

# Global Flood Myths : An Evolution of Scholarship

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**Abstract**

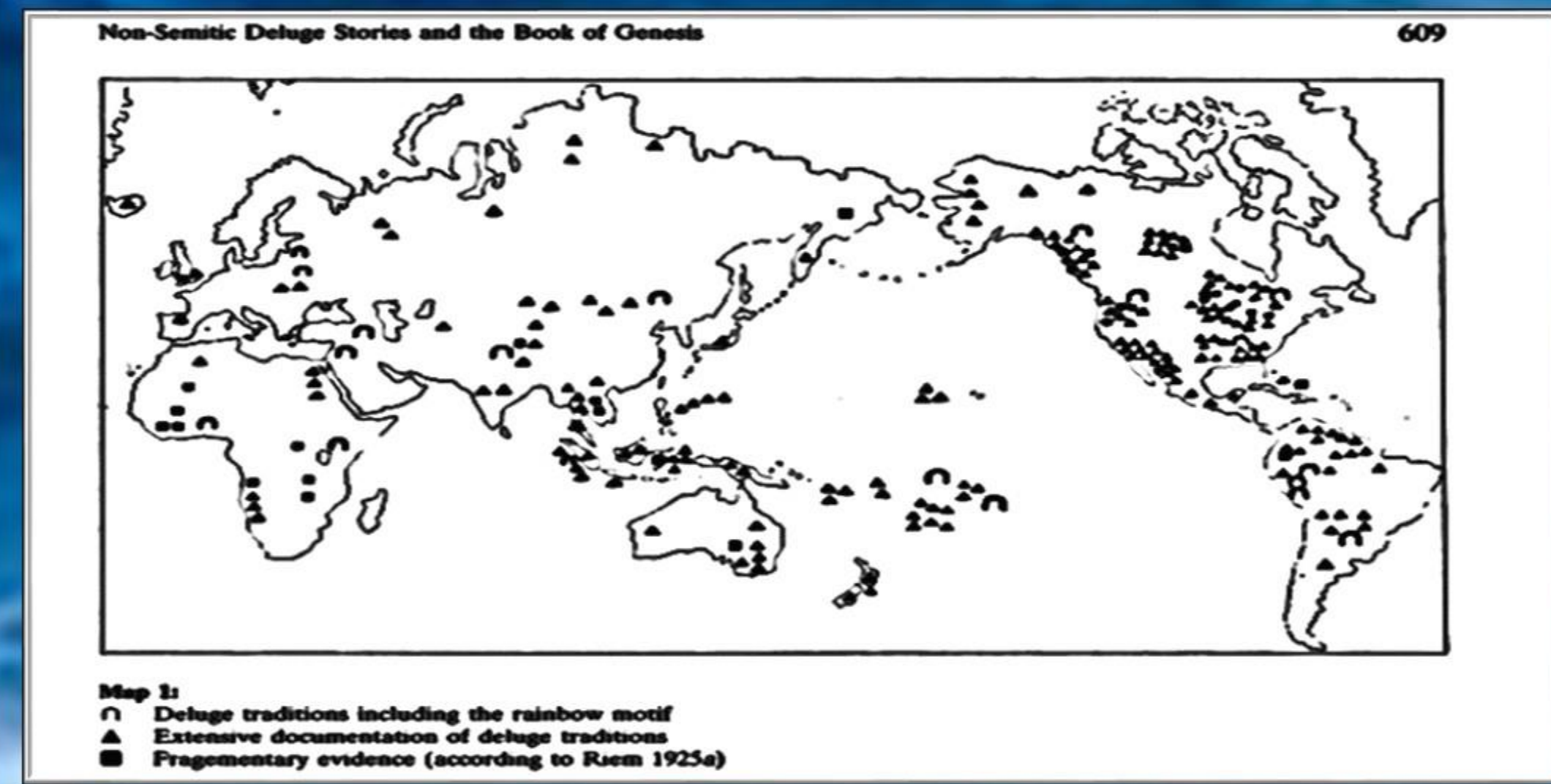
Among geography's greatest natural occurrences is the flood. One of the best known stories about floods in the West is that of Noah and the biblical account in Genesis. Like most other flood myths, the flood is sent by a deity to punish man for his behavior. Academics have labeled the biblical account and the many oral and written deluge traditions around the world as myth. They used several criteria for this determination including the inability to verify its claims. This project examines the trail of deluge or flood myths as they scan the globe and exist in almost every major ancient civilization and every inhabitable continent. Scholarship can be traced for these myths as it evolves over time from the scholarship of Christian missionaries during the age of exploration, to the secular and scientific scholarship of today which focuses on gender studies and global climate change.

**Keywords:** Myth, Deluge, Scholarship, Genesis, Flood, Deucalion, Ethnographic, Non-Semitic

**What is a flood myth?**  
A flood myth is usually a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.

Noah's Ark told in Genesis 6-9 is the most famous of the flood myths. God is convinced that man has become so corrupt that it is necessary to purge the earth and start over. He directs Noah to build an ark to save a remnant of the animals and his own family.

Flood myths are found on all inhabitable continents and include the regions of East and West Africa, Egypt, North America, Mesoamerica, South America, the Ancient Near East, China, India, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Greece, Ireland, Northern Europe, and Oceania. The flood myths vary in detail but most occur during the Neolithic or Bronze Age and include a deity destroying civilization as a retributive punishment for mankind's behavior for the purpose of creating a new civilization.



This map depicts the flood myths that exist globally. The shapes in the key specify the reliability of the myth and whether it includes a reference to a rainbow.

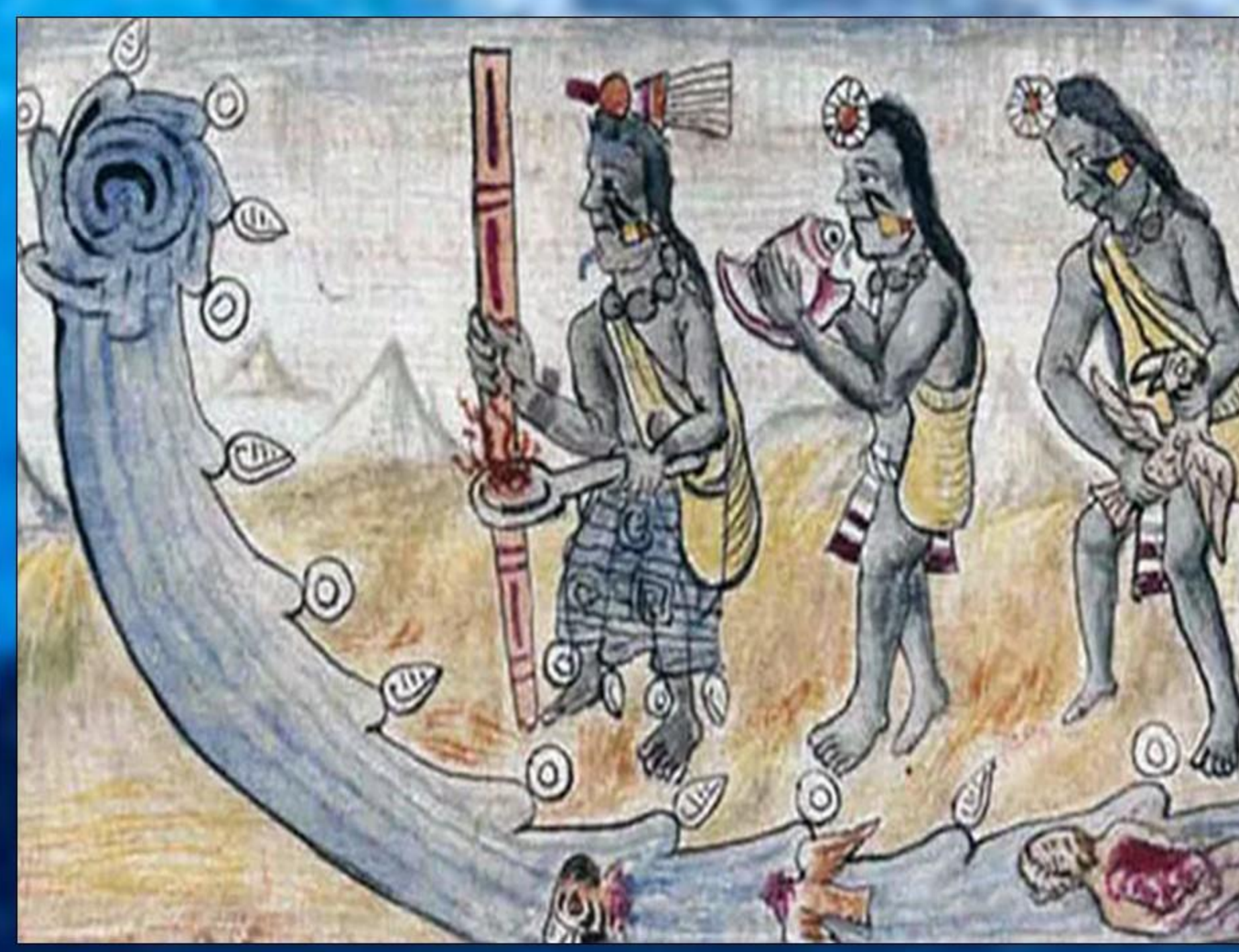
Early scholarship included non-semitic flood accounts as corroboration for the historicity of the Genesis account. The vast number of varied cultures that most likely had no instance of cultural diffusion served as proof of a global flood. During the early twentieth century; however, two new trends of scholarship overtook this view. With a presupposition that Darwin's theories were accurate, archaeologists sought to examine the geological evidence and found it inconclusive. Psychologists, like Wundt, also examined the stories with the understanding that since God did not exist, it was necessary for primitive cultures to explain the origin of the world through myth. Today, new trends such as gender studies and Global Warming are examining the flood myths and offering new perspectives. New geological evidence continues to surface that substantiates the idea that many of the floods actually occurred, but not as a global flood which Genesis suggests.

Indian flood myth of Manu and Matsya in the *Shatapatha Brahmana* where Vishnu in fish form warns Manu (human) and tells him to store all the grains and animals in a boat to escape the great flood that is coming to destroy. Manu and seven sages survive as Vishnu pulls them to safety.

Right photo- The Great Flood of China is depicted as the first Emperor Yu engineers dams to hold back the water and appoints Gun to steal earth from the supreme divinity to create China out of the chaos of waters. Here Yu is slaying one of the dragons bringing the flood.



Right photo- Aztec Flood Myth depicts Coxcox and his family as the only survivors of the great flood. The waters even covered the mountains. He is told by the gods to carve out a cypress tree and survive the flood. He had 15 mute children who were taught by a dove sent by the great spirit to speak and these were the ancestors of the Aztecs.



Above photo- Deucalion and Phyrpha from the Theogony depicts the Greek god Prometheus telling his son Deucalion to build a chest to escape the great deluge coming to destroy mankind. Except for a few that were on the very tops of mountains, Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha were the only survivors. Floating upon the sea for nine days and nights.

For further reading, see the literary review available from [djp023@bravemail.uncp.edu](mailto:djp023@bravemail.uncp.edu)

for more information on flood mythology watch this YouTube video "Is There Any Truth to Flood Myths? By Atlas Pro"

