

MYTHOLOGEME AS A UNIVERSAL UNIT OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL WORLD PICTURE

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Abstract

Mythologeme is a shared structural feature of the world view in the myths that conveys archetypal themes and symbolic meaning common to all cultures and throughout history. As a recurring figure, image, or theme of narrative, the mythologeme conveys humanity's overall cognitive and affective experience, which governs how societies think about existence, morality, and cosmology. Although definitions vary among scholars, mythologemes are commonly defined as stable yet elastic signs that survive over time, bridging between old and new narratives. Universality stems from common human experience, psychological archetypes, cultural diffusion, and symbolic descriptions of natural and social phenomena. Serving as the building blocks of myths, mythologemes frame mythological discourse, transmit cultural values, and preserve collective identity. They are powerful in determining worldviews, establishing cosmological order, and symbolizing cyclical patterns of life, death, and rebirth. Firmly rooted in language, literature, and folklore, mythologemes persistently evolve, connecting the religious and the secular, past and present. They affirm their enduring presence by demonstrating that mythology is a necessary means for understanding the human condition and the interrelatedness of all cultures.

Keywords: mythologeme, mythology, archetype, universality, symbolic meaning, cultural identity, mythological world picture, collective consciousness, narrative motif, cosmology

The term "mythologeme" refers to a fundamental, recurring unit of mythological narratives that encapsulates archetypal themes and structures. It is a stable, symbolic element that persists across different cultures and epochs, shaping the collective mythological consciousness of humanity. The concept of mythologeme is central to understanding the mythological world picture, as it represents a shared cognitive framework through which societies interpret their existence, history, and values.

Mythologeme is characterized differently by different scholars, reflecting a variety of theoretical opinions. Some scholars emphasize its function as a structural element of myths and see it as a fundamental semantic unit of mythology.

The complexity of mythologemes and their varied function in mythological discourse are highlighted by this variation in definitions. Scholars take different approaches to mythologemes, focusing on their structural, linguistic, cultural, and psychological elements. While some see them as essential narrative units that influence societal norms and archetypal symbols, others see them as dynamic components that change depending on the historical and cultural setting. This range of interpretations highlights how flexible mythologemes are, serving as links between myths from antiquity and modern narrative. Their persistence in

influencing worldviews, upholding social norms, and offering a framework for comprehending human experiences is evidenced by their presence in a wide range of literary traditions.

Key characteristics of mythologeme

A key element of mythological cognition, the mythologeme is a logical image, motif, or storyline that appears repeatedly in different mythological traditions. The mythologeme is a universal structural unit of myth that expresses cultural codes and archetypal meanings while reflecting collective perceptions of the world. Scholars concur that mythologemes are essential to the development of literary and mythological texts as well as to the comprehension of human experience, in spite of variations in interpretation. A deeper understanding of the nature of myth, its purposes, and its cultural impact can be gained by looking at their salient features.

1. **Universality** – Myths from many cultures contain mythologemes that represent archetypal structures and universal human experiences. For example, the flood myth is found in the *Hindu (Manu's survival)*, *Hebrew (Noah's Ark)*, and *Sumerian (Gilgamesh)* traditions.

2. **Stability** – While myths evolve over time, core mythologemes remain relatively unchanged. The themes of creation, transformation, and cosmic struggle are continuously reinterpreted in different cultural contexts but retain their fundamental meanings.

3. **Symbolic nature** – Mythologemes function as symbols representing complex ideas, emotions, and beliefs. They can manifest as *figures (the trickster)*, *objects (the World Tree)*, or *events (the hero's journey)*.

4. **Cultural specificity and adaptability** – Despite their universality, mythologemes adapt to the cultural and historical contexts of individual societies, acquiring unique characteristics while maintaining their fundamental essence.

5. **Functionality in mythological narratives** – Mythologemes serve as the building blocks of myths, helping to convey moral lessons, social norms, and existential questions. They provide coherence and continuity within a culture's mythological system.

Moreover, it should be acknowledged that a myth, a mythologeme is a recurrent theme rather than an entire narrative. It is not the same as an **archetype**, which is a more general psychological concept that denotes fundamental patterns of human behavior and thought. However, because mythologemes frequently represent archetypal themes, they are closely related to archetypes.

Notably, recent studies have demonstrated that mythologemes are deeply rooted in language and can be found in everyday speech, literary works, folklore, and idiomatic expressions. Their verbalization indicates their ongoing generational transmission, enabling them to influence and strengthen cultural identity and collective memory. In order to reflect historical, social, and philosophical changes over time, these basic mythological units do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they adjust to the linguistic and cultural contexts in which they are employed.

Mythologemes frequently function as motifs, archetypes, or narrative structures in literature, offering more profound levels of meaning. For example, different cultures have their own versions of the hero's journey, the trickster figure, or the idea of the spirit world to reflect their own traditions and beliefs. Mythological meanings are also often created in idiomatic phrases and proverbs, illustrating the ongoing existence of ancient symbolic structures.

Within the mythological world picture, a mythologeme is a universal, stable, and symbolic unit. Fundamental human experiences, archetypal narratives, and shared values are preserved by this essential component of cultural heritage, which serves as a cognitive and communicative bridge across civilizations. Mythologemes continue to serve the fundamental purpose of organizing myths and passing along cultural knowledge, despite differences in form and interpretation among various societies.

It is important to note that essential components of mythological world picture, mythologemes are basic narrative motifs that appear in various cultures and eras. Mythologemes serve as the universal building blocks of mythology, reflecting the common human experience, in contrast to individual myths, which are culturally specific tales. A number of interrelated factors can be used to explain their *universality*:

1. Individuals experience in a common

All human societies deal with existential issues like birth, death, bravery, destiny, and transformation, regardless of cultural and historical variances. Naturally, recurrent mythological motifs emerge from these universal experiences.

For instance:

Greek mythology (Heracles, Odysseus), English legends (King Arthur), Russian folklore (Ivan Tsarevich), and Uzbek epics (Alpamysh) all contain examples of the Hero's Journey.

Hermes (Greek), Loki (Norse), Baba Yaga (Slavic), Aldar Kose (Kazakh), and Khoja Nasreddin (Afandi) are all examples of the trickster figure, who represents cunning, mischief, flexibility.

These parallels imply that mythologemes, which express universal themes in culturally particular ways, have their roots in the human condition.

2. Psychological archetypes

Carl Jung's idea of archetypes, which stand for ingrained symbols and motifs in the collective unconscious, is closely related to mythologemes. In mythology all across the world, archetypes such as the Hero, the Shadow, the Wise Old Man, and the Great Mother recur frequently.

The sage mentor manifests as *Qorqut Ata* (Turkic legend), *Merlin* (Arthurian legend), *Gandalf* (modern mythology), and *Chiron* (Greek).

Myths such as the *Biblical Cain and Abel*, the *Norse Loki*, and the *Slavic Koschei the Deathless* all exhibit the shadow/dark double.

Mythologemes naturally arise across cultures as manifestations of basic human instincts and conflicts because these archetypal patterns are ingrained in human psychology.

3. Cultural exchange and diffusion

Through trade, conquest, migration, and storytelling, civilizations have interacted throughout history, facilitating the spread and development of myths and their central themes.

The myth of the *Great Flood* is found in Central Asian (Tengrism), Greek (Deucalion), Biblical (Noah), and Mesopotamian (Gilgamesh) traditions.

Ra (Egypt), *Helios* (Greece), *Dazhbog* (Slavic), and *Koyash* (Turkic mythology) all feature the solar deity motif.

These myths, which show how mythologemes transcend national traditions and become a part of a common global heritage, were probably passed down through cultural contact.

4. Symbolic representation of natural and social phenomena

Numerous mythologemes develop as symbolic representations of essential truths after being inspired by observations of human society and the natural world.

Yggdrasil (Norse), *the Tree of Life* (Biblical), *Baiterek* (Turkic), and the *Kalpavriksha* (Hindu) all feature the *World Tree*, which represents the cosmic order and interconnectedness of realms.

Orpheus (Greek), *Dante's Inferno* (Christian), *Erlik Khan's realm* (Turkic), and *Baba Yaga's trials* (Slavic) all feature the underworld journey, which represents the struggle with death and rebirth.

These recurrent pictures show how people from many cultures have tried to comprehend the order of things and how they fit into it.

5. Mythology as a way of understanding the unknown

Myths were the main source of explanation for human psychology, natural phenomena, and the unidentified forces controlling life prior to the creation of science.

The myth of the Sun Chariot, which describes how the sun moves, is found in *Slavic* (Dazhbog), *Hindu* (Surya), and *Greek* (Helios) traditions.

The Nile (Egyptian), *Ganges* (Hindu), *Styx* (Greek), and *Amu Darya* (Turkic) are all examples of sacred rivers that are seen as sources of life.

Societies independently came up with similar motifs by using recurrent mythological structures to interpret the unknown, which strengthened the idea that mythologemes are universal.

It is reasonable to conclude that mythologemes are universal because they arise from shared human experiences, psychological archetypes, cultural exchanges, and symbolic thought. They are the common language of myths, connecting different civilizations through timeless motifs. By studying mythologemes, we uncover the deep structures of human storytelling and gain insight into what unites people across cultures and history. These motifs are not just remnants of the past -they continue to shape our understanding of the world, our struggles, and our aspirations, proving that mythology is an ever-evolving reflection of the human condition.

After defining the mythologeme and proving its universality, it is crucial to investigate how it structures the way traditional cultures perceive reality and shapes their mythological world picture.

The mythological world picture relies heavily on mythologemes, which are conceptual frameworks that influence how different cultures view the world. They represent ingrained ideals, beliefs, and archetypes that form conventional thinking and go beyond simple narrative motifs. These recurrent themes and symbols offer a common perspective on life, impacting folklore, mythology, and even contemporary narrative.

Mythologemes, which are ingrained in myths, support collective identity and continuity across generations by providing explanations for social norms, natural phenomena, and human behavior. They create a prism through which individuals view the world, tying the sacred and the everyday together. For example, a common mythologeme that represents personal transformation and the search for meaning is the hero's journey.

Mythologemes bridge the past and present by sustaining a society's worldview through the preservation of cultural memory. They keep changing, adjusting to new stories while ensuring

1. The World's Cosmological Structure

The universe often appears in traditional cultures as an organized structure that includes the earth, sky, and underworld. Several key mythologemes serve as examples of this tripartite model:

The Tree of the World: The World Tree connects the various worlds of existence by acting as a cosmic axis. Yggdrasil is a massive ash tree that connects and protects the nine worlds in Norse mythology. Take a look at "Yggdrasil: Chronicles of The World Tree (Norse Mythology)" for a more thorough investigation.

The Celestial Mountain: The center of the universe and the home of the gods are symbolized by this mythologeme. According to Hindu belief, Mount Meru is the axis mundi that all creation revolves around. "Meru: The Center of our Earth" by Mukundchandra G. Raval explores this idea.

The Primordial Ocean: In Egyptian mythology, Nun represents the shapeless emptiness that existed before creation. Nun stands for the tumultuous seas from which the first land appeared. "Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt" offers a thorough summary.

2. The word cyclical Character

Numerous mythologies emphasize themes of rebirth and metamorphosis, viewing time as cyclical:

Death and Rebirth: Cycles of death and resurrection are depicted in myths like the Egyptian lore of Osiris. An incisive analysis can be found in "The Osiris Myth: The History and Legacy of Ancient Egypt's Most Important Mythological Legend."

The End of the World and Renewal: Ragnarök, a figure from Norse mythology, represents a foretold end of the world followed by a rebirth. "Ragnarok: The End of the Gods" by A.S. Byatt offers a literary retelling of this myth.

3. Rituals and social norms

Mythologemes are often used as examples of social norms and inform group activities:

Divine Origin of Power: In Chinese culture, rulers are legitimated as having been selected by God through the Mandate of Heaven. "The Mandate of Heaven: Marx and Mao in Modern China" by Nigel Harris explores the development of this idea over time.

Beginning and Rites of Passage: The "Epic of Gilgamesh" describes the protagonist's metamorphosis, signifying development and maturity. N.K. Sandars' translation provides a thorough interpretation.

The Trickster: In Norse mythology, characters like Loki represent chaos and subvert the status quo, which eventually leads to change. "The Gospel of Loki" by Joanne M. Harris tells the Norse myths from Loki's point of view.

Primarily, mythologemes play a crucial role in language and culture, influencing how societies perceive and express their identity, values, and worldview. As essential components of myths, mythologemes are not only found in oral traditions but are also deeply rooted in a ***culture's language, literature, folklore, and symbolism.*** These symbolic units, which

represent a people's cosmological, social, and spiritual beliefs, offer insight into their psyche. Below, you can see how mythologemes remain in various historical periods.

