan unity, sometime before 2,000 BCE." (1999, p. 475)

Given the above considerations, I employ the following interpretive assumptions in this paper regarding Hesiod's life and works: first, that he was an actual person who lived sometime between 750 and 650 BCE; second, that he is the author of both *Theogony* and *Works & Days*, although the former borrows more heavily from the Helikonian poetic tradition to which he belonged than the latter; and finally, that he composed those two poems in that order, following the dates supplied by West. Furthermore, while the composition of some parts of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may post-date Hesiod's *flourit*, the bulk of the material they contain was composed and assembled prior to that time by another ancient society of poets collectively known as the *Homerídai*, the existence of which may be traced back through the Mycenaean Greeks to the time of Graeco-Aryan unity. The poetic tradition maintained by the *Homerídai* also contrasts in interesting ways from the one maintained by the poetic society dedicated to the Helikon muses; for, while the former focuses almost exclusively on the Olympian gods, the latter focuses much greater attention on their Kronian precursors, the Titans.

In analysing the historical origins of *Theogony* and *Works & Days*, the cultural sources of their *mūthoi* may be generally divided into three broad categories: Indo-European, Chthonic and Semitic. Indo-European elements are those derived from the linguistic inheritance of Greek culture, dating to the split of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan sometime around 2,500 BCE. Chthonic elements, on the other hand, derive from the *mūthoi* of cultures who lived in the areas into which early proto-Greeks migrated; and Semitic elements, finally, derive from the Semitic-influenced cultures of the Near East. In certain cases, it is also possible to further distinguish sub-categories within each of these general categories. In the case of Indo-European sources, for instance, it is sometimes possible to differentiate between elements derived from the mythology of the Ionian Greeks, the ancestors of whom migrated into the Greek peninsula around 2,300 BCE to become the Mycenaeans, and those later brought by Dorian Greeks, who arrived in Greece sometime after 1,100 BCE. In terms of Chthonic sources, by comparison, it is sometimes possible to identify elements absorbed from pre-existing cultures, as opposed to spontaneously arising from Greek culture as it evolved on Greek soil. And in the case of Semitic elements, finally, it may be possible to differentiate, for instance, between elements that were absorbed from Semitic sources during the Mycenaean age (c.1,600-c.1,100 BCE), and those that were absorbed sometime toward the end of the Greek Dark Age (c.1,200-c.800 BCE), or shortly thereafter, when communication and trade ties were re-established between Greece and the Levant region of the eastern Mediterranean.

In analysing the cultural origins of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos*, it is useful to divide it into its constituent elements. These elements are arranged in Table II according to their mytho-chronological sequence, along with citations of where they occur in the two major works ascribed to Hesiod:

<b>Table II – Elements of Hesiod's Promethean <i>Mūthos</i></b>		
<b>Mythic Element</b>	<b>Theogony</b>	<b>Works&amp;Days</b>
1. Creation & Succession <i>Mūthos</i> of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus	116-506	
2. Genealogy of Prometheus	507-520	
3. Negotiation at Mekone: Initiation of Sacrifice Ritual & Deception of Zeus	535-557	
4. Zeus Angered & Withholds Fire from Men	558-564	47-50
5. Prometheus Steals Back Fire	565-570	50-52
6. Hephaestus Creates Evil of Woman / Pandora	571-602	53-82
7. Hermes Gives Pandora to Epimetheus		83-89
8. Pandora Opens Jar, Releases Evil Fates, Retains Hope		90-105
9. Zeus Gives Men Additional Evil of Mortality	602-616	
10. Punishment of Prometheus	521-5	
11. Heracles Kills Bird Eating Liver	526-532	
12. Zeus' Anger Abates	533-4	
13. Five Ages of Man		106-201

Several of the elements identified above may be readily seen to derive from mythic traditions that originate in Semitic sources, and even their Sumerian precursors. In positing Chaos as the primal state of existence, for instance, the Creation *Mūthos* in *Theogony* bears remarkable resemblance to the opening of *Enûma Eliš*, the Babylonian creation *mūthos* composed sometime between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, and that also forms the basis for *Genesis*. *Theogony's* Succession *Mūthos* of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, by comparison, "has parallels in oriental mythology which are so striking that a connexion is incontestable." (West M. L., 1997, p. 19). In particular, the castration and stone swallowing motifs in *Theogony's* Succession *mūthos* bear unmistakable resemblance to the succession *mūthoi* that appear in two Hittite poems, *Kumarbi* and *The Song of Ullikummi*, dating from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. These Hittite poems, in turn, were largely inherited from a still older Hurrian tradition, likely dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century, that "clearly betrays the influence of Mesopotamian culture." (West M. L., 1997, p. 105) The Genealogy of Prometheus, on the other hand, refers to several of his relatives, some of whose names derive from Semitic sources. His father, Iapetus, for instance,

likely derives from Japheth, the youngest son of Noah. Prometheus' brother, Atlas, by comparison, appears in *The Phoenician History of Sanchuniathon*, the original sources for which predate the Trojan War (i.e. 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE).<sup>3</sup> The *mūthos* of the five ages of man, finally, most likely originates from Mesopotamian sources, given its presence in the *mūthoi* of a wide array of ancient cultures (West, 1996, pp. 172-7).

As may be seen from this brief survey, Hesiod's poems contain many significant parallels to stories of creation, divine succession and mortal decline, as related in several mythic traditions ultimately derived from Semitic-Sumerian sources. These include the divine succession *mūthos* and genealogy that prefaces the Promethean *mūthos* in *Theogony*, and the *mūthos* of the five ages of man appended to the Promethean *mūthos* in *Works & Days*. At the same time, though, Semitic mythic traditions contain no strong corollary to the core features of Hesiod's Promethean *mūthos*. *The Phoenician History* does contain a *mūthos* on the origin of fire, as does practically every human culture in the world (Frazer, 1930); however, it crucially lacks the vital theft/transgression and punishment elements that particularly distinguish the Hesiodic Prometheus. Instead, it attributes the human acquisition of fire to the three mortal sons of Genos, named "Light, and Fire, and Flame" who "discovered fire from rubbing pieces of wood together, and taught the use of it." (34d) (Eusebius, 2002, p. 39). The Babylonians also had a god named Ea (largely derived from the even earlier Sumerian god, Enki), who acted as both a benefactor of humanity and counselor to the gods. In this sense, Ea/Enki may be seen to have strongly influenced the depiction of Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound* and the trilogy to which it belonged. As West observes, though: "The Hesiodic Prometheus, however, shows no features that we can definitely relate to the Babylonian god." (1997, p. 295) A reasonable hypothesis to adopt in the face of this evidence, is that Hesiod's Promethean *mūthos* derives from the Indo-European cultural inheritance of the Greek language.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Phoenician History of Sanchuniathon* was initially preserved by Herennius Philo of Byblos (64-c.140 CE). The extant fragments of this work are cited by Athenaeus (fl. late 2<sup>nd</sup>, early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) in *Deipnosophists* (126a), and Porphyry (234-c.305 CE) in *De abstinentia ab esu animalium* (2.56), and at far greater length by Eusebius (c.263-c.339 CE) in *Praeparatio Evangelica* (esp. 1.9.28-2.2.52).

## C. Parallels between the Hesiodic Prometheus and Vedic Mātariśvan

While the Hesiodic Prometheus has no strong parallels in the Semitic mythological tradition, it does possess many points of similarity with the figure of Mātariśvan in Vedic mythology. The oldest Vedic Sanskrit text is the *Rig-Veda*, the composition of which is generally thought to date to sometime between 1700 and 1100 BCE. None of its 1,028 hymns, or *sūktas*, are directly addressed to Mātariśvan, but he is mentioned 27 times in that text, with 18 of those instances occurring within hymns addressed to the fire-god, Agni.<sup>4</sup> In the oldest of the *Rig-Veda*'s ten books, or *mandalas*, (numbers 2-7) Mātariśvan establishes Agni, who brings new prosperity (3.2.13). In the same *mandala*, Mātariśvan acts as an envoy of the Gods, kindling Agni, the oblation-bearer who lies in secret, far from the Bhrgus, one of the Vedic orders of fire-priest (3.5.9-10). Elsewhere, Mātariśvan also brings forth Agni, this time by friction from the Gods far away (3.9.5). In one instance, Mātariśvan is merely mentioned in association with Agni (3.26.2); in another, he brings Agni from far away as the envoy of Vivasvan (6.8.4), "the first sacrificer and, as a father of Manu, the ancestor of the human race." (West M. L., 2007, p. 273) And finally, Agni is described as a Germ

Illustration 3



Three-headed Agni ('the knower') god of fire, riding a goat, a symbol of sexual potency

<sup>4</sup> *Rig-Veda* 1.31.3 (addressed to Agni); 1.60.1 (to Agni); 1.71.4 (to Agni); 1.93.6 (to Agni); 1.96.4 (to Agni); 1.128.2 (to Agni); 1.141.3 (to Agni); 1.143.2 (to Agni); 1.148.1 (to Agni); 1.164.46; 1.190.2; 3.2.13; 3.5.9 (to Agni); 3.5.10 (to Agni); 3.9.5 (to Agni); 3.26.2 (to Agni); 3.29.11 (to Agni); 6.8.4 (to Agni); 8.52.2; 8.96.2; 9.67.31 (to Agni); 10.46.9 (to Agni); 10.48.2; 10.85.47; 10.88.19 (to Agni); 10.105.6; 10.109.1; 10.114.1.

Celestial, formed in his Mother [*Mātāri*] as *Mātariśvan*, who is born diffused in varied shapes, and becomes the rapid flight of wind (3.29.11).<sup>5</sup>

<b><i>Mātariśvan</i></b>		<b><i>Promêtheús</i></b>
Synonymous with Agni, Vedic god of fire	Yes	Synonymous with Hephaestus, Greek god of fire
Assists in establishing ritual of sacrificing burnt offerings to the gods	Yes	Initiates ritual of sacrificing burnt offerings to the gods at Mekone
Brings fire from the Gods as a messenger	Analogous	Steals fire from the Gods as a thief
Kindles fire by friction	No	
Establishes prosperity	Inverse	Power of fire provokes divine creation of evil of woman
	No	Punished by Zeus: Bound in fetters; Liver eaten by bird

Even from this extremely brief overview, several strong points of correspondence may be identified between the Vedic *Mātariśvan* and the Hesiodic Prometheus. Like Prometheus, *Mātariśvan* brings fire, which establishes prosperity (cf. *Works & Days* 47-5). In performing this task, they also both act as messengers who deliver fire from the far away gods. They also both play crucial roles in initiating the ritual of sacrifice to the gods with fire and burnt offerings. *Mātariśvan* is also closely identified with the fire-god, Agni, as is Prometheus with Hephaestus, the Greek god of fire, even to the point of them being considered interchangeable with one another.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, though, there are a couple of elements of the *mūthoi* told about each that do not initially seem to have corollaries in the other. The Promethean motifs of the theft of fire and punishment are apparently missing in the stories about *Mātariśvan*, for instance, while the idea that *Mātariśvan* obtained fire from the gods by friction is a technical aspect of the Vedic *mūthos* that would seem to hold more in common with the Semitic *mūthos*

<sup>5</sup> This last passage is particularly significant, as it is one of the only hymns in the Rig Veda to name *Mātariśvan* as the wind, albeit obliquely; probably in reference to the blown air that helps ignite fire. It may thus be seen to reflect an influential early strain of the Vedic myths relating to *Mātariśvan*, as he becomes primarily known as a god of wind in later Vedic literature (Organ, 1974, p. 85). Even more significant, though, is the close association in this passage between *Mātariśvan* and Mother [*Mātāri*], which hints at a deeper etymological relationship between the two.

<sup>6</sup> Cf: Pindar, *Olympian* 31-44, and Sophocles, *Ion* 455, where Hephaestus and Prometheus respectively split open the head of Zeus, giving birth to Athena; Apollodorus writes that "when the time came for the birth to take place, Prometheus or, as others say, Hephaestus, smote the head of Zeus with an axe, and Athena, fully armed, leaped up from the top of his head at the river Triton." (1.3.6, trans. Frazer) Scholiasts Ab on *Iliad* 14.295 and T on *Iliad* 14.296, also name Prometheus the son of Hera, whom Homer names the mother of Hephaestus (*Iliad* 1.578, *Odyssey* 8.312).

of the Sons of Genos than the Hesiodic Prometheus. An initial summary of the mythic correspondences between Mātariśvan and Prometheus is summarised in Table III.

The evidence for Prometheus and Mātariśvan being genetically related is thus fairly strong, according to a straightforward comparison of their respective *mūthoi*; however, this hypothesis remains questionable if it relies on mythological evidence alone. For this reason, it is necessary to buttress the argument with linguistic analysis. That will be the task of the next section of this paper. There, analysis of the linguistic evidence for the hypothesis that there is a genetic link between Prometheus and Mātariśvan is approached from three perspectives, in terms of an examination of: 1. cognate terms for Prometheus in Vedic Sanskrit; 2. the etymological origins of Prometheus as an appellative term in archaic Greek; and 3. the etymological origins of Mātariśvan in Indo-European.

## D. Linguistic Evidence for the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus Hypothesis

### 1. Kuhn's Evidence, and Its Critics

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Kuhn (1859) was the first to examine the existence of a genetic relationship between Prometheus and Mātariśvan based on linguistic evidence. In doing so, he drew several parallels between terms in Vedic Sanskrit and the Greek words from which the name Prometheus was thought to have derived as an appellative. Ancient Greek linguists long thought that Prometheus was based upon the root word, *manthánô*,<sup>7</sup> although some modern linguists have contested the validity of this formulation, critiquing it as based upon a false 'folk-etymology'. Kuhn accepts it, though, and goes on to relate *manthánô* to the recurring Sanskrit verbs *mathnâmi* or *manthâmi* and *mathâyati* (p. 12), the standard 19<sup>th</sup> century translations of which were: to agitate, to shake, to stir, to rub, or to produce by rubbing. Kuhn also notes the frequency with which the activities of fire-making and butter churning are described by words with the Sanskrit roots *manth*, *manthana* and *manthara* (p. 13). He further observes that, in a later Vedic text – the *Kâtîya Crauta sūtra* – the drilling stick employed by Vedic fire-priests to generate the ritual flame was called a *pramantha* (p. 15).<sup>8</sup> As a result, Kuhn also associates the root word *manth* with the meanings "separating, ripping apart, robbings", which he describes as a forgone meaning of the Greek word *manthánô*, but which therefore makes it appear to be "a tearing to acquire foreign knowledge [*sich reissen, sich aneignen des fremden wissens erscheint*]." (p. 16)

Based on his analysis of the Vedic root word, *ma(n)th*, Kuhn hypothesises that "Prometheus is conceived from the concept of *pramatha*, to rob, [*Prometheus aus dem begriff von pramatha, raub, hervorgegangen ist*]; whereby the word designating "the predatory, the robbery loving [*der räuberische, raub liebende*]" would be rendered by an unattested Sanskrit word he reconstructs as "*Pramathyus*." He then also notes, almost as an afterthought, that *pramantha*, the stick-drill employed for generating fire, also likely influenced the formation of Prometheus as an appellative, given the existence of a "Zeus Promantheus" named by Lycophron

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<sup>7</sup> Liddell & Scott (1961) provide the following definitions for *manthánô*: "I. *learn, esp. by study, but also by practice* (Simon 147). II. *acquire a habit of, and in past tenses, to be accustomed to* (Emp. 17.9). III. *perceive, remark, notice*. IV. *understand*."

<sup>8</sup> The *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* is a Vedic manual composed sometime in the mid-first millennium BCE, provides detailed instructions on how to correctly perform the various ritual ceremonies described in the Vedas.

(*Alexandria*, line 537).<sup>9</sup> From this evidence, Kuhn concludes that Prometheus "must certainly have been perceived to be affiliated with the subsequent Sanskrit term *pramantha* [so muss er hier jedenfalls einen an das Sanskrit *pramantha* sich anschliessenden begriff bezeichnet haben]." (p. 17) Kuhn's analysis of the etymological origins of Prometheus thus rests upon two linguistic parallels: a nearly identical, hypothetically reconstructed word – \**Pramathyus* – based on numerous attested words based on the root-word *ma(n)th*; and a later attested Sanskrit word, *pramantha*, also with close parallels in Greek literature.

At first, Kuhn's theory of the etymological origins of Prometheus in Vedic Sanskrit won wide acceptance among scholars such as Cox (1870, pp. 421 & 433, n. 2)<sup>10</sup> and Steinthal (1877). One of his most important supporters in this regard, though, was the pioneering Sanskrit scholar, Max Müller (1823-1900), who nonetheless pointed out the tenuousness of the connection between *pramantha* ('fire-stick') and its subsequent application to Prometheus, "the wisest of the sons of the Titans" (1889, pp. 452-3). In a later work, though, Müller presents a more full-throated defense of the "Prometheus-Pramanthu" formulation, noting their mutual connection to the Sanskrit verbs *manth* and *math* (1897, pp. 810-813). Even Müller's arch-rival, the prolific Scottish mythographer and anthropologist, Andrew Lang (1844-1912), initially hailed Kuhn's book as "epoch-making" (1887, pp. 26, n. 1). He even describes Kuhn's philological formulations with respect to the Promethean *mūthos*, including the conjecture that the formation of Prometheus was influenced by *pramantha*, as "ingenious and plausible" (Lang, Prometheus, 1892), although it's quite easy to read irony into his praise. And, indeed, when prominent Sanskrit linguists, such as Macdonell, began calling Kuhn's formulations into question, Lang was more than happy to publicize the event (1897, pp. 201-2), and did not even find it necessary to

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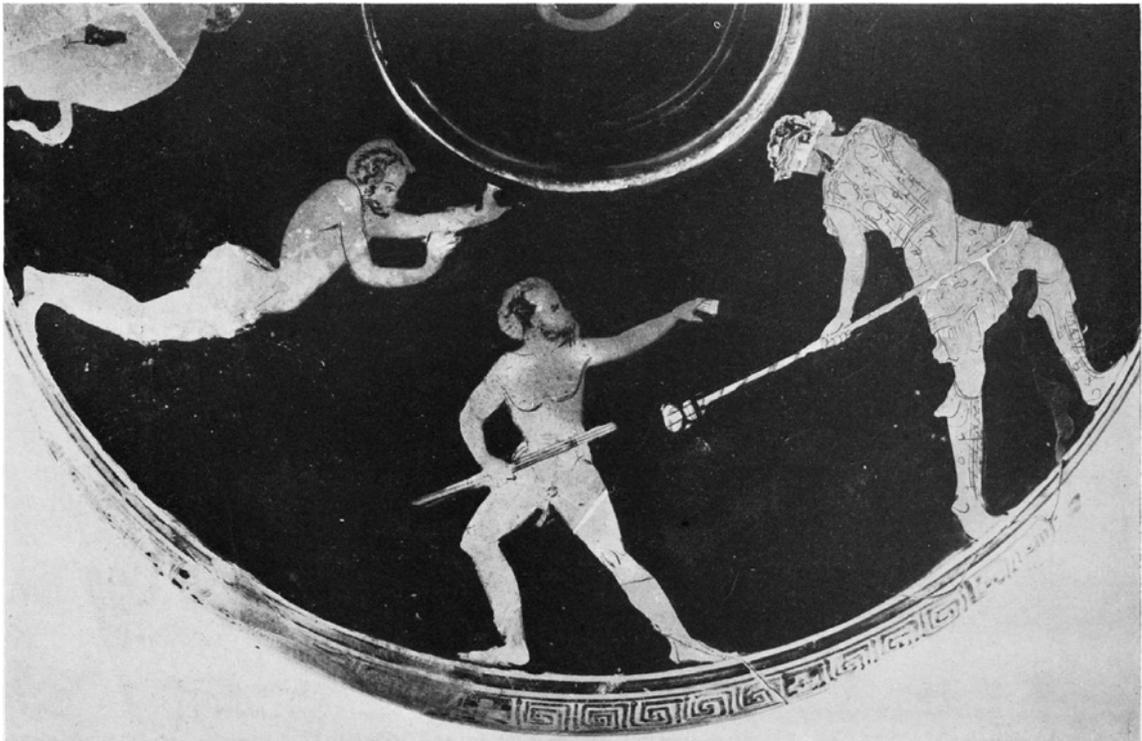
<sup>9</sup> Lycophron (fl. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE) was an Alexandrian scholar and poet, and who is sometimes described as a by-word for obscurity. Lycophron's reference to 'Zeus Promantheus' is the only extant use of the word *promanthánō* as an appellative. However, it does occur several times in a non-appellative form in several other authors, most notably in Plato (*Laws* 1.643), where it describes 'learning beforehand', but also in Theophrastus (*Characters* 7.4.2), Aelius Aristides (quoting the above passage from Plato's *Laws*), Menander (*Comparatio Menandri et Philostionis* 1.17), Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 4.3.7.1, 12.17.1.7), Porphyry (*Isagoge to Aristotle's Categories* 1.56.25), Salminius Hermias Sozomenus (*Historia ecclesiastica* 5.19.11.4), Joannes Lautentius Lydus (*De Ostentis* 4.12), and Eustratius (*Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* 393.3).

<sup>10</sup> Cox writes: "Thus, with the exception of Agni, all the names of the fire and the fire-god were carried away by the Western Aryans: and we have Prometheus answering to Pramantha, Phorônus to Bhuranyu, and the Latin Vulcanus to the Skr. Ulkah, a firebrand, a word used in connection with the flames or sparks of Agni."

revise his earlier words of praise in the reprint of his 'Prometheus' entry for the 1911 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

In his landmark work, *Vedic Mythology*, Macdonell notes that *pramantha* first occurs in a late metrical *Smṛti* work, the *Karmapradīpa*,<sup>11</sup> and argues that it has been connected with Prometheus only owing to a superficial resemblance. He further observes that Prometheus has "every appearance of being a purely Greek formation, which the Indian verb *math*, to twirl, is found compounded only with *nis*, never with *pra*, to express the act of producing fire by friction." (1897, p. 91) Karl Bapp arrives at a very similar conclusion (1896, p. 6). As a result, a consensus quickly formed among classical scholars that "many of the philological 'equations' proposed by Kuhn, Max Müller and their followers," including "the equation *pramanthas* =

#### Illustration 4



Prometheus giving fire to a satyr with a ceremonial scepter. As Beazley (1939) points out, the spiral iconography on the shaft and lack of smoke or flame emanating from the end of this scepter excludes the possibility of it illustrating the Greek fire instruments usually associated with Prometheus: the stalk of a giant fennel (*nárthêx*) or a torch (*lampás*). However, the spiral iconography along the shaft comports nicely with Vedic descriptions of a *pramantha*, as a ceremonial staff meant for spinning in order to produce fire.

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<sup>11</sup> Dated to around 500 BCE.

*Prometheus*", were "based on assumed linguistic evidence." As a result, scholarly consensus quickly moved back to thinking that Prometheus meant 'Forethinker' to the Greeks from the beginning (Sikes, 1906, p. xiii). This contemporary scholarly consensus against the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus hypothesis is more recently reflected in the entry for Prometheus in the Oxford Classical Dictionary (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), which opens with the assertion that Prometheus simply means "the forethinker," and that "all other etymologies of his name are merely fantastic;" (Robinson, 1979 [first publ. 1970]). As a result, the question of the Indo-European origins of Prometheus has been virtually ignored by 20<sup>th</sup> century classical scholarship, and is even denied outright by prominent Indo-European scholars, such as Mallory (1997) and Lincoln (1987). Nevertheless, research conducted by some Greek and Sanskrit scholars over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century now allows for a serious reappraisal of the hypothesis that Prometheus is, indeed, of Indo-European origin.

## 2. Narten's Reassessment of the Vedic Verb *Math*

One of the more important studies contributing to a reevaluation of the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus hypothesis is a monograph on the Vedic verb *ma(n)th* authored by Johanna Narten (1960). This study accomplishes three important tasks; first, it differentiates between slightly differing, but nevertheless distinct, shades of meaning imputed to words constructed from the root words *math* versus *manth*; second, it re-establishes the validity of assuming the word formation *pra-math* in early Vedic Sanskrit as cognate with Prometheus; and third, it (re-) establishes a philological connection between *math* and Mātariśvan. In drawing a distinction between the meanings of *math* versus *manth*, Narten demonstrates how, within the various contexts in which it is used, the latter is better understood as meaning "to whip" an object by rapidly twirling, spinning or rotating it. This rotary motion is naturally associated with the activities of churning butter and starting a fire by means of drill-sticks specifically designed for such purposes, as was also noted by Kuhn. *Manth* also carries a sexual connotation, as does *math*, likely given the similarity of the physical movements it describes with those involving sex; with one inflection of *math* meaning to rub something with a vigorous back and forth motion, and the related inflection of *manth* meaning to drill into something. As the primary verb for describing the act of causing this spinning motion, *manth* thus also naturally provided the etymological base for naming the fire-making tool that made this motion, namely the *pramantha*. Regarding the meaning of *math*, on the other hand, Narten demonstrates how this word makes better sense in many of the contexts in which it occurs in Vedic literature, often as the root of a compound word, if it is also understood as expressing the actions "to snatch away from, to lay a hold of, to rob, to steal, to rape" (Narten, 1960, pp. 121-2).

Regarding the existence of *pra-math* as a verbal construct in early Sanskrit, Narten identifies several of the earliest historical occurrences of the preposition *pra* (connoting direction of force) in conjunction with the verb *math* in Vedic literature (1960, pp. 129-130). The earliest such attestation is found in the *Atharvaveda* (19.40.2), the composition of which is variously ascribed to the three main orders of Vedic fire-priests: the Atharvanas, the Angirasa, and the Bhrgu. Sometimes referred to as the 'fourth Veda',<sup>12</sup> the *Atharvaveda* is generally thought, primarily based on linguistic evidence, to have been composed sometime at the very end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. This dating is strengthened by the fact that it is the earliest Sanskrit text to

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<sup>12</sup> The other three being the *Rigveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Samaveda*, respectively the oldest texts in Vedic Sanskrit.

mention iron (*sajāmasi ayas*, i.e. 'black metal' [*Atharvaveda* 7.115.1c]). The Indian Iron Age is thought to have begun in earnest in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE, although archeologists have found iron implements in the Indian subcontinent that date to as early as 1800 BCE.

The occurrence of *pra* in conjunction with *math* in the *Atharvaveda* is found in a Hymn that prays for pardon in making errors in the ritual of sacrifice, and for wisdom, strength and light.

The second verse of this four verse Hymn reads:

Disturb ye not our intellect, O Waters, nor the power of prayer  
*mā na āpo medhām mā brahma pra mathiṣṭana*

Glide on your way, strength-giving, invocated: may I be vigorous and wise  
*suṣyadā yūyaṃ syandadhvam upahūto 'haṃ sumedhā varcasvī.*

*Atharvaveda* 19.40.2: transliterated Sanskrit, Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, 2001)<sup>13</sup>; English translation, Griffith (1895).

A particularly interesting feature of the word usage in this passage is how *pra mathiṣṭana* is employed to indicate the 'disturbance' of 'intellect' (*medhām*). In this instance, then, the Old Sanskrit word *math* may be seen to have undergone semantic drift in the process of being compounded with *pra*: from describing a physical motion to describing a mental state. This drift thus parallels a similar development in archaic Greek, whereby *manthánō* came to describe the mental state 'to learn', and its original meaning, to describe the physical actions of rubbing, etc., was completely lost.<sup>14</sup> With respect to the meaning of *pra-math* in Old Sanskrit as a whole, Narten primarily defines it in terms of indicating directional movement, in the sense of "gone with oneself [*mit sich fort-*], to fore-mark [*voranreissen*], to rob away [*hinwegrauben*]" (1960, pp. 129-130). The usage of the verbal construct *pra-math* in the *Atharvaveda*, along with Narten's refined sense of the meaning of the Vedic verb *math*, thus effectively neutralises MacDonell's critique of Kuhn's Indo-European Proto-Prometheus, cited above. For her analysis demonstrates the linguistic parallels that Kuhn draws between Prometheus and cognates of the Vedic verb *ma(n)th* to be based on far more than a superficial resemblance. In particular, while *pra* is not used in conjunction with *math* to describe the act of producing fire by means of friction in early Vedic literature, these two words are combined to describe other forms of

<sup>13</sup> [http://fiindolo.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1\\_sanskr/1\\_veda/1\\_sam/avs\\_\\_\\_u.htm](http://fiindolo.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/1_veda/1_sam/avs___u.htm)

<sup>14</sup> West (2007, p. 273) conjectures that the meaning of Prometheus' name evolved from 'one who loves to rob/rape' in Indo-European to 'forethought' in ancient Greek by a similar process whereby the English term 'to grasp' also came to signify the mental process of coming to understand something.

action that parallel patterns of usage found in Greek cognates of the term, including the appellative Prometheus.

In terms of the link between *math* and Mātariśvan, finally, Narten points to how frequently the occurrences of *math* in the *Rig-Veda* "largely have Matarisvan as a subject" (1960, p. 132). Compound words based upon the Sanskrit word *math* occur 32 times in the *Rig-Veda*; and those based upon *manth* 17 times. None of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* are directly addressed to Mātariśvan, but of the 27 times he is mentioned in that text, he is closely associated with *math* and its various cognates six times (1.71.4, 1.93.6, 1.93.6, 1.141.3, 1.148.1, 3.9.5). As well, *math* and its various cognates also frequently occur in association with Agni (1.127.11, 3.23.1-2, 3.29.12, 8.73.4), as well as the various orders of Vedic fire-priests: the Bhr̥gu's (1.127.7) and the Angirases (5.11.6). One of the more prominent theories as to the origin of the name Mātariśvan is that it grew out of the Sanskrit word for mother [*mātā*], and that its original literal meaning was probably "growing in his mother" (Macdonell, 1897, p. 72). Another theory, though, argues that Mātariśvan was derived from the (reconstructed) Indo-Iranian word for fire: *\*atar* (Insler, June, 1985). As Watkins also notes, the addition of 'm' to this word may well have caused the deformation of the 't' to form the Indo-European word *\*math<sub>2</sub>* (1995, p. 256).

The competing theories linking Mātariśvan to the Indo-Iranian word *\*atar*, and the Sanskrit words *math* and *mātā*, may be somewhat reconciled by supposing that the later two derive from the common Sanskrit root '*mā-*', which means "to make, produce, create" (Burrow, 1980) as well as "to measure" (s.v. Mother, 1911). In this conception, Mātariśvan may be interpreted as a composite word formed from the locative Sanskrit word for 'mother' (*mātari*), itself derived from the Indo-European word *\*mā-* ('to create'), perhaps also combined with the Indo-European word for 'fire' (*\*atar*), and the addition of the suffix *śvi*, meaning 'to grow or swell.' Given these considerations, it is reasonable to assume that Mātariśvan and *math* are, indeed, cognate terms derived from a common Indo-European root *\*ma*. This etymological relationship between *math* and Mātariśvan is significant, for it strengthens Watkins' assertion "that the Mātariśvan-Prometheus myth, long assumed to be cognate and inherited in Greek and Indic (Kuhn [1859], Charpentier [1911]), agree also in the motif of the **theft** of fire." (1995, p. 256)

### 3. Schmidt's Reassessment of the Linguistic Origins of Prometheus as an Appellative

Significant advances have also been made by 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars regarding the etymological origins of Prometheus as an appellative in archaic Greek. One of the first scholars to trace its development as a word in ancient Greek in detail is Gerhard Fink, who argues that "at first *promatheús* was used as an appellative (as by Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 85ff.), from which the adjective *promêthês* evolved"; and that it was from this initial base that the noun form, *promêtheia*, was subsequently derived (1958, p. 52). A weakness of Fink's analysis, though, is that he does not appear to have considered the evidence present in fragmentary texts. This problem was later addressed by Henry Wood, although he still proceeds from the same basic assumption as Fink: namely, that Prometheus is an appellative of non-Indo-European origin, given the absence of attestations of the root word \**mêth* in ancient Greek (1966, p. 229).

Wood argues that the process of "grammatical paronomasia" away from Prometheus as an appellative began with the formation of the feminine form in Alkman (Fr. 64),<sup>15</sup> where the "noun *Prometheia* [...] wavers between allegorical goddess and conceptual abstraction," and that it was then "used as an abstraction" by Xenophanes (Fr. 1)<sup>16</sup> and Pindar (*Isthmean Ode* 1.40 & *Nemean Ode* 11.45). The verb form, on the other hand, Wood argues, was an "Ionic development [...] of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, [...] and last of all the adjective was formed, probably in Athens by an early Sophist as a purely abstract formation." (1966, pp. 231-3)<sup>17</sup> The historical use of *promêtheús* as a non-appellative in extant archaic Greek literature is arranged in Table IV. On the basis of this assumed pattern of development, Wood declares the occurrence of the verb form, *promêthesai*, in Fragment 106 of Archilochus (c.680-c.645 BCE) "to be indisputable evidence of the inauthenticity of the fragment." (1966, p. 228) Instead, he assigns the date of

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<sup>15</sup> Alkman's fragment 64 is cited by Plutarch in *On the Fortune of the Romans*, 4.318a, where he writes:  
"For Fortune is not 'inflexible', as Pindar has it, nor 'plying a double steering paddle'; rather she is Sister of Good Order [*Eunomia*] and Persuasion and daughter of Foresight [*Promatheias*], As in Alcman's account of her lineage." Trans. Campbell (1991, p. 49)

<sup>16</sup> Xenophanes' fragment 1 is quoted by Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* [*Scholars at Dinner*] 11.462c, where he writes:

"Praise the man who when he has taken drink brings noble deeds to light,  
as memory and a striving for virtue bring to him.  
He deals neither with the battles of Titans nor Giants  
nor Centaurs, fictions of old,  
nor furious conflicts – for there is no use in these."

But it is good always to hold the gods in high regard [*promêtheiên*]." Trans. Leshner (1992, pp. 11-12)

<sup>17</sup> Wood apparently operates from the assumption that *promêtheiên*, as it occurs in the Xenophanes fragment, is a noun form. By contrast, the Greek Word Study Tool at the Perseus Digital Library (Tufts University, 2012), based on Liddell & Scott (*A Greek-English lexicon*, 1940), classifies it as an adjective form.

this poem fragment's composition to the Hellenistic age, and probably no earlier than the papyrus upon which it was found, which dates to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.

Author	Date	Work	Word	Form
Archilochus	fl. c.714-c.676	Fr. 106	<i>promêthesai</i>	Verb
Alkman	fl. 7 <sup>th</sup> cent. BCE	Fr. 64	<i>Promatheías</i>	Appellative Noun
Xenophanes	570-480	Fr. 1.25	<i>promêtheiên</i>	Adjective
Pindar	c.522-443	<i>Isthmean</i> 1	<i>promátheian</i>	Noun
		<i>Nemean</i> 11	<i>promatheias</i>	Noun
Aeschylus	525/4-456/5	<i>Supplicies</i> 178	<i>promêthían</i>	Noun
		<i>Supplicies</i> 357	<i>kápromêthêtôn</i>	Adjective
		<i>Supplikes</i> 700	<i>promathis</i>	Adjective

The assessments of Fink and Wood are fundamentally challenged by Volkmar Schmidt, who points to the inherent limitations of the underlying assumption of their studies: namely, that the chronological sequence in which the grammatical forms of a word occur in extant source texts provides an accurate picture of its overall historical development. Instead, Schmidt proceeds from the hypothesis that Prometheus, as an appellative, was itself formed out of previous, unattested word formations in archaic Greek. In particular, he points to the aorist verb tense *matheĩn*, which was most likely derived from the unattested words *\*mãthos* and *\*mêthos*, given the resemblance to parallel formations in word groups with similar structure, such as: *latheĩn*, *lãthos*, *álêthês*; and *ãdeĩn*, *êdos*, *ãêdês* (1975, p. 186), as illustrated in Table V. From this and other related considerations, Schmidt not only dismisses Wood's assumption that the verb form *promêtheĩsthai* is a late word formation; he further concludes that Archilochus' use of the word actually provides indirect evidence for the existence of a pre-historical, unattested word – *\*promãthsĩomai* – as well as its rarely attested root-word, *promãthês* (1975, p. 190).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Schmidt does not specify where he finds *promãthês* to occur. As far as this author has been able to find, this particular word form, *promãthês* (from *promanthãnô*, 'to learn beforehand'; in aorist *proũmathon*), is attested by only one ancient Greek author: Hephaestion the Astrologer (4<sup>th</sup> century CE) in *Apotelesmatica* (Fortune-telling). There, it is employed in what appears to be a stock phrase repeated three times in different parts of the work:

*èpisképtou dè kai tèn selênên pôs keĩtai ĩna èk pántôn tò ãlêthês promãthês*

'But you see afterward how the moon places from where out of everything that truth is learned beforehand' (trans. by author), (Hephaestio, Hephaestionis Thebani Apotelesmaticorum libri tres, vol. 1, 1973, p. 278) (Ibid., vol. 2, 1973, pp. 123, 304).

The identical repetition of this phrase would seem to indicate it was a ritual verbal form, and therefore likely of greater antiquity than the date of composition of the text in which it occurs.

Word Form	Verb	Noun	Adjective
Words built on root 'lath'	<i>latheĩn</i> (to escape notice)	<i>lāthos</i> (an escape from detection)	<i>álêthês</i> (unconcealed)
Words built on root 'ad'	<i>àdeĩn</i> (to please, delight, gratify)	<i>êdos</i> (delight, pleasure)	<i>áêdês</i> (distasteful, nauseous)
Words built on root 'math'	<i>matheĩn</i> (to learn)	* <i>māthos</i> (*that which is learned?)	* <i>mêthos</i> (*learnable?)

Schmidt's findings hold several important implications for establishing a more solid linguistic link between Mātariśvan and Prometheus, thereby supporting the hypothesis positing the existence of a Graeco-Aryan Proto-Prometheus. To begin with, he demonstrates the Doric word form, *promatheús*, to preserve a more archaic word form than its Ionic equivalent, *promêtheús*. The Dorian Greeks are generally thought to have migrated into and/or invaded the Greek peninsula from somewhere in east-central Europe sometime shortly after the collapse of Mycenaean civilisation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Given their relatively late arrival in Greece proper, and likely prior habitation in east-central Europe, far from the influences of the dominant cultures of the Mediterranean, it is reasonable to conjecture that the Dorian Greek dialect preserved word forms closer to the original Indo-European than the Ionians, whose Indo-European ancestors migrated into the Greek peninsula sometime during the 24<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

Schmidt's analysis provides persuasive supporting evidence for the hypothesis that Dorian Greek preserves a more archaic form of the appellative Prometheus than its Ionic counterpart. This conjecture is supported by the utter lack of any mention of Prometheus in 'Homer',<sup>19</sup> whose source material primarily derived from Ionian poetic traditions. And if the Dorians preserved a more archaic Indo-European word form for Prometheus, this also gives rise to the possibility that they were also the primary transmitters of the essentially Indo-European elements of the Promethean *mūthos*; a hypothesis supported by the fact that virtually all the archaic Greek references to Prometheus are made either by Doric authors, or authors known to have been deeply influenced by Doric culture.<sup>20</sup> It therefore seems altogether likely that the Hesiodic

<sup>19</sup> While Homer does not mention Prometheus at all, his father, Iapetos, is mentioned in *Iliad* (8.479) and his brother, Atlas, is mentioned in *Odyssey* (1.52-4).

<sup>20</sup> "[M]any of the authors dealing with the post-Hesiodic Promethean myth between the mid-7th and mid-5th BCE hail from Doric cities, including: Alcman, Epimenides, Akousilaos, Ibycus, Mellanipides, Pindar, Epicharmus, Deinolochus and Herodotus. As well, two of the more influential revisionists of the post-

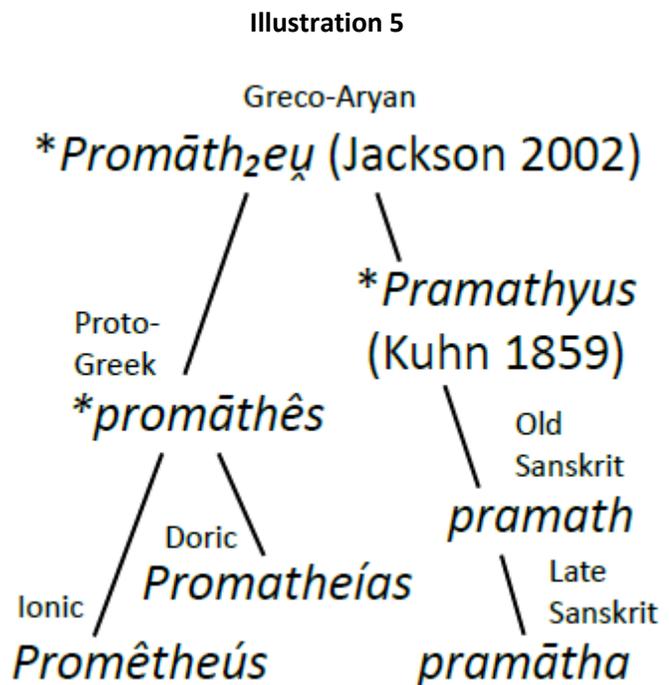
Promethean *mūthos* was transmitted by the Dorians in the process of their migration to Greece during the Greek Dark Age (c.1200-800 BCE).

Schmidt's findings regarding the unattested, but plausibly reconstructed, etymological origins of *promêtheús* in archaic Greek also further strengthen the linguistic connection between Prometheus and *pra-math* in Vedic Sanskrit. This point is only very tentatively advanced by Narten, who wrote before Schmidt's findings were published. In a footnote (!) to the conclusion of her analysis of the Vedic verb *math*, Narten ever so cautiously reasserts Kuhn's hypothesis on the linguistic origins of Prometheus as an appellative, as follows:

Perhaps in light of the striking phonic similarity of the Greek *promêtheús* with ai. (*pra-*) *math* "to rob" one could point out with great caution to the possibility, which Kuhn in *The descent of the Fire*, p. 17 (= *Mythol. Stud.*, p. 18) has already pointed to, based on his correct assessment of its meaning, that the Greek name meant perhaps originally „thief" (robber) and that this meaning was lost for obvious reasons (since there is no trace of the verb that can be found in Greek), and was attached subsequently to the more common meaning of *promêthês* as "caring for the future". (Narten, 1960, p. 135)

Narten's tentative assertion gains additional credence from the analysis of Schmidt, as the archaic Greek root word from which he determines the appellative Prometheus to have been derived – *\*promāthês* – is even closer in form to the Sanskrit word *pra-math* than the Greek word form that Narten employs as the basis for her philological comparison:

i.e. *promêthês/promêtheús*. The only weakness in this formulation West identifies as being the long vowel in the second syllable of *promêtheús* (2007, p. 273), presumably because languages tend to shorten, rather than lengthen, their vowels in the course of sound change over time. Durante, though, also notes the existence of a later Sanskrit noun – *pramātha* – meaning 'seizing, violent




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Hesiodic Promethean myth – Sappho and Aeschylus – spent considerable amounts of time in Doric cities in Sicily, while respectively in exile and visiting." (Sulek, 2011, p. 76)

abduction', that also contains a long vowel in the second syllable (1976, p. 57 f.). From these considerations, it may be alternatively surmised that the reconstructed Indo-European word should also contain a long vowel, rendered as *\*māth<sub>2</sub>*.<sup>21</sup> This reconstruction also has the benefit of better accommodating the theory that *\*māth<sub>2</sub>* was originally a compound word formed by the combination of the Indo-European words *\*mā* '(to make') and *\*atar* ('fire'), as outlined above. It is, perhaps, on this basis that Jackson (2002, p. 85) also reconstructs the appellative for the Indo-European proto-Prometheus with a long *ā* in the second syllable, as *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey*. In any case, the attested Old Sanskrit *pramath* is already so close to the Proto-Greek *\*promāthês* as to approach a virtual identity. Given this evidence, plus the tentative endorsements of West (Ibid.) and Watkins (1995, p. 256), two of the pre-eminent living authorities in the respective fields of classics and Indo-European linguistics, the existence of a genetic linguistic relationship between Mātariśvan and Prometheus becomes about as certain as any conclusion can possibly be within the field of comparative linguistics.

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<sup>21</sup> Such as that the 'th' sound originally evolved from an Indo-European fricative a-colouring laryngeal.

#### 4. Linguistic Insights into the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus

Positively establishing a linguistic relation between Prometheus and Mātariśvan grants much greater insight into than standard accounts, which tend to view each *mūthos* as simply a Greek or Vedic formation. For establishing a genetic link between these two key mythic figures allows one to plausibly posit the historical existence of a proto-Promethean Indo-European mythic figure from which each evolved, dating at least as far back as 2,500 BCE, the last point of Graeco-Aryan unity, and likely considerably earlier. This link thus extends the history of the Promethean *mūthos* at least 1,800 years prior to its earliest attestation in Hesiod, and that of Mātariśvan at least 800 years. The realisation that Prometheus, as an appellative, was formed from a root word cognate with the Sanskrit word *math* also grants much greater insight into the nature of the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus than standard etymologies. Standard accounts of the origins of his name tend to proceed from the assumption that Prometheus is of non-Greek derivation, given the lack of attestation of the root *mēth* in ancient Greek, that it stems from folk-etymologies that derived it from *manthánō*, and that it simply means 'forethought.' But if Prometheus did originally mean 'forethought,' and this appellative is specifically applied to describe his nature, one would expect him to more clearly manifest this quality than he in fact does in the earliest stories told about him, as related by Hesiod. Instead, the Hesiodic Prometheus would seem to demonstrate a manifest *lack* of forethought: for, in the end, his schemes to trick and steal Zeus, in his vain attempts to subvert the will of the King of the Gods, bring about nothing less than the fall of humankind from its golden age of bliss, as well as the painful and interminable punishment of Prometheus, still left ineluctably bound to a rock at the end of his story (*Theogony*, 613-6). Rather than reflecting forethought, these actions much better fit the profile of the hypothetically reconstructed Indo-European proto-Prometheus, here revealed as a clever fire-priest who perfected the technique of fire-making and founded the ritual of sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings; a Neolithic shaman, the pre-moral nature of whom may be inferred from Narten's etymology of *math* and Kuhn's reconstruction of *\*pramathyus* in Vedic Sanskrit: as one who loves to generate things through various forms of occasionally predatory behavior, including: snatching, grasping, robbing, rubbing, raping, agitating, separating and/or individuating.

Determining the etymological origins of Prometheus and Mātariśvan grants much greater insight into the nature of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus and its reconstructed appellative, *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey*. It helps establish, for instance, the existence of several points of

correspondence between the Mātariśvan and Prometheus *mūthoi* previously thought lacking; in particular, the important 'motifemes' of rubbing to generate fire in Vedic *mūthos*, and the theft of fire by Prometheus in Greek *mūthos*. For the very meaning of the root word upon which Prometheus was originally constructed – the Indo-European word *\*māth<sub>2</sub>* – itself encompassed both the actions of rubbing to generate fire, and stealing something by grabbing a hold of and quickly snatching it. *\*Māth<sub>2</sub>* is also likely cognate with earlier Indo-European words, such as *\*mā* (to make) and *\*atar* (fire), that were likely combined to construct Mātariśvan as an epithet. Viewed in this light, Hesiod's depiction of Zeus depriving men of fire and Prometheus stealing it back may be plausibly interpreted as a mythic representation of the archaic Greeks' understanding of the fundamental historical transition that occurred in man's relationship with fire: from the tenuous possession of naturally occurring, god-given fire, such as that generated by lightning strikes, to the permanent possession of man-made fire generated by artificial means, such as rubbing sticks together.

Anthropologists have long divided the transitions in man's historical relationship to fire into three distinct stages: "the knowledge of fire, the means of utilizing it, and the means of procuring it." (Broca, 1870) This transition may also be seen to have been recognised by the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE philosopher and mythographer, Epimenides of Knossos, who writes that, while some writers of myth record that Prometheus stole fire, "the truth is that he was the discoverer of those things which give forth fire and from which it may be kindled." (Diodorus, *History* 5.67.2) Epimenides' interpretation of the meaning of Prometheus' theft of fire may thus be seen to constitute an early recognition of the meaning of this *mūthos*, as an illustration of the fundamental transition that occurred in man's relationship with fire: from simply utilizing natural, 'god-given' fire, to discovering the means of generating it by artificial means. Epimenides' interpretation also aptly evokes the Vedic Mātariśvan, who is also said to have "rubbed forth [*mathāyāti*]" fire (*Rig-Veda* 1.141.3; cf. 1.148.1, 3.9.5). Epimenides may thus be attempting to do more than simply rationalise the *mūthos* of Prometheus' theft of fire; he may, indeed, be attempting to evoke its original, though only dimly recalled, Indo-European features and meaning.

## E. Mythographic Evidence for the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus Hypothesis

### 1. The Creation of Woman

Thus far, the Indo-European provenance of the Hesiodic Prometheus has been positively established for three of its mythic elements: the Negotiation at Mekone, Zeus withholding fire from men, and Prometheus stealing it back and giving it to humans. The next elements in the sequence of the *mūthos* – Hephaestus creating woman/Pandora, Hermes giving her to Epimetheus, and

Pandora opening the Jar – do not have any obvious Indo-European antecedents, for there are not many major female figures in Vedic *mūthos*. *Prthvi Mater* is one of the most important female Vedic gods, but even she is relatively minor, being mentioned only eight times in the *Rig-Veda*, and has no *suktas* addressed to her. The etymological origin of Prometheus in the Indo-European verb *\*māth<sub>2</sub>*, on the other hand, betrays unmistakable associations with the concepts of lust, the sexual act, and procreation. These concepts are also observable in the etymological formation of Prometheus' Vedic corollary, *Mātariśvan*: as the maker (*mā*) / mother (*mātari*) in whom fire (*\*atar*) grows or swells (*śvi*). Given this linguistic background, plus the prominent role played by Prometheus / Hephaestus in delivering Athena from the head of Zeus (Pindar, *Olympian* 31-44; Sophocles, *Ion* 455), it seems likely that Hephaestus' creation of the "lovely evil [*kalòn kakòn*]" of woman in Hesiod's *Theogony* (585) had Indo-European antecedents.

While the Indo-European provenance of the creation of woman *mūthos* in *Theogony* is somewhat uncertain, the Pandora elements in *Works & Days* display unmistakable Chthonic influences. As Harris convincingly demonstrates, the Pandora *mūthos* – and especially the motif of her release of the Fates from a Jar, and the retention of Hope – reflects the assimilation of non-Indo-European *mūthoi* preserved by a Chthonic ghost cult, most likely Pelasgian in origin, dedicated to the worship of the great goddess Ge, or mother earth (Pandora's Box, 1900). The

Illustration 6



Phrynos Painter, *Birth of Athena* (c.560-550 BCE)

Pelasgians considered themselves an autochthonic people, and are associated in Greek *mūthos* with the Danaïdes, whom Aeschylus describes in *Suppliant Maidens* as linked to Egyptian princes by marriage. The Pandora *mūthos* thus most likely originated in the cultures of Neolithic, goddess-worshipping, agrarian societies that migrated into the plains of Thessaly from the Anatolian peninsula around 6,700-6,500 BCE. Anthony conjectures that the language spoken by this cultural group may have belonged to the Afro-Asiatic super family that generated both Egyptian and Semitic in the Near East (2007, p. 147).

Hesiod's incorporation of the Chthonic Pandora element into the Indo-European Promethean *mūthos* may have played a pivotal role in triggering what Kuhn describes as the bifurcation of the proto-Prometheus into two brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus (1859, p. 17). Epimetheus is the 'after-thinker' who unwittingly accepts Zeus' gift of the beautiful Pandora, the "irresistible snare [dólōn]" who releases into the world the evils that afflict men (*Works & Days* 83-105). Epimetheus' lust for Pandora also has a corollary in Prometheus' passion for Athena, as discussed in the next section; and Athena herself may also be seen to have undergone a similar bifurcation in her characterisation with the introduction of Pandora. In *Theogony*, Athena's role in assisting Hephaestus to create woman is limited to adorning her with beautiful raiment (577). In *Works & Days*, by contrast, Zeus instructs Athena to teach Pandora the feminine crafts of embroidery and weaving, while it is the Cyprian love goddess, Aphrodite, who "spills grace" upon her head (65-6). Athena thus makes a progression in her characterisation between the two depictions of Hesiod, from providing woman the trappings of outward beauty, to providing Pandora instruction in the feminine crafts. Epimetheus' witless acceptance of the mortal woman, Pandora, presumably more on the basis of sexual attraction to the outward manifestations of beauty bestowed by Aphrodite, thus has a corollary in the fore-thinking Prometheus, who desires Athena for her inward knowledge of the feminine crafts. This brings us to the subject of Prometheus' punishment and its connection to the little known story of his passion for the virgin goddess.

## 2. The Passion of Prometheus for Athena

The details of Prometheus' punishment – his being bound with ineluctable fetters and a shaft driven through his torso, and having a large bird daily consume his liver (*Theogony* 521-5) – first occur near the beginning of the sequence of events related in *Theogony* that conclude with his being punished. This positioning of the conclusion of the story, at its very beginning, would seem to indicate that Prometheus' punishment is an original element of the *mūthos*; for it is more natural for a poet to open a traditional story with a shorthand review of elements already familiar

to the audience, particularly before subjecting it to more novel treatment. There are no obvious parallels in Vedic mythology, though, to Prometheus' rather distinctive punishment of being bound and having his liver consumed by an eagle.<sup>22</sup> Other means must be employed, therefore, to establish whether or not this particular element of the *mūthos* is Indo-European in origin. As it happens, an ancient historian and mythographer, Douris of Samos, testifies to the existence of a particular variant of the Promethean *mūthos* (Fr. 19) that, it will be argued here, both corroborates the Indo-European provenance of the punishment of Prometheus, and sheds considerable light on the lustful nature of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus.<sup>23</sup>

**Illustration 7**



Athena as depicted on an Athenian *tetradrachma* (c.560-550 BCE)

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<sup>22</sup> There is no parallel instance in Vedic mythology such as, for instance, Mātariśvan being punished at behest of *Dyaus Pitar* (the Sanskrit cognate to both *Zeús Pater* in Greek and Jupiter in Latin) for having stolen fire. However, there are two *suktas* in the *Rig Veda* that employ the verb *math* to describe how a bird of prey snatches away a sacrificial offering of Soma (1.93.6, 9.77.2); the first of these passages also occurs in close conjunction with a reference to Mātariśvan.

<sup>23</sup> Appreciating Douris' status as a historian and understanding his unique version of the Promethean *mūthos* also sheds considerable light upon Bacon's use of this particular variant in *Of The Wisdom Of The Ancients* (ch. 13 'Prometheus, or the State of Man').

The particular variant of the Promethean *mūthos* cited by Douris is a singular occurrence in all of classical literature. The only reference to it is found in a scholiast's commentary in the margins of a manuscript of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century to after 246 BCE). The location of these comments correspond to the point in *Argonautica* at which Jason and the Argonauts, sailing along the eastern shore of the Black Sea, hear the screams of Prometheus, chained to a mountain in the Caucasus, as an eagle consumes his liver (2.1249). Commenting on this passage, the scholiast duly notes:

Hesiod says that Prometheus was bound and the eagle was let loose upon him because of his theft of fire. But Douris says that this happened because of his passion [*èrasthênai*] for Athena. For this reason those dwelling in the region of the Caucasus refuse to sacrifice to Zeus and Athena alone, because they were the cause of the punishment of Prometheus, but extravagantly worship Heracles on account of his shooting the eagle with his bow. (Okin, 1974, p. 152)

The most significant feature of this highly singular version of the Promethean *mūthos* is, of course, its unprecedented claim: that Prometheus was punished for his passion [*èrasthênai*] for Athena, rather than for his theft of fire. The word the scholiast attributes to Douris' description of the passion of Prometheus – *èrasthênai* – is cognate with *ëros*, it being based on the root word *ëramai*. The various verbal constructs that employ *ëramai* as a base generally describe an eager desire for something (cf. *Iliad* 2.149), and in particular the lust of a man's sexual passion (cf. *Iliad* 3.446, 16.182, 20.223).

Douris' characterisation of Prometheus as having lusted for Athena is corroborated by linguistic evidence, as one of the original shades of meaning attributed to the Indo-European root word upon which the appellative of Prometheus was formed – *\*māth<sub>2</sub>* – is 'to rape'. One of the attributes of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus – as derived from the meaning imputed by Kuhn to its reconstructed appellative, *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>eū* – would therefore literally be: 'one who loves to rape'. But is this linguistic evidence purely circumstantial? In order to judge the veracity of this accusation against Prometheus – that he was punished for his lust for Athena rather than his love of humankind – several pieces of corroborating evidence need to be more closely examined. The first is a (re-)appraisal of the status of the writings of Douris of Samos, as scholars, both ancient and modern, have often called his veracity and reputation as an historian into question. With respect to establishing the veracity of Douris' Promethean *mūthos*, this task of re-appraisal is aided by corroborating evidence found in reports from the Hindu Kush by Alexander the Great's generals, as well as aspects of Vedic religion and mythology. A second

batch of evidence that needs to be examined is the significance of several parallels to elements of the Promethean *mūthos* preserved elsewhere in Greek mythology, including: Hephaestus' attempted rape of Athena, and Homer's description of Zeus' punishment of Tityos. With these tasks completed, the seemingly incredible accusation made by Douris – that Prometheus was not punished for his theft of fire, but rather because he harboured a forbidden lust for Athena – may be corroborated so as to render a more just verdict.

### 3. The Reputation of Douris

Douris of Samos (c.350-after 281 BCE) was an historian, mythographer, and, for a time, tyrant of Samos. He was also possibly a student of Theophrastus at Aristotle's Lyceum, along with his brother, Lynceus, who certainly was (Athenaeus, 128a).<sup>24</sup> The reputation of Douris and his writings have widely fluctuated over the centuries. He is guardedly praised as "industrious" by Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* 6.1); more often than not, though, ancient authors condemn him for his exaggerated style and historical unreliability (Plutarch, *Lives*: Alcibiades 32, Demosthenes 23, Eumenes 1; Dionysius, *On Composition* 4; Photius, *Library* 176). Douris is also sometimes criticised as an exemplar of what is termed "tragic history" (Grant, 1970, p. 142); a scholarly style fashionable in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, whereby stories of past events were embellished with dramatic cues derived from Greek theatre so as to assist the reader's understanding, particularly with respect to arriving at the proper moral conclusion.

Some modern reappraisals of Douris, though, have been considerably more favourable toward his work. Okin, for one, finds persuasive evidence that he was highly rational and methodical in terms of how he went about gathering, assessing and ordering the variants of particular *mūthoi*; a reflection, perhaps, of his Peripatetic training. In particular instances, in fact, Douris may be seen to have gone to considerable lengths to collect all the existing variants of a particular *mūthos*, and then to have closely analysed them with an eye to determining which versions were the most authentic and original (Okin, 1974, pp. 164-5). While Douris may have incorporated tragic elements into his composition of history, then, he also seems to have incorporated historical methodologies into his practice of mythography. He also seems to have held true to this rigorous methodology in his treatment of the Prometheus *mūthos*, as evinced by Fragment 19, quoted above, from the scholiast's comments on the *Argonautica*. For, as Okin states: "Although Douris is our only source for this variant, it is doubtful that he invented it." (1974, p. 154) Rather, he likely examined all the source texts available, and then attempted to square them against the most up to date information available to him from other sources.

As a student at the Lyceum, Douris would have had access to its extensive library, established by Aristotle with the magnificent patronage of Alexander the Great. Even if it was only his brother who attended the Lyceum, though, as some scholars believe, this would still have provided Douris at least indirect access to the extraordinary resources of this library and

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Athenaeus 100e, and *Suida* s.v. Lynkeus, where only Lynceus is mentioned as a pupil of Theophrastus.

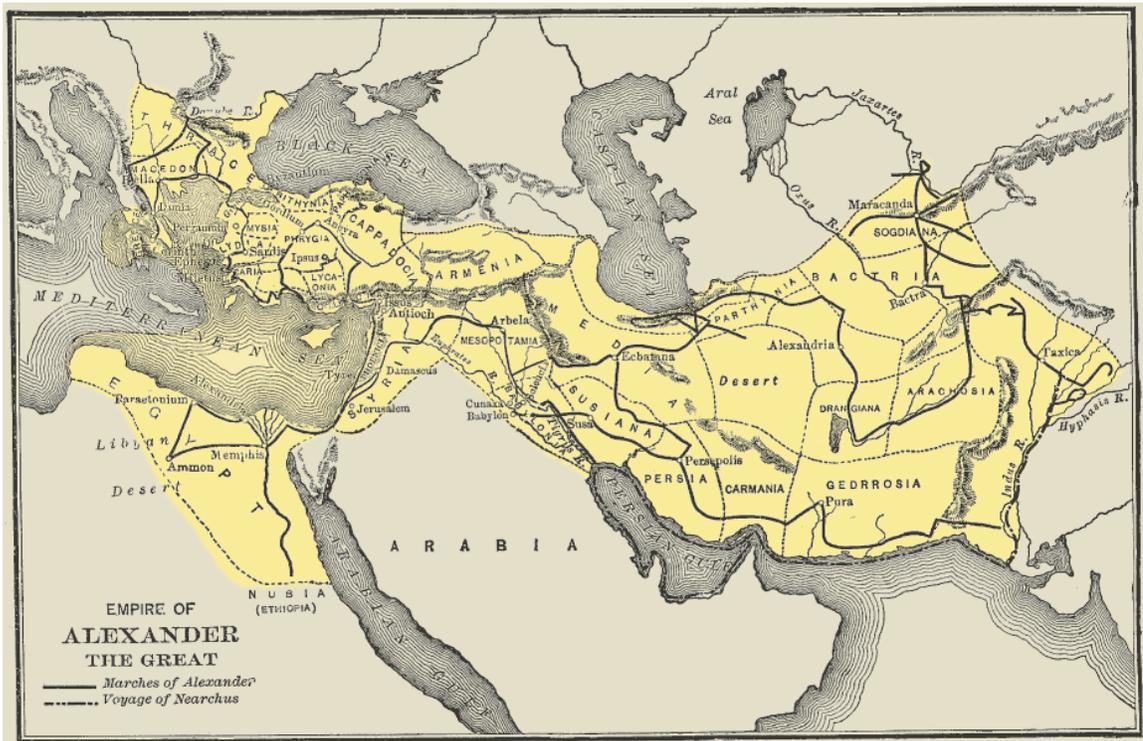
museum. During his time as the tyrant of Samos, Douris would also have had unimpeded access to the exemplary library of that island, located off the south-east coast of Asia minor, near Miletus. The Samian library was one of the earliest great libraries of the Greek world; built by Polycrates during his magnanimous reign as tyrant (c.538 to 522 BCE), when Samos reached its historical apogee in terms of military power and cultural influence. Polycrates also provided support for many other aspects of the arts and sciences, and was a notable patron of the poets Anacreon and Ibycus. The Samian library would thus have been an extremely valuable scholarly resource in Douris' time, particularly for researching more archaic texts and early variants of *mūthoi*. From these considerations, we may conclude that Douris was likely very conscientious in his selection of the particular version of the Prometheus *mūthos* that he included in his mythographical works; picking what he believed to be the most original account from the vast array of variants that would have been available to him.

#### 4. Reports of Alexander's Generals

A critical factor that Douris would most certainly have taken into account in his appraisal of source texts relating to the Promethean *mūthos*, would have been the reports then filtering back to Greece regarding Alexander's military exploits in the east. In his history of Alexander's *anabasis*, or march up country, the Roman (though of Greek ethnicity) historian, Arrian of Nicomedia (c.86-after 146 CE), relays a report presented by the great Alexandrian scholar, Eratosthenes of Cyrene (c.276-c.195 BCE), on Alexander's alleged journey to the location where Prometheus was reputedly punished. Best known today as the physicist who deduced the radius of the earth to a remarkable degree of accuracy, based on the differing angles of the noon-day sun at different latitudes, Eratosthenes was a noted scholar at The Great Library in Alexandria who also researched the descriptions that Alexander's fellow-campaigners brought back of their travels in the east. In one of these reports, they described having been shown a cave by the Parapamisadae that, according to local legend, was:

Prometheus' cave, where he had been chained, and that it was there that the eagle used to go, to feed on Prometheus' liver, and that Heracles, arriving at this same spot, killed the eagle [*aetòn*] and released Prometheus from his chains; (Arrian, 1983, p. 5.3.2)

Illustration 8 - The Empire of Alexander the Great



"Parapamisadae" was an ancient Greek name for a collection of peoples who inhabited a region of the Hindu-Kush, and that was later used as a toponym for the area they inhabited.

Paropamisus was located in what is now east-central Afghanistan, in the regions surrounding the modern-day cities of Kabul and Bagram, the latter of which was the primary city of the region in Alexander's time. After it was captured by the Macedonian army in the 320s, it was renamed 'Alexandria of the Caucasus' and made the regional capital of his empire in the far east. Alexander's associates also reported that, upon reaching India itself, they saw cattle branded with the symbol of a club, from which they deduced that Heracles had also reached this part of the world. In relaying these reports, Arrian also notes their skeptical appraisal by Eratosthenes, "who says that all the Macedonians ascribe to the divine influence was magnified in this way to please Alexander." (Ibid.) Arrian, for his part, states that, as far as he's concerned, "the stories about these things must rest open." (Ibid.)

Douris is known to have written one of the definitive histories of Macedonia, documenting the period between the battle of Leuctra in 371 BCE, to the death, in 281 BCE, of Lysimachus, Alexander's successor in Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor. It is therefore a near certainty that he was intimately familiar with the reports of Alexander's associates on their adventures in the east, later relayed by Eratosthenes. Indeed, it seems likely that Eratosthenes derived his information on this matter from Douris' work itself. Arrian/Eratosthenes' report of Alexander's army coming across a people who knew of Prometheus and dwelt in a mountain range that the Greeks then believed contiguous with the Caucasus, and another people in India who worshipped Heracles, would thus have provided Douris with corroborating evidence for the veracity of his particular variant of the Promethean *mūthos*, whereby Prometheus was punished by Zeus for attempting to violate Athena, rather than his theft of fire.

## 5. Parallels Between Greek and Vedic Mythology and Religion

Given the advances made by Western scholarship in deciphering Old Sanskrit over the past two centuries, it is now possible to seriously re-evaluate Eratosthenes' judgement as to whether or not the reports of Alexander's generals were specious, particularly with regard to their divine elements, which he claims were magnified either to please Alexander or preserve the memory of his deeds. In particular, it is now possible to corroborate the generals' reports of Alexander's journey to the cave of Prometheus and the religious beliefs of the Parapamisadae against the source texts that largely informed the religious practices and beliefs of ancient India during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The *Rig-Veda* contains many significant parallels to ancient Greek religion and mythology, as well as many instructive points of departure. In particular, it contains linguistic and/or symbolic parallels to all the major figures in the Promethean *mūthos* mentioned by both Douris and Arrian, including: Zeus, Heracles, Athena and Prometheus.

As previously discussed, the closest mythic parallel to Prometheus in Vedic mythology is Mātariśvan. There is also a Vedic god – *Dyaus Pitar* – whose name bears a direct and incontestable etymological relation to *Zeús Pater*. In fact, the *Zeús / Dyaus* formulation is often held up as an exemplar for the validity of drawing etymological relations between the various deities worshipped by people who spoke a language within the Indo-European family. As Burkert notes: "Zeus is the only name of a Greek god which is entirely transparent etymologically, and which indeed has long been paraded as a model case in Indo-European philology." (1985, p. 125)<sup>25</sup> The similarities between *Zeús* and *Dyaus* would seem to end at their names, though, for whereas Zeus is considered the all powerful king of the gods in Greek mythology, *Dyaus Pitar* is considered a relatively minor god in Vedic mythology, with no *suktas* addressed to him in the *Rig-Veda*. He is mentioned there 34 times,<sup>26</sup> though, and appears as the elemental day-lit sky and primordial father. *Dyaus Pitar* is also sometimes mentioned in conjunction with the earth-mother, *Prthivi Mater* (RV 6.50.13, 10.36.2, 10.65.7). By the time the *Rig-Veda* was being written down, though, during the Indo-Iranian period (1700-1100 BCE),

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. (Müller, Selected Essays on Language Mythology and Religion, Vol. I, 1881, pp. 215-219) (Cox, 1870, pp. 173-4) (Müller F. M., Natural Religion, 1889, p. 462) (Brown, 1898, pp. 18-19) (Lang, Myth, Ritual and Religion, 1887, pp. 190-2) (Watkins, How to Kill a Dragon - Aspects of Indo-European Poetics, 1995) (West M. L., Indo-European Poetry and Myth, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> *Dyaus Pater* is named in the following *suktas* of the *Rig-Veda*: 1.54.3, 1.122.1, 1.129.3, 1.131.1, 1.136.6, 3.25.1, 4.1.10, 4.17.4, 4.21.1, 5.41.4, 5.58.6, 5.59.8, 6.2.4, 6.12.2, 6.20.2, 6.50.13, 7.84.2, 8.20.17, 8.34.1,2,3,4&14, 8.89.12, 10.36.2, 10.44.8, 10.45.4&8, 10.46.9, 10.61.4, 10.63.3, 10.65.7, 10.67.2&3, & 10.132.1.

*Dyaus Pitar* and *Prthivi Mater* had already been succeeded by their descendents, most notably, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni and Soma (Organ, 1974, p. 66).

With respect to Heracles, no linguistic parallels have been drawn to comparable figures in the Vedic mythology. However, so many distinctive mythological parallels may be drawn between Heracles and Indra, the single most frequently addressed god in the *Rig-Veda*, that the existence of a cognate Indo-European hero/god figure is virtually a foregone conclusion. Burkert, for one, has positively identified the core story of Heracles with the Neolithic hunter culture and traditions of shamanistic crossings into the netherworld (1985, pp. 208-212); these being the same traditions from which Indra derives. In the *Rig-Veda*, Indra is the god of supreme power who gathers the storm cloud and wields a lightning bolt (*RV* 1.32), and who is thus more often compared with the Greek figure of *Zeús*. In terms of his character and deeds, though, Indra more closely fits the archetype of the heroic warrior, with all his virtues and faults, and in this respect more closely parallels the figure of Heracles. Indra is also sometimes named as the son of *Dyaus* (*RV* 4.17.4, 10.120.1), for instance, just as Heracles is named the son of *Zeús*. Indra's primary weapon is the lightning bolt, called *vajra* or *vadhá* in Sanskrit, translatable as 'smasher' or 'killer,' which is compared to a club (cf. *Rig Veda* 1.63.5 [trans. Griffith, 2008]; Rjabchikov, 2004), the iconic weapon of Heracles. Indra also undertakes the performance of many heroic deeds, including slaying the dragon, Vritra (*RV* 6.20.2), and freeing the cattle hidden by the Panis (*RV* 1.32, 10.108). These actions are comparable with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> labours of Heracles: killing the Lernaean Hydra, and capturing the Cattle of Geryon (Apollodorus 2.5.1-2.5.12). Both Heracles and Indra also kill members of their own family while temporarily out of their mind: Indra kills his father after drinking too much Soma (*RV* 4.18.12), while Heracles kills his family after he succumbs to a madness induced by Hera.

With respect to Athena, the parallels to figures in Vedic mythology are considerably more controversial. One of Max Müller's favourite etymological parallels is the one he draws between Athena and the Vedic *Ahanâ* – one of the deities representing the dawn, or *ushas* – the etymological foundations for which he argues are impeccable (cf. 1856, pp. 56-7; 1889, pp. 435-6; 1897, pp. 726-8). As one of the more prominent supporters of his *Ahanâ*/Athena formulation writes: "The name *Athênê* is practically a transliteration of the Vedic *Ahanâ*, the morning, which in a cognate form appears as *Dahanâ*, the Greek *Daphnê*." (Cox, 1870, p. 248) In addition to its allegedly impeccable etymological pedigree, this formulation also has the benefit of illuminating one of the more bizarre and mysterious stories in Greek mythology; namely, Athena's birth from

out of Zeus' head, which is split open by an axe-wielding midwife who is alternatively identified as either Hephaestus (Pindar, *Olympian* 31-44) or Prometheus (Sophocles, *Ion* 455).<sup>27</sup> It is much easier to imagine the basis for this rather bizarre scenario if Athena is understood to be a beautiful red dawn born from out of the head of Zeus, understood as the day-lit sky. Likely due to the compelling way in which Müller's formulation lent meaning to this particularly puzzling Greek *mūthos*, it was widely endorsed by scholars at the time, such as Brown (1878, p. 333) and Fiske (1898, p. 20). As Müller himself admits, though, this formulation rests on only a single occurrence of *Ahanâ* in the *Rig-Veda* (1.123.4). Because of this rather narrow etymological base, the *Ahanâ*=Athena formulation (along with several others made by Müller) was singled out for attack by his opponents, such as Lang (1887; 1897, pp. 107-8), and was eventually discredited. As Farnell definitively notes, "many old religious etymological equations, such as *Oúranós* = Sanskrit Varuna, '*Ermês* = Saraneyās, Athena = Ahana, were uncritically made and have [since] been abandoned." (1911, p. 528)

The parallels between the relevant figures in Greek and Vedic mythology and religion lend considerable credence to the particular variant of the Promethean *mūthos* related by Douris: that "those dwelling in the region of the Caucasus refuse to sacrifice to Zeus and Athena alone, because they were the cause of the punishment of Prometheus, but extravagantly worship Heracles on account of his shooting the eagle with his bow." This observation is perfectly in line with the fact that Vedic texts extravagantly emulate Indra – the closest Vedic analogue to Heracles – as the greatest of the gods, while *Dyaus Pitar* and *Ahanâ* are relegated to relatively minor status in the *Rig-Veda*.<sup>28</sup> This high degree of correspondence between Vedic mythology and Douris' description of the religious views of those dwelling in "the Caucasus" lends credence to his assertion that, in the original version of the Promethean *mūthos*, Prometheus was punished, not for his theft of fire, but rather for his passion for Athena. Furthermore, Douris' singular version of the Promethean *mūthos* corresponds remarkably well with the lustful nature of the original Indo-European proto-Prometheus, as revealed by the etymology of his name.

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<sup>27</sup> This is one of the more famous instances where Prometheus and Hephaestus appear as mere doublets of one another, being thus considered more or less co-equal in function.

<sup>28</sup> Note that this observation holds true even if Müller's Athena=Ahana formulation is assumed to be based on a 'false etymology', as the folk etymologies devised by Greeks travelling in the Caucasus would likely have arrived at similar formulations based on mere phonetic resemblance and mythological parallels.

## 6. The Tityos Parallel in Homer

The punishment of Prometheus in Hesiod has a significant parallel to that of Tityos in Homer's *Odyssey*. This parallel not only points to Prometheus having been originally punished for his lust, rather than for his theft of fire; it also points to the

likelihood of an Indo-European origin for this element of the

*mūthos*, given the very different histories of the poetic traditions within which each story occurs. As discussed above, the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* was most likely preserved by the Dorians, who brought it with them during their migration to the Greek peninsula during the Greek Dark Age (1200-800 BCE). The Homeric poetic tradition, by contrast, is Ionian in origin, and traces its roots through the Mycenaeans to the original 'proto-Greeks' who migrated to and settled in the Greek peninsula sometime during the 24<sup>th</sup> century BCE (West M. L., 2007, p. 8). If the punishment motifs of the Prometheus and Tityos *mūthoi* are, indeed, cognate, the common mythic source from which they each derive would therefore also have to predate that period, when the Greek language family first split into what would eventually become the Doric and Ionic dialects.

At the opening of Hesiod's Promethean *mūthos* in *Theogony*, a long-winged eagle [*tanýpteron aietòn*] is said to have gnawed at Prometheus' liver [*êpar*] (523). In the *Odyssey*, by comparison, Zeus is described as having punished "Tityos, son of glorious Earth [*Gaiês êrikuéos*]", by having two "vultures [*gýpe*]" tear out his liver (11.576-581). Aside from the highly

Illustration 9



*Tityos* (1632) oil on canvas by José de Ribera (1591-1652)  
Source: Museo Nacional Del Prado [www.museodelprado.es](http://www.museodelprado.es)

unique aspects of their punishment, there are several other significant parallels between Tityos and Prometheus that also point to them being cognate mythic figures. Homer's description of Tityos, as the son of "glorious" Earth, for instance, echoes Hesiod's similar description of one of Prometheus' brothers, Menoitios, as "ultra-glorious [*hyperkýdanta*]" (*Theogony* 510). Whereas Prometheus is allegedly punished by Zeus for having stolen fire, though, Tityos is punished for having "violated [*ἔλκεσε*]" Leto, the honoured consort of Zeus and mother of Apollo. As Pease observes: "Most

scholars agree that the punishment of Tityos is made poetically appropriate to his offence" (1925, p. 277). In other words, Zeus specifically moulds Tityos' punishment to fit the nature of his crime, as the ancient Greeks considered the liver to be the seat of lust or passion. Pease then goes on to argue, though, that "Prometheus was surely not punished for any such passion, and that the transference to him of a penalty suitable to Tityos would seem highly inappropriate." (*Ibid.*) To reconcile this seeming incongruity with the nature of Prometheus, Pease constructs an elaborate theory positing that the Greeks originally considered the liver to be the seat of the soul, and only later as the seat of lust. Working from this assumption, he then argues that Prometheus was not punished for a crime of passion. Rather:

the crime of Prometheus lay in the misuse of that intelligence to which his very name bears witness, and the story of the torture of his liver must, I believe, have arisen at an epoch when that organ was the seat of intelligence. The Tityos story, on the other hand, would have meant nothing at a time when the liver symbolized intelligence but everything at an age when it was held to be the seat of passion. (1925, p. 278)

From this line of reasoning, Pease concludes that Hesiod's composition of the Prometheus *mūthos* should be dated much earlier than the Tityos episode in Homer, and that Prometheus was punished for the misuse of his intelligence, not lust.

#### Illustration 10



*The Rape of Leto by Tityos* (c.515 BCE)  
Amphora painted by Phintias (fl.525-510 BCE)  
Tityos abducts Leto while Apollo, to left, and Artemis, to right, move to prevent him.  
Source: Louvre Museum [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)  
via Wikimedia Commons

Despite West's tentative endorsement of Pease's argument (1996, pp. 313-4), its claim that the liver was not considered the seat of passion until Aeschylus is unpersuasive for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the lack of adequate textual evidence in support of his theory. Furthermore, as discussed above, Hesiod's life is now thought to have been more or less contemporary with the date of 'composition' for the bulk of the Homeric poems. If it is accepted that Zeus justly crafted Tityos' punishment to fit the crime of lust, therefore, then the idea must also be entertained that the punishment of Prometheus was likewise just. As it happens, corroborating evidence for the lust of Prometheus for Athena may be found in *mūthoi* regarding his mythic doublet, Hephaestus.

## 7. Hephaestus' Attempted Rape of Athena

Perhaps the single most extenuating factor indicting Prometheus for his excessive passion for Athena is his close relationship to Hephaestus, the Greek god of fire, which often approaches an identity. In several instances in Greek mythology, Prometheus and Hephaestus are interchangeable, in a manner similar to Mātariśvan and Agni, the Vedic god of fire. This is significant, given the several accounts in Greek *mūthos* of Hephaestus' attempt to rape Athena, most notably in Apollodorus (3.188) and Pausanias (3.18.13). In the most detailed version, related by Apollodorus, Athena visited

Hephaestus in his workshop to present a request for him to make some weapons. Hephaestus was so overcome with desire for the lovely virgin, though, that he clumsily tried to seduce her. Athena successfully fended him off, but not before Hephaestus had ejaculated on her leg. In disgust, she wiped the semen off with a piece of wool and threw it to the ground. There, it grew inside Gaia, who subsequently gave birth to a son who was half man and half serpent. She gave him to Athena, who named him Erichthonius, which means 'troubles born of the earth'. Erichthonius later went on to expel Amphictyon from Athens and usurp the kingship of the city from him. As the new king of Athens, he instituted the Panathenaea festival, and built a temple to Athena on the acropolis. Erichthonius is also said to have adjudicated in the dispute between Athena and Poseidon over the possession of Attica, ruling in favour of his mother.

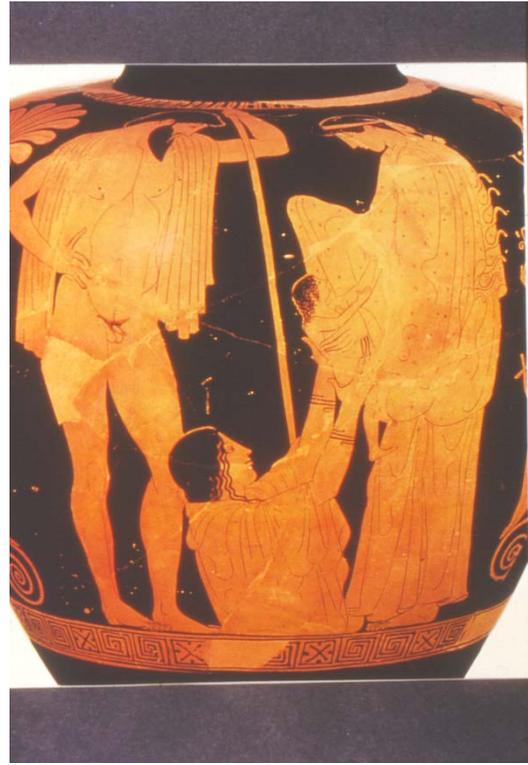
**Illustration 11**



*Athena Scorning the Advances of Hephaestus* (c.1555-60)  
Oil on canvas by Paris Bordone (1500-1571)  
From University of Missouri Museum of Art and Technology:  
<http://maa.missouri.edu>

All told, then, there are ample reasons for regarding the particular variant of the Promethean *mūthos* preserved by Douris of Samos, highlighting the excessive passion of Prometheus for Athena, as a more authentic, archaic version of it, and more representative of its original Indo-European form. To recap: the reputation and authority of Douris as an historian and a mythographer has been substantially rehabilitated and elevated by the recent work of scholars such as Okin. Douris likely corroborated his singular variant of the Promethean *mūthos*, culled from his easy access to the greatest libraries of his day, against reports of the religious views of people living in the 'Caucasus,' brought back by Alexander's generals who served in the Hindu Kush. Arrian's description of those religious views, although employing close Greek mythic parallels, aligns almost perfectly with what is now known of the Vedic mythology and religion of his time. The motif of having a bird eat one's liver as punishment for the crime of lust also has a significant parallel in Homer, in the story of Tityos, who was punished by Zeus for violating Leto. And finally, Hephaestus, who is closely associated with Prometheus in Greek mythology, even to the point of identity, is described in several accounts as having attempted to rape Athena. Combine these mythographical factors with the linguistic evidence, with one inflection of *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey* in Indo-European literally meaning 'one who loves to rape,' and the verdict regarding the charge against Prometheus for the crime of lusting after Athena has to be: guilty, guilty, guilty!

## Illustration 12



*The Birth of Erichthonios* (c.470-60 BCE)  
Gaia hands Erichthonios to Athena, while  
Hephaestus stands to the left.  
Side A of an Attic red-figure stamnos  
Source: University of Georgia  
Dept. of Classics: [www.classics.uga.edu](http://www.classics.uga.edu)

## F. The Indo-European Proto-Prometheus Recovered

In this paper, the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* has been closely examined and compared with elements of Vedic mythology with an eye to answering two questions. First of all, which elements of the Promethean *mūthos*, if any, are demonstrably Indo-European in origin? And second, is the mythic element of ritual of sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings also identifiably Indo-European? As has been discerned from this investigation, the core elements of the Promethean *mūthos* – namely, the deceptive sacrifice at Mekone, the withholding of fire by Zeus, and the theft of fire – are, indeed, identifiably Indo-European in origin, given their close parallels to the actions of Mātariśvan in the *Rig Veda*. Prometheus' initiation of the ritual of sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings at Mekone has close mythic parallels in the *Rig-Veda*, where Mātariśvan performs a very similar function as the envoy of Vivasvan. Anthropological analysis of the fire-stealing element, furthermore, reveals that Zeus withholding fire and Prometheus stealing back it in *Theogony* is likely a mytho-poetic representation of a fundamental transition that was understood to have occurred in man's historical relationship to fire: from the tenuous possession of god-given, naturally-occurring fire, to the secure possession of the knowledge of how to artificially generate it; a view corroborated, furthermore, by the interpretation of Epimenides.<sup>29</sup> Again, Mātariśvan performs a very similar role in the *Rig-Veda*, in terms of teaching men the technique of making fire by vigorously rubbing wood together. Furthermore, linguistic evidence also supports the view that Prometheus and Mātariśvan are genetically related. As was shown above, the name for Prometheus was originally constructed from the Indo-European root word *\*māth<sub>2</sub>*, which originally meant not only 'to rub,' but also 'to rape,' or 'to rob by snatching away.' These and related considerations point to the negotiations at Mekone, the withholding of fire and its theft, as being essentially Indo-European in origin.

Elements in the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* whose Indo-European origins are likely, though somewhat less certain, on the other hand, include the creation of Woman and the punishment of Prometheus. The creation of Woman *mūthos* in *Theogony* (571-602) is likely of Indo-European origin, given the implication of sexual lust in the very word formation upon which the appellative Prometheus is based, one of the inflections of the root of which – *\*māth<sub>2</sub>*

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<sup>29</sup> The role of being the first one to teach men the means of how to generate fire is also performed, in Doric *mūthos*, by Phoroneus, the primordial founding King of Argos, who likely inherited this trait from the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus.

– means to rape. It is also supported by Douris' description of the Prometheus' lust for Athena (Fragment #19), as well as the attempted rape of her by his doublet, Hephaestus. The Indo-European provenance of Douris' version of the Promethean *mūthos* is also corroborated by the reports of Alexander's generals, who reported a very similar version of it preserved in India. Given this background, the creation of Woman by Hephaestus and Athena in *Theogony* may be tentatively identified as Indo-European in origin, and symbolising not only the coming-to-be of an object of lust, but also of the more feminine aspects of human social existence, including the institutions of the hearth, marriage, family and household.

Some other elements of the Promethean *mūthos*, such as the punishment of Prometheus, are also likely of Indo-European origin, though not to the same degree of certainty as other elements, given the lack of close parallels in Vedic mythology. The particular nature of the punishment of Prometheus, though – by having a large bird eat his liver – shows indications of deriving from Indo-European sources, given its close parallel to the punishment of Tityos for the rape of Leto in the Ionian poetic tradition maintained by the *Homerídai*, in combination with the likely Doric origin of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos*. The Doric provenance of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* is evinced by the fact that the Doric dialect's appellative *Promatheías* is closer to the reconstructed archaic Greek non-appellative version of the word, *\*promāthês*. As well, virtually every archaic Greek writer who mentions Prometheus is either Dorian or may be seen to have been deeply influenced by Doric culture. Given these parallels, it may be plausibly hypothesised that the Proto-Greeks, from which the Doric and Ionic poetic traditions derived, likely had a proto-Promethean *mūthos* in which Prometheus was punished for his lust for Athena by being bound and having a large predatory bird eat his liver. The lack of any explicit mention of Prometheus in Homer, on the other hand, would seem to indicate that the core Indo-European elements of the Promethean *mūthos* were (re-)absorbed into Ionic Greek mythology only after the Dorian migration into Greece, sometime between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Evidence is somewhat weaker for assigning an Indo-European provenance to Heracles killing the Bird that tormented Prometheus, and the abatement of Zeus' anger. Given the Ionian parallels to the punishment of Prometheus, and the lack of parallels in other mythic traditions, though, it is the only plausible scenario that suggests itself. Overall, the points of mythic correspondence between *Mātariśvan* and *Promêtheús*, as uncovered by the investigations of this paper, are illustrated in Table VI.

<b>Table VI – Mythographic &amp; Linguistic Correspondences Between <i>Mātariśvan</i> and <i>Promêtheús</i></b>		
<b><i>Mātariśvan</i></b>		<b><i>Promêtheús</i></b>
Synonymous with Agni, Vedic god of fire	Yes	Synonymous with Hephaestus, Greek god of fire
Assists in establishing ritual of sacrificing burnt offerings to the gods	Yes	Initiates ritual of sacrificing burnt offerings to the gods at Mekone
Brings fire from the Gods as a messenger	Analogous	Steals fire from the Gods as a thief
Kindles fire by friction	Yes	- * <i>ma(n)th</i> as rubbing/drilling - Epimenides' interpretation
- Establishes prosperity - 'Mother in whom fire swells'	Reciprocal	Power of fire provokes divine creation of the evil of woman
Alexander's General's reports of <i>mūthoi</i> of Parapamisadae	Likely	Punished by Zeus: Bound in fetters, Liver eaten by bird

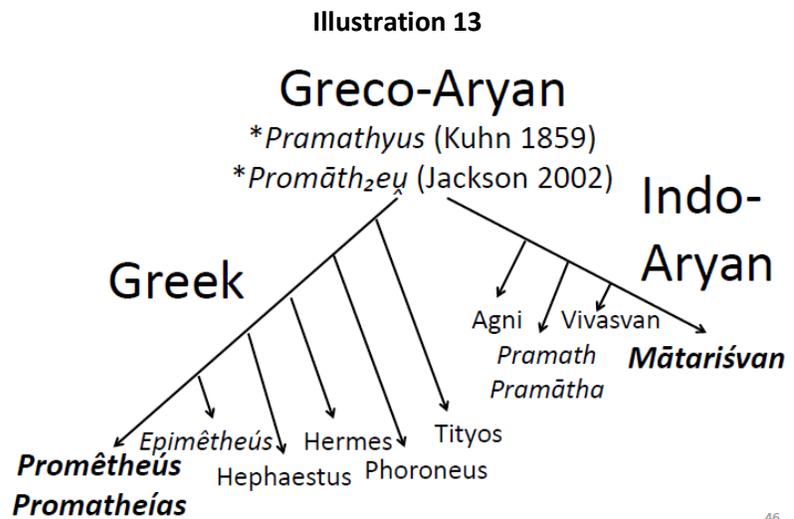
While the core elements of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* has been determined to be essentially Indo-European in origin, it also bears definite signs of later accretions ultimately derived from Chthonic and Semitic/Sumerian sources. While the creation of Woman in *Theogony* is likely of Indo-European origin, for instance, the parallel Pandora *mūthos* in *Works & Days* (53-105), culminating in Pandora opening the jar and releasing the evils that afflict men into the world, is likely Chthonic in nature, and was most likely derived from the *mūthos* of a Chthonic ghost cult of Ge, or Mother Earth, maintained by the Pelasgians, who considered themselves the autochthonic population of Attica, and whose habitation of the Greek peninsula pre-dates the arrival of the Proto-Greeks in the 24<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The genealogy of Prometheus in *Theogony* (507-520), on the other hand, bears unmistakable signs of Semitic influence. This influence may be seen, for instance, in the name of his father, Iapetos, who may well be etymologically cognate with Japheth, the youngest son of Noah in Genesis of the *Old Testament*. It may also be seen in the name of his brother, Atlas, who is also mentioned in the *Phoenician History of Sanchuniathon*. Zeus (God) giving Man the curse of mortality (*Theogony* 602-616), in addition to the evil of Woman, on the other hand, has associations with all the above traditions, so a definitive determination of its origin is not possible, given the current state of knowledge of the source materials.

Semitic elements may also be discerned in the *mūthoi* that bracket the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* as presented in *Theogony* and *Works & Days*. In *Theogony*, it is prefaced by the succession *mūthos* of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus (126-210, 453-506), which was probably absorbed into Greek mythology from Hittite/Hurrian sources during the Mycenaean Age (c.1900-c.1100 BCE) and/or Phoenician sources during the Dark Age of Greece (c.1200-c.800 BCE). The

adamant sickle that Kronos employs to castrate Ouranos, on the other hand, would seem to reflect the influence of the Pelasgian god of agriculture, thus betraying distinct traces of Chthonic influence. The Five Ages of Man that immediately follows the Promethean *mūthos* in *Works & Days* (109-201), finally, most likely derives from Mesopotamian mythology (West, 1996, pp. 172-177), and is thus also Semitic in origin. What appears to have happened, then, is that the Promethean *mūthos* was absorbed wholesale into a larger, primarily Semitic-influenced mythic context, but that its core Indo-European elements – the deceptive sacrifice, the theft of fire, the creation of woman, the punishment of Prometheus – remained essentially intact.

Having positively identified the Indo-European core of the Promethean *mūthos*, it should now be possible to plausibly advance a reasonable hypothesis as to what the original, proto-Promethean mythic figure might have looked like and when he might have first arisen. This Indo-European proto-Prometheus – whose name Jackson (2002) reconstructs as *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey*, employing the current conventions of linguistic notation – would have been something of a blend of Prometheus, Hermes, Hephaestus, Phoroneus and Epimetheus: passionate, clever, inquisitive, inventive, transgressive and occasionally somewhat hapless; a combination of ritual fire-starter, divine messenger, craftsman, thief and trickster; a stone-age fire-priest who lusted

after the beautiful red light emanating from the crack of Dawn, and thereby brought down upon himself the punishment of her Father, the Day-lit Sky. In terms of when this proto-Prometheus might have first arisen: given the genetic relationship between the Hesiodic



Prometheus and the Vedic Mātariśvan, it would have to pre-date the separation of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan c.2500 BCE. This is a particularly interesting historical period, as it occurs soon after the beginning of the European Bronze Age (c.3000 BCE), an event likely facilitated by the importation of metal alloy making techniques by migrating Indo-European tribes travelling from their original homeland, in the steppes north of the Caucasus mountains, to Western Europe.

The earliest conceivable date for the Indo-European proto-Prometheus, on the other hand, is limited, in one respect, by the earliest date at which humankind is known to have possessed the ability to generate fire. That advance is such an exceedingly remote event in human history, though, that it likely accounts for the ubiquity and relative consistency of fire *mūthoi* in virtually all human cultures (Frazer, 1930). The earliest archeological evidence for the "controlled use of fire" comes from the discovery of what are thought to have been pre-historic hearths in Gesher Benot Ya'aqov, on the shores of the Dead Sea in present day Israel, which date to nearly 790,000 years ago (Naama Goren-Inbar, 2004).<sup>30</sup> A much later date for the Indo-European proto-Prometheus on the other hand, may be conjectured from the fact that the Hittites lacked a future tense in their language (Anthony, 2007). Given this lack, it may be inferred that the Proto-Indo-European language from which Hittite derived also lacked a future tense, and that this grammatical innovation only came about with the development of Mature Indo-European. As a future orientation or direction of force is one of the primary concepts signified by the Indo-European prefix *\*pro-* (Sanskrit *pra-*, Greek *pro-*, English *fore-*), it seems reasonable to assume that this innovation also post-dates the Hittite split from Proto-Indo-European c.4400 BCE. On the other hand, there is a Proto-Indo-European prefix, *\*p<sup>h</sup>rō*, reconstructed in part from the Hittite phrase *para šiyatar*, translated as 'area left unsown' or 'missed in sowing' (Gamkrelidze & Ivanov, 1995, p. 594), that may have formed the basis for the formation of *\*pro-* in Mature Indo-European. In the absence of more concrete evidence, though, such as the discovery of a Promethean parallel in Hittite mythology, though, the Indo-European *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey* may be tentatively supposed to post-date this split.

The date of the Anatolian language family's split from Proto-Indo-European is historically significant, for it closely coincides with the beginning of what is alternatively known as either the Chalcolithic, Eneolithic, or 'Copper' Age in the Caucasus. The Copper Age was a relatively brief period situated between the end of the European Neolithic Age (late 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE), when the smelting of copper first became widespread in the Middle East and the Caucasus, but before the discovery of how to alloy it with arsenic or tin to make bronze brought about the European Bronze Age, in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. The period between the Copper Age (late 5<sup>th</sup> to late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE) and the separation of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan c.2500 BCE was thus likely the period when the mythic figure of a Neolithic fire priest first bifurcated into his doublets, Hephaestus and *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey*. Hephaestus, the god of blacksmithing, would

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<sup>30</sup> i.e. 640,000 years before the advent of modern Homo Sapiens.

eventually become the primary fire god among the Ionian Greek tribes; Prometheus, on the other hand, retaining most of his original Indo-European features, would become the mythic figure most closely associated with fire among the Dorian tribes, although Phoroneus, the founding King of Argos (Pausanias 2.15ff), assumed the particular element of teaching people the technique for making fire, and some aspects of establishing the ritual of sacrifice (to Hera) within the Doric mythic tradition (Pausanias 2.19.5). In sum, then, the essential contours of the Indo-European proto-Prometheus – \**Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey* – may be tentatively surmised to have arisen sometime after the Hittite separation from Proto-Indo-European (c.4400 BCE) but most certainly before the separation of proto-Greek from Indo-Aryan (c.2500 BCE).

Having identified the specifically Indo-European elements of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos*, I would now like to briefly summarise the cultural origins of its various elements. To this end, all the elements of the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* as it appears in *Theogony* and *Works & Days*, are arranged in Table VII, along with their likely cultural sources and the time-frame for their incorporation:

<b>Table VII – Sources of the Hesiodic Promethean <i>Mūthos</i></b>		
<b>Mythic Element</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Likely Sources &amp; Appr. Dates</b>
1. Prologue – Succession <i>Mūthos</i> of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus ( <i>Theogony</i> )	Semitic & Chthonic	Hittite/Hurrian (pre-12 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE), Phoenician (11 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE) & Pelasgian (pre-23 <sup>rd</sup> c.BCE)
2. Genealogy of Prometheus	Semitic	Hittite/Hurrian (pre-12 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE)
3. Negotiation at Mekone: Initiation of Sacrifice, Deception of Zeus	Indo-Euro	Arising between Hittite split (4400 BCE) and beginning of Euro. Bronze Age (3200 BCE) via Dorians
4. Zeus Angered & Withholds Fire from Men	Indo-Euro	(4400-3200 BCE) via Dorians
5. Prometheus Steals Fire Back	Indo-Euro	(4400-3200 BCE) via Dorians
6. Hephaestus Creates Evil of Woman / Pandora with assistance of Athena	Indo-Euro & Chthonic	Possibly Graeco-Aryan (pre-2500 BCE) with later addition of Pelasgian Pandora after Proto-Greek migration to Greece (post 2300 BCE)
7. Hermes Gives Pandora to Epimetheus	Chthonic	Pelasgian (post-2300 BCE)
8. Pandora Opens Jar, Releases Evil Fates, Retains Hope	Chthonic	Pelasgian (post-2300 BCE)
9. Zeus Gives Men Additional Evil of Mortality	Semitic?	Mesopotamian?
10. Punishment of Prometheus	Indo-Euro	Graeco-Aryan (pre-2500 BCE)
11. Heracles Kills Bird Eating Liver	Indo-Euro	Likely Graeco-Aryan (pre-2500 BCE)
12. Zeus' Anger Abates	Indo-Euro	Likely Graeco-Aryan (pre-2500 BCE)
13. Epilogue – Five Ages of Man ( <i>Works &amp; Days</i> )	Semitic	Mesopotamian (11 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> c.BCE)

From the information summarised in Table VII, the development of the Indo-European Promethean *mūthos* may be traced out as follows. It was initially preserved by Graeco-Aryans then living in the Indo-European homeland, on the steppes of southern Russia. Sometime around 2500 BCE, the Aryan (Indo-Iranian) branch migrated east and south into modern day India and Iran, while the Proto-Greek branch migrated west and south into east-central and southern Europe. One branch of these Proto-Greek tribes reached the Greek peninsula by around 2300 BCE, later to become the Myceneans during the Bronze Age, and who provided the primary cultural inheritance of the Ionians in the poetic tradition preserved by the *Homeridai*. Likely due to its prolonged exposure to Mediterranean culture, many of the original Indo-European mythic elements of Mycenaean culture were diluted, subsumed and/or lost, except for fragmentary remains. Thus, the only surviving remnants of the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus in the Homeric tradition are faint derivatives or echoes of the original, such as Hephaestus and Tityos.

The main features of the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus, as primarily preserved in the Helikonian poetic tradition exemplified by Hesiod, were likely brought to the Greek peninsula by Dorian tribes who migrated there between the 12<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, likely from somewhere in east-central Europe. Most likely due to their previous geographic isolation from the dynamic cultures of the Mediterranean, the Dorians tended to preserve more archaic features of both the Indo-European language and *mūthos*, including their distinct form of the appellative *Promatheías*. As has been shown in this paper, the following elements of the Promethean *mūthos* most likely have Indo-European antecedents: the Negotiation at Mekone, Zeus withholding fire, Prometheus stealing it back for humans, and the punishment of Prometheus. Other elements also likely transmitted by the Dorians include: the Creation of Woman, Heracles freeing Prometheus, and the Abatement of Zeus' anger. Even within the Doric tradition, though, some elements of the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus were either lost or hived off into parallel mythic figures. Some of these lost elements remained preserved in idiosyncratic variations of the *mūthos*, such as the lust of Prometheus for Athena (Douris, Fr. 19), who in some versions is even described as complicit in his crimes (Servius, *On Virgil's Eclogues* 4.42). Elements of the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus hived off into other mythic figures, on the other hand, include aspects of Phoroneus, the mythical founding King of Doric Argos, who taught humans how to generate fire, and initiated the first sacrifice in honour of Hera.

After the Dorians (re-)introduced the Indo-European Proto-Prometheus *mūthos* into the Greek peninsula during the Dark Ages, it began to both absorb mythic elements from local, Chthonic traditions, as well as be absorbed into mythic traditions from Mediterranean cultures that ultimately traced their influence back to Semitic sources. Both these sets of influences are clearly seen in the earliest extant versions of the Promethean *mūthos*, written by Hesiod in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Among the Chthonic influences on the Hesiodic Prometheus are the adamant sickle Kronos wields to castrate Ouranos in the Succession *mūthos* of *Theogony*, and the Pandora *mūthos* in *Works & Days*, both of which likely derive from the agricultural cults of the Chthonic Pelasgian culture. The Semitic derived influences are more legion, and include: the Succession *mūthos* of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus and the genealogy of Prometheus in *Theogony* (aspects of which are paralleled in Mesopotamian, Phoenician and the Semitic-influenced Hittite *mūthoi*), and the Five Ages of Man, most likely derived from Mesopotamian *mūthos*. However, while the Hesiodic Promethean *mūthos* did admit elements of non-Indo-European origin, mostly in terms of providing it a larger mythic context, its core Indo-European features remained largely intact.

What is particularly interesting about the proto-Promethean *mūthos*, as it relates to the larger subject of this paper, though, is what it reveals of the pre-historic development of Indo-European society; or, at the very least, that society's mythological awareness of its own historical development. In particular, the identifiably Indo-European elements of the Promethean *mūthos* may be seen to preserve key pre-historical accounts of the formation of fundamental social institutions including: the family hearth, marriage, the household, and, not least of all, the performance of ritual sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings.<sup>31</sup> Particularly given how the Negotiation at Mekone element is primarily an etiological *mūthos* – i.e. intended to explain why the ritual of sacrificing burnt offerings to the gods exists in the first place – one may reasonably assume that this important religious rite existed among the Graeco-Aryans. As noted above, these essential elements of the Promethean *mūthos* were well preserved by various poetic societies in oral traditions dating back literally thousands of years. The written versions of the primary texts preserved by the *Homerídoi* and the society of poets dedicated to

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<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, employing a mythic tradition that tells of the creation of social institutions in order to create other novel institutions is a pattern followed in subsequent versions of the Promethean *mūthos*, as related by Plato, Bacon and Nietzsche; each of whom tells highly distinctive versions of the Promethean *mūthos* that both preserve and modify its traditional elements in order to present highly novel accounts calling for the creation of new social institutions and/or the dawn of a new social order.

the Helicon Muses to which Hesiod likely belonged, are datable to no earlier than the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, on the basis of linguistic evidence, these societies, and the mytho-poetic traditions they preserved, may be dated at least as far back as the era of Mature Indo-European, during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BCE. This long legacy also implies a relatively high degree of cultural continuity and stability over time, and lends credence to the hypothesis that the ritual of sacrifice to the Gods with burnt offerings was a rite observed by the Greco-Aryans, as well as their antecedents.

## G. The Ritual of Sacrifice to the Gods with Burnt Offerings

If the core elements of the Promethean *mūthos* are accepted as being of Indo-European origin, as has been shown above, and ritual sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings constitutes one of the core elements of that *mūthos*, then the private giving for religious purposes that such rituals pre-suppose may also be posited as having existed among the Graeco-Aryans dating back at least as far as 2500 BCE. This ritual likely dates even further back, to the age of Mature Indo-European unity, given the ubiquitous practice of ritual sacrifice with burnt offerings in the cultures of the Eastern, Western and North branches into which Mature Indo-European split around 2900 BCE. To the end of illuminating the likelihood of the existence of this religious ritual among the Graeco-Aryans, as well as the religious giving that such a practice presupposes, its presence in Vedic and ancient Greek *mūthoi* will be briefly examined here.

As mentioned above, the ritual of sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings is vaguely alluded to in the *Rig Veda*. In a *sukta* dedicated to Agni, Mātariśvan is said to have brought Agni (fire) from far away as the envoy of Vivasvan (6.8.4), elsewhere identified as the first sacrificer (West M. L., 2007, p. 273). Dependent as they are on a large presupposed knowledge of the culture from which it derives, the somewhat vague references in the *Rig Veda* to ritual sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings do not shed much light on the actual practice of this religious ceremony in Vedic society, never mind the social practices of giving that would necessarily have accompanied and informed such a practice. Slightly later Vedic texts, though, do contain more explicit references to the performance of this ceremony. The earliest of these is the *Atharvaveda*, composed c.1000 BCE, where the ceremony is referred to as the Agnihotra (6.97.1). In another hymn of the *Atharvaveda*, the residue of the fire sacrifice is also described in highly revealing terms:

“Faith fire-oblation, fervent zeal, service, and sacrificial cry, Guerdon, good works and their reward, are stored within the Residue.”(11.7.9, trans. Griffith)

In this passage, then, the ritual of sacrifice with burnt offerings is integrally tied to "faith", "zeal", "service" and "good works", pointing to both the motivations that ideally inform the act of providing the sacrificial victim to perform the ceremony, and their reward. In modern Hindu practice, by comparison, the Agnihotra is an ubiquitous feature of Hindu religious ritual, and forms the necessary prelude to nearly every significant occasion, both public and private, but particularly those involving celebratory feasts.

The evidence for religious giving in support of the ritual of sacrifice is much more clear and abundant in ancient Greek sources, particularly in terms of large-scale giving. Indeed, references to ritual sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings on a particularly massive scale occur at both the opening and the close of the *Iliad*. At the beginning of that seminal epic poem, Agamemnon, King of the Achaeans, sends Odysseus with a "holy hecatomb" to present to Chryses for sacrifice to Apollo (1.442), followed by a lavish feast. At the conclusion of the *Iliad*, by comparison, Mariones, a mere attendant to another warrior, defeats Teucer, the greatest archer in the Achaean army, in an archery contest. He is able to do so after Teucer neglects to make a promise a sacrifice to the gods before shooting his arrow, while Mariones promises to sacrifice a "glorious hecatomb" to Apollo (23.864). In both of these cases, the purpose behind the provision of the ritual sacrifice is obvious; namely, to purchase the favour of the gods. In the case of Agamemnon, his sacrificial offering is made in order to obtain the forgiveness of Apollo, who rained down plague on the great king's army in retribution after he abused Chryses, a priest of Apollo. In the case of Teucer, on the other hand, the purpose of his promised sacrifice is to seek the favour of Apollo in granting him victory in a contest. At least as significant as the motivations behind the offering of sacrificial victims, though, is the social purpose such ritual sacrifices performed.

In ancient Greece, an "hecatomb" was a particularly lavish form of public ritual sacrifice that entailed the slaughter of 100 (*ékaton*) cattle. This would have worked out to a monetary value of approximately one talent, or 6,000 drachma. Translating this into more modern equivalents of value, one talent equaled approximately nine man-years of skilled labour. Looked at another way, one hundred cattle would have provided enough meat to feed approximately 100,000 people.<sup>32</sup> As such, the hecatomb sacrifice would have constituted one of the major forms of private provision of public goods, supplying enough meat to feed every person in the *pólis*. This would even have been enough to feed a large portion of the population of Athens, the largest *pólis* in Greece during the Classical age.<sup>33</sup> Given the scarcity of fresh meat in the ancient world generally, the sacrifice of an hecatomb would thus have provided one of the major sources of protein consumption for the poorer segments of Greek society. As well, the established practice in ancient Greece was that the priest who performed a ritual sacrifice involving an animal

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<sup>32</sup> A modern cow yields approximately 550 lbs of beef, which equals 1,100 servings of 8 ozs.

<sup>33</sup> Athens usually had a total citizen population of around 40,000 people, depending on the citizenship laws in place at the time, while the total population of Attica probably numbered around 300,000 people, including citizens, women, metics, servants and slaves.

received its hide. Thus, when Prometheus makes the sacrifice at Mekone, Zeus takes the hide-wrapped offering, inside of which were the bones overlaid with fat that were to be burnt on the ritual pyre, while the edible parts went to the men.

During the Classical age of Athens, both the frequency and size of large-scale sacrifices, and the feasts that followed, noticeably increased. This increase was recognized by the Athenians themselves, in terms of the official designations they gave to these public ceremonies. On the one hand, there were the traditional 'paternal sacrifices' (*pátrioi thusíai*), considered the most ancient rituals, the costs of which were often defrayed by endowments in the form of crop-share rents from sacred lands. On the other hand, during the Classical age 'additional festivals' (*èpithétous èortaīs*) were instituted with even larger sacrifices, often consisting of a hecatomb, and paid for by sponsors. Significantly, a frequent criticism of these later ceremonies was that they were undertaken, not so much to honour the gods, as to feed the political ambitions of their sponsors, who benefitted from the public gratitude and acclaim that such sponsorships brought in their wake.

In conclusion, given the ubiquity of the ritual sacrifice of burnt offerings to the gods in Vedic religion, as well as in both the Doric traditions (as reflected by the Prometheus *mũthos* in Hesiod) and the Ionic traditions (as reflected in Homer), it is reasonable to assume that such ceremonies also formed an integral part of Graeco-Aryan and Indo-European religious practice. As such, it is also reasonable to assume that private giving for such religious purposes was also a common feature of Graeco-Aryan and Indo-European society.

## H. Implications of this Paper's Findings for Other Fields of Study

This paper's findings hold a number of important historical implications regarding the religious beliefs and practices of the Graeco-Aryans, and of Indo-Europeans more generally. To begin with, the Hesiodic *Promêtheús* has been shown, on the basis of the analysis of both linguistic and mythographic evidence, to be cognate with *Mātariśvan* in Vedic mythology, pointing to the existence of an Indo-European Proto-Promethean mythic figure, the appellation of which Jackson (2002) reconstructs as *\*Promāth<sub>2</sub>ey*. The strong correspondence between these two mythic figures, particularly as the mutual founders of the ritual of sacrifice to the gods with burnt offerings, gives credence to the hypothesis that this ritual also played a key role in

### Illustration 14



The oldest human-made religious structure yet discovered (c.9000 BCE) at Göbekli Tepe, Turkey.

the religious rites of the Graeco-Aryans, dating at least as far back as 2500 BCE, and likely to the era of Indo-European unity, prior to 2900 BCE. Furthermore, given the intrinsic link between the performance of the ritual of sacrifice, and the provision of sacrificial victims through the voluntary contributions of individuals as a means of purchasing the favour of the gods, the existence of private religious giving for public purposes may also be posited to have existed among the Graeco-Aryans and Indo-Europeans. As such, the findings of this paper open an important window on the religious rituals and spiritual dimensions of pre-historic Indo-European societies going back more than 5,000 years from the present. These findings thus complement the work of archeologists examining the material culture of pre-historic societies, such as the excavation at Göbekli Tepe, Turkey, of the oldest human-made religious structure yet discovered, dating to c.9000 BCE.

The findings of this paper also hold several important philosophical implications. Most importantly, Nietzsche, following Kuhn, has been shown to be fully justified in viewing the Promethean *mūthos* as essentially Indo-European in character, and even in assigning it the same importance for that cultural tradition as the *mūthos* of the Fall in Genesis has for the Semitic tradition. The Ionic origin of the punishment of Prometheus for the crime of lust also offers insight into his original, Indo-European nature, and corroborates the authenticity of Douris' claim, which Bacon adopts as a centerpiece of his Promethean *mūthos*, that Prometheus was punished, not for his theft of fire, but rather for his passion for Athena. Given the degree to which Bacon identifies with the figure of Prometheus, the recovery of the Indo-European analysis also hints at Bacon's own underlying motivations as a philosopher: as someone who lusts for the wisdom of Athena, described by Burkert as nothing less than "the force of civilization" and "the organizational wisdom which achieves this" (1985, p. 141).

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