

Cigán, Michal

Theoretical background : [introduction part]

In: Cigán, Michal. *Priest-king of the warriors and witch-queen of the others : cargo cult and witch hunt in Indo-European myth and reality*. First published Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2019, pp. 13-14

ISBN 978-80-210-9341-6; ISBN 978-80-210-9342-3 (online : pdf)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/141681>

Access Date: 10. 12. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

Theoretical Background

On the most general level, argumentation in this work is based on knowledge of the common genetic facility of mankind. Around 20,000 years ago in America, 40,000 years ago in Europe, 70,000 years ago in Asia and 200,000 years ago in Africa all the older evolutionary branches of genus *Homo* had started to be eliminated by the species of anatomically modern human (AMH) (Dunbar 2004). For this reason all the world's populations of the last 20.000 years share common physical as well as mental facility.

The commonness of cognitive facilities of AMH is caused by the process of gene and cultural co-evolution of genus *Homo*. During its evolutionary process, successful non-biological, cultural responses to the challenges of environment – invented thanks to the gradually growing mental capacities – were transmitted to the next generations via directly or indirectly corresponding gene mutations. For this reason, basic mental facilities are genetically encoded, inherited and so universally shared within the population of AMH (Boyd & Richerson 1983, Boyd & Richerson 1987, Boyd & Richerson 2008).

The element of chance in conjunction with specific historical and ecological circumstances causes the selective and specific realization of genetically transmitted mental biases. Hence the local cultural traditions of human societies are prone to be formed with relative similarity on a general level though showing variability in details.

One such cultural area, partially unique due to the influence of local conditions and conventionally labeled Proto-Indo-European (PIE), was produced by the prehistoric population of Pontic-Caspian steppes circa in 5000 – 3000 BC. For the same reason, many archaic historical traditions of IE speaking groups can also be considered culturally unique.

Theoretical Background

Product par excellence of any culture is its folklore narrative tradition, especially myths, the set of narrations produced by elites. Therefore also in the mythological texts the occurrence of universally shared biases of AMH, influenced and modified by specific local (historical, ecological) conditions, can be expected. Of course, hypothetical PIE myths or myths of later historical IE traditions do not constitute an exception.