

ANTHROPOGONIC MYTHS OF THE WA IN NORTHERN INDO-CHINA

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I. *Introduction*

As HEINE-GELDERN, the doyen of the ethnology of Southeast Asia, rightly remarked, "from the anthropologist's point of view, the Wa on the border of Burma and China are without doubt one of the most important tribes of the whole of Southeast Asia. They alone have preserved in the center of Further India such ancient cultural traits as head-hunting, the erection of megalithic monuments, the use of the split drum, etc." (HEINE-GELDERN 1946: 158). They have been, however, little studied, owing to the inaccessibility of their habitat, for which their practice of head-hunting largely has been responsible.

This primitive people, with a Mon-Khmer (Austroasiatic) language and the slash-and-burn agriculture, have many interesting culture elements, as HEINE-GELDERN pointed out. Besides, their myths of origin present us with some problems important to the cultural and ethnic history of Southeast Asia, which will be discussed in the following.

II. *Emergence of Men from Cave and Origin of Culture*

Three different types of anthropogonic myth have been reported from the Wa, as TEMPLE writes: "sometimes we find incompatible origins recorded by different observers of the same tribes or groups of tribes [in Burma]. Thus Was are variously said, in different stories, to be descended from celestial beings, frogs, and gourds" (TEMPLE 1910: 24).

To begin with, we shall treat the motif of the emergence of mankind from a cave, to which TEMPLE referred as frog descent story.

On this motif four versions are available, recorded by SCOTT and HARDIMAN, PITCHFORD, PRESTRE, and P'AN respectively.

1st Version

First we shall reproduce the version as recorded by SCOTT and HARDIMAN in the *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*.

"They claim to have inhabited the country where they now are since the beginning of time. One account of their origin (from a huge gourd) is given under the head of Mang Lön, but this is much disfigured by additions obviously taken from Shan and Buddhist history. Another gives the reason for the head cutting, but it is no doubt toned down from the true head-hunter's version.

"All the Indo-Chinese races have a predilection for totemistic birth stories. Some

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claim to be sprung from eggs, some from dogs, some from reptiles. The Wa claim tadpoles for their rude forefathers. The *primaeval* Wa were called Ya Htawm and Ya Htai. As tadpoles they spent their first years in Nawng Hkeo, a mysterious lake on the top of a hill range, seven thousand feet high, in the centre of the head-cutting country. When they turned into frogs they lived on a hill called Nam Tao and, progressing in the scale of life, they became ogres and established themselves in a cave, Pakkatè, about thirty miles south of the mountain lake on the slope over the Nam Hka. From this cave they made sallies in all directions in search of food, and at first were content with deer, wild pig, goats, and cattle. As long as this was their only diet, they had no young. But all Hpi Hpai in the end come to eat human beings. It is their most distinguished characteristic, after the fact of their having red eyes and casting no shadow. One day Ya Htawm and Ya Htai went exceptionally far afield and came to a country inhabited by men. They caught one and ate him and carried off his skull to the Pakkatè cave. After this they had many young *ogrelets*, all of whom, however, appeared in human form. The parents therefore placed the human skull on a post and worshipped it. There were nine sons, who established themselves in the nine Wa glens, mostly in the west, and they bred and mustered rapidly. The ten daughters settled on the fells and were even more prolific. Their descendants are the most thorough in head-hunting and the skulls are always men's. The language the new race spoke was at first that of the frog, a sort of Brekkekkkekx-koax, but this was elaborated in time into modern Wa.

"Ya Htawm and Ya Htai enjoined on their children the necessity of always having a human skull in their settlements. Without this they could not have any peace, plenty, prosperity, comfort, or enjoyment, and this injunction has always been piously obeyed. When the venerable ogres felt death coming they summoned all their progeny together and gave an account of their origin and said that they, Ya Htawm and Ya Htai, were to be worshipped as the father and mother spirits. Other spirits there were, but they were bad and malevolent. Ya Htawm and Ya Htai alone were genial and benignant and the most seemly offering to them was a snow-white grinning skull. The ordinary sacrifices on special occasions, however, were to be buffaloes, bullocks, pig, and fowls, with plentiful libations of rice-spirit. The special occasions were marriage, the commencement of a war, death, and the putting up of a human skull. In addition to these meat offerings a human skull was always desirable under exceptional circumstances, or for special objects. Thus when a new village was founded, a skull was an imperative necessity. If there were a drought, which threatened a failure of the crops, no means would be so successful in bringing rain as the dedication of a skull. If disease swept away many victims a skull alone would stay the pestilence. But the good parental ogres expressly said that it was not necessary that the villagers should slay a man in order to get his head. They might get the skull by purchase or barter" (SCOTT and HARDIMAN 1900, I, i: 496-497. cf. SCOTT 1918: 293-295).

2nd Version

In the second version PITCHFORD reports as follows:

"The tour took us through the heart of the wild Wa country east of the line [admitted by the Chinese Border Commissioners] and to the totally unmapped area of the fairy lake Nawngkhio, an age-long riddle, of which old reports from hearsay evidence

gave the following description :

"The fairy lake lies on a cloud-capped mountain in the middle of a silent forest, where mortals dare not dwell. Its waters are so cold and deep, that no fish can live. At its four corners four cliffs rise sheer from the water into high rocky peaks. From its waters flow the rivers of the world. From its primaeval waters sprang the forebears of the Wa race and when they became men, they lived in the cavern of Pakkatei and there they learnt the mystery of head hunting, whereby they waxed fruitful and multiplied exceedingly. Motpalu, with over 300 houses, on the western slope of the hill, guards the famous walnut forests to the south, never failing to punish poachers, and bartering the walnuts for rock salt to the Chinese".

"Locally it is said that the Shan name for the lake is Namtongling and the Wa name Kaing Kret. Also that the first and early Wa spread to the lake area from the Pakkatei cave, and not from the lake to the cave. Other reports described the lake as the Wa holy of holies, stating that there were two lakes connected by a narrow neck of water, and that in the lake area were the Wa Pwi and the Wa Lon, the wildest and fiercest of all the Wa" (PITCHFORD 1937 : 223).

In 1937 visiting the lake, PITCHFORD remarked :

"We saw no signs of the walnut trees and the guides said there were none.... A Gurkha sepoy showed me some tracks in the waterlogged edge of the lake. It was impossible to identify them as they had sunk deep and had partly closed. We thought they might be the tracks of the bison which are reported to live in the dense forest round the lake, and which are more effectively protected by the ruling of Hpyi Mut, the spirit of the lake, than by the game laws. ... The rocky peak at the northwest corner of the lake would have probably got us in visual communication with camp, but it looked extremely difficult of ascent. In any case it was not advisable to attempt it as our guides said it was the residence of Hpyi Mut, who sweeps the shores of the lake with a new broom every night." (PITCHFORD 1937 : 230).

Apparently, the version of PITCHFORD is closely related with the one described by SCOTT and HARDIMAN.

3rd Version

The third version of this myth was reported by PRESTRE. He heard it from a Wa chieftain, Sao Oua Pah (Sa Seigneurie des Ouas de la tribu Pah), during his travel in the 1930s (?). He heard the story at night, while smoking opium (PRESTRE 1946 : 176-177).

"Paisible, j'écoutais Sao Oua Pah me dire dans son shan musical les légendes Ouas.

Nous nous appelons Ouas—disait-il—car Oua est le cri de la grenouille qui est notre ancêtre. Je tiens de mon père qui la tient des ses pères depuis des temps immémoriaux l'histoire de nos origines.

"C'était il y a des âges et encore des âges, à l'époque où l'esprit qui règne sur les esprits n'était point encore descendu des marches d'airain. Dans le cercle des dix montagnes, les onze rivières coulaient à travers les futaies de noyer dans le lac sacré, séjour de tous les esprits : celui-là des eaux et celui-ci de la terre, le génie des vents et le génie des nuages, le nat des forêts et la nat des rocs. Dans ce lac sacré, il y avait des têtards. Et voilà que ces têtards se développèrent et grandirent, car ils vivaient au

milieu des esprits et ce sont ceux-ci seuls qui dispensent la vie du corps et la vie de l'âme. Ainsi un jour arriva où les têtards, ayant grandi, furent devenus des ogres. Il y avait Ha Mâh, celui qui chasse, et Ni Mâh, celle qui cultive. L'autre de Ha Mâh et de Ni Mâh était au ventre de la montagne sacrée, dans la caverne qui demeure fraîche parce que ses eaux charrient le métal jaune qui glace les ondes.

"Biens que le lotus fleurit sur le lac sacré, bien que la colombe cuivrée roucoulat à l'ombre des banians, Ha Mâh et Ni Mâh n'étaient point heureux, car l'esprit qui règne sur les esprits leur refusait l'enfant qui serait le gardien de leur mânes.

"Un jour pourtant il advint que Ha Mâh, celui qui chasse, ayant pris d'une bête, la suivit jusque dans les plaines où les hommes cultivent le riz. Parce que sa poursuite était vaine et parce que la nostalgie de Ni Mâh était en lui, Ha Mâh prit un homme et le tua. Ce fut cette chair qui rendit aux ventres de Ha Mâh et de Ni Mâh la béatitude des digestions. Parce que la tête de leur proie était un jouet cher à Ni Mâh, ils la laissèrent sur un rocher devant la caverne. Sous le soleil du troisième mois, cette tête se mit à couler, dessinant sur la pierre des signes étranges qu'ils cherchaient à comprendre. La vue de cette tête et les signes qu'elle écrivait sur le roc plurent au grand esprit, celui qui règne sur tous les esprits, de sorte qu'il donna à Ni Mâh des fils et des filles.

"C'est pour cela, acheva Sao Oua Pah, chef des Ouas, que nous, les descendants de Ha Mâh et de Ni Mâh, présentons au grand Nat, le onzième jour de la troisième lune, la tête qui dessine les augures de la fertilité des nos rizières dont dépend la vie des nos femmes et de nos bêtes" (PRESTRE 1946: 177-178).

Although we are not yet able to locate the "Pah tribe" in the map, it is clear that they live in the then disputed area which lies on the Sino-Burman border and not far from Meng-tung city in southwestern Yunnan. It is also assumed that they stand under rather strong Shan influence, because the chieftain narrated the myth in the Shan.

4th Version

The fourth version we owe to P'AN, which shows some differences from the foregoing three:

"Mankind emerged from a cave—So we, the Kawa [the Wa within the Chinese border], speak of it often. Nowadays there are also red men and black men, whose origin we do not know.

"Thousands or tens of thousands of years ago, we do not know exactly, mankind came from a cave called Yang-ho. At Yao-sin, a hundred and some *li* away from Mount Si-ming, we, the Kawa, have to sacrifice a white rooster every three years.

"In the beginning, there were only a few men and they could not speak. After a long time, they increased in number gradually and lived together with leopards, wild pigs and buffaloes.

"At first they all subsisted on grass, but an animal with four feet came to the evil idea of eating men and said: "Dear two-footed! I have a proposal. Let us eat those of us who drop excrements in a standing position!" The man, discovering the evil design, answered, "Let us try it". All the animals dropped excrements in standing positions before they walked a half day. Therefore the men ate the flesh of the animals.

"After a long time, the men moved to a place called Wêng-p'u. In Wêng-p'u there is a large lake, where the first millet (ku-tzü) appeared. Since trees bore no fruit and

the grass was withered at that time, men and animals wanted to get the millet.

"However, the lake was so large and deep that they could not find the means to get the millet. At last the men showed better wisdom and let a big swimming snake draw the millet to the shore. Everybody dragged the tail of the snake to obtain a lot of millet.

"Then everybody left the lake and came to Yang-p'ien. The man said to the animals, "Let us plant the millet together". Then they dug the earth with their hands, feet and mouths. However, nobody knew what to do after that. Therefore they asked the help of Heaven. Heaven taught them to dig and weed the earth by means of bamboo (stick) in preparation for sowing the millet.

"Everyone sowed the millet and the millet sprouted. The man said: "we have to weed the field, if we want to eat the grain". But the lazy animals were displeased by this idea.

"After weeding, they asked again to Heaven: "What shall we do now?". The Heaven answered: "Soon the millet will be ripe enough for eating". However, the animals said: "We cannot wait any longer. You, the men, had better plant the millet and we, the animals, had better eat the grass from now on".

"Since the animals did not like to work, they remained animals and continued to eat grass and fruits of trees. Through the labor the men gradually became different from the animals, learning to speak and cultivating the millet until now.

"Then a long time passed again. A sudden conflagration broke out in the mountain. The men ate the flesh of the animals burnt to death for the first time. The men acquired the taste for food prepared with fire and kept the live coal for cooking.

"After the conflagration the millet grew especially well in the mountain. Since then we, the Kawa, have cut the trees down and burned them before digging the earth with a bamboo stick and sowing the millet.

"After that they moved to Yang-pu-lo to live apart from the animals. At that time day and night were not yet clearly divided. They wanted to know the suitable season for planting the millet because otherwise it did not grow.

"Everybody was lost in thought. A spirit said: "Do not worry about it. Dig the earth quickly when the small birds sing *pei-pei*, sow the millet quickly when they sing *ku-ku, ku-ku*. It rains during six months of the year and it is clear during the other six. Work outdoor in the day and sleep in the night. If you obey what I said, then you will not miss the right time".

"Then, mankind moved to live in Yang-pu-lui. When they slept, they felt that the grass pricked the back like a needle. So they talked over the matter and came to the conclusion to build a house with grass. Since that time, the grass did not prick the man any more, but was used in building houses which protected him from wind and rain.

"Once the grass said to the tree: "Dear tree, since I let the men build the house with the grass, the more we are mowed by men, the better we grow". The tree answered: "Each time the man fells one of us, ten of us will grow in its place".

"At that time the small birds had no feathers, so the tree said to the small birds: "Weep each time the man fells me!" Then the small birds began to chirp always and the tree collected red and blue feathers to give to the birds.

"Once the kindling coal went out because of a sudden heavy rain. So the man sent

the small bird to the sky to consult with the Thunder. The Thunder taught: "Rub a rattam against a wood with all your strength, so a fire will be produced. Thereafter, we made the kindling fire each time the fire went out" (CHUNG-KUO K'O-HSIO-YÜAN 1962 II: 413-414).

Comparing these four versions with each other, we can divide them in two groups, namely the first three versions (group A) and the last one (group B). In group A the tadpole ancestor is manifestly or implicitly referred to, and the origin of head-hunting is also mentioned. But neither the tadpole ancestor nor the head-hunting are mentioned in group B. However, we cannot overestimate these differences, because the recent mainland Chinese publications have been keeping silent on the head-hunting among the Wa, although it exists without any doubt (cf. HEINE-GELDERN 1917, WINNINGTON 1959: 125-172). So it seems quite possible that the origin of head-hunting was omitted from the original, when the fourth version was published by P'AN. Apart from the problem of a possible omission in the fourth version, we have some significant traits common to all the versions or to some:

1. The first men came out of a cave (all versions).
2. The sacred lake is mentioned of as a home of the Wa forebears (all versions).
3. The idea of the primordial parents-pair (versions 1 and 3).
4. The primeval ancestors had originally been tadpoles in the sacred lake, became later ogres in the cave (versions 1, 2, 3).
5. Head-hunting arose from hunting of wild animals (versions 1, 3).
6. As a result of the first head-hunting, the ancestors were blessed with offsprings (version 1, 2, 3).
7. The head-hunting of the modern Wa is practised in accordance with this mythical happening (versions 1, 2, 3). It is a repetition of the first head-hunting at the end of the primordial times (cf. JENSEN 1960: 190-217, 382-384).
8. The idea of a High God appears in two versions, i.e., as Nam Lung (grand esprit) in the third, as the Heaven in the fourth. As JENSEN points out, the concept of High God is well developed particularly among the grain-cultivators and pastoralists (JENSEN 1960: 101-102). Also UNO suggests the importance of the concept of High God among the younger agriculturalists in Southeast Asia (UNO 1944a: 658-665, 1944b: 389-393).
9. The cultural background of these versions is a culture based on the slash-and-burn cultivation of millet or other cereals, accompanied to some extent by animalistic traits of hunting economy.

These common traits may be taken as essential for this mythic theme. We shall discuss some of them more in detail in the following.

One of the main motifs in this origin myth is the emergence of primeval mankind from a cave or the earth. This theme has a world-wide distribution. It occurs among the Ao Naga, Lhota Naga, Angami Naga, Luhupa Naga, Tangkhul Naga, Lushei Kuki, Thadou Kuki, Kyeng, Singpho, Moklum, Mishmi, Burma, Lawa in the mainland of Southeastern Asia (KÜHN 1935: 52-53, 131-132, cf. SCOTT 1918: 267. ELWIN 1958: 193. OBAYASHI 1964: 116). It is also reported from Trobriand Island, Melanesia, whose version is particularly similar to those in Assam. Furthermore, an origin myth of the Maori in New Zealand and the concept of *hsüan-p'in* (the primordial female) in the philosophy of Lao-tse of the ancient China bear some resemblance to this theme (KÜHN 1935: 132). In the Quelpart Island south of Korea,

three women emerged out of a cave, who became afterwards the ancestors of three lineages there (MIWA 1919: 64-67). So far as the distribution in Eastern and Southeastern Asia and Oceania is concerned, this theme seems to belong to agricultural cultures. This motif is characteristic of agrarian cultures in Africa again (BAUMANN's "altnigritische Kultur". BAUMANN 1936: 386-388). The New World makes no exception in this respect. HULTKRANTZ writes: "A tradition common in the whole of agrarian North America tells how once in the mythic primeval era the first human beings ascended from the underworld, where their line had first come to life. To this notion of man's origin corresponds, among the same peoples, the notion of his fate after death: man returns to the place whence he came, thus to the underworld.... And researchers like HAEBERLIN and DIETERICH have since [GAYTON, FEWKES and STEVENSON] stressed that the primeval myth of man's emergence from the underworld and the notions of his abode after death are parts of one and the same general pattern of ideas" (HULTKRANTZ 1957: 179).

The point made by HULTKRANTZ is highly interesting. And the fact that the Wa observe earth-burial (SCOTT and HARDIMAN 1900, I, ii), also supports his point. However, it should be considered in this connection that the earth-burial has a far wider distribution than the myth of emergence of the primeval human beings from a cave or the earth. This theme of myth seems to be restricted to some groups of agrarian peoples who practice earth-burial.

The second point to be discussed in the origin myth of the Wa is the concept of the primordial parents-pair. This motif again is widespread in the mainland of Southeast Asia. According to KÜHN, this motif is reported from the Lolo, Li, Siam, Ko, Wa, the white Karen, Kachin, the white Chin, Rengma Naga, Angami Naga, Sema Naga, Mikir, Garo, Kachari and even from Tibet (KÜHN 1935: 59-65, 135-137). In Japan, too, we have a classical example of this concepts in the primeval pair of Izanaki and Izanami (cf. OBAYASHI 1961: esp. 54-96). If we add the primeval brother-sister pair, who survived the deluge, to this category, the distribution can be enlarged from China (especially the Miao), through Indo-China (especially the Moi tribes) to Indonesia and some parts of Oceania (KÜHN 1935: WALK 1949, LI 1955). However, nothing certain can be said as to the culture-historical position of this theme in Southeast Asia and Eastern Asia, nor the relation to the social organization of the above mentioned peoples.

The third point is the fact that the Wa claim tadpoles for their rude primeval ancestors. Prof. Dr. H.E. KAUFFMAN kindly put at our disposal the exchange of letters between him and PRESTRE: KAUFFMAN asked PRESTRE whether the tadpole origin indicates a totemism among the Wa. "Is the tadpole treated as a sacred animal? Is it prohibited to be eaten?" The answer of PRESTRE runs: "Grenouille des totems probablement vient d'une notion vague de l'évolution (cf. au tableau de BUFFON) de la grenouille à l'homme" (communication of PRESTRE to KAUFFMAN, 13. 5. 1951). Other reports also keep silence on the question, whether the tadpole has any relation to totemism, whether it is regarded as sacred or tabooed to be eaten.

Aside from the dubious question, if the Wa partake a vague notion of zoological evolution like that of BUFFON, it should be pointed out that the idea of tadpole-ancestors is rare in the mythologies of Southeast Asia. Certainly we know many animals ancestors such as dog, tiger, wild goat, monkey, alligator, bird, in the mainland Southeast Asia (KÜHN 1935: 67-68, 137-138, KOPPERS 1930, KRETSCHMAR 1938 I: 35-43), but the tadpole or frog only seldom appears as the ancestor of mankind or a tribe.

However, it should be pointed out that another case of frog ancestor is known from a people with Mon-Khmer (Austroasiatic) languages: the Bahnar. The Bahnar, a Moi tribe, respect the frog, holding that one of their ancestors took that form, and in this shape he is believed to guard their field (GUERLACH 1894: 140, 143, cited in THOMAS 1908: 516). That their field is guarded by their frog-ancestor seems to suggest that he was the mythical originator of agriculture. (cf. BAUDESSON 1919: 221-222).

Another example of the frog-ancestor motif is known from the Dhammai (Miji) in North Assam, who belong linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman.

"Earth and Sky lived together. The Sky went to his wife, the Earth, and she gave birth to a son, Subjang-Gnoi-Rise and a daughter, Jubbu-Jang-Sangne. These were gods but they had the shape of mountains. After they were born Earth and Sky separated and as they were parting Earth gave birth to two other children, a boy, Lujjuphu, and a girl named Jassuju, who had the form of frogs. They mated and from them a boy and a girl in human form, Abugupham-Bumo and Anoi-Diggan-Juje, were born. They were human but were covered with hair. They married each other and in time had three sons, Lubukhanlung, Sangso-Dungso and Kimbu-Sangtung" (ELWIN 1958: 14).

Interesting to note is the combination of the frog-ancestors with the motif of cosmic parents (Sky-Father and Earth-Mother), although this combination should be taken for accidental on the ground of distribution.

A Bornean myth should be quoted here, although it is no frog-ancestor-myth. This myth is particularly interesting, because it ascribes the origin of head-hunting to a frog, a motif, which reminds us of the origin of the head-hunting by the Wa-ancestors who were formerly tadpoles. The myth was reported by HOSE and MACDOUGALL:

"The Kenyahs themselves preserve the tradition of the origin of the taking of heads; and the suggestion is further borne out by the legend of *Tokong*, which is widely known, but is probably of Kenyah origin..., according to which the frog adminished a great Kenyah chief that he should cease to take only the hair of the fallen foe, but should take their heads also" (HOSE and MACDOUGALL 1912 I: 189).

And further:

"*Tokong* is claimed as ancestor by the Sebops (a tribe of Klemantans) and by the Punans. The former attribute to him the introduction of head hunting. The story goes that once upon a time, when *Tokong* and his people preparing to attack a village, he was addressed by the frog, who called out, "*Wong ka kok, tetak batok*". This fairly represents the cry of this species of frog (*Bufo*); and *tetak batok* in the Sebop language means "cut through the neck". At first the people, who hitherto had taken only the hair of their enemies to adorn their shields, scoffed at this advice; but the frog assured them that the taking of heads would bring them prosperity of every kind, and demonstrated the procedure he advised by decapitating a small frog. *Tokong* therefore determined to follow the frog's advice and carried away the heads of his enemies; this was followed immediately by increased prosperity. As the party returned home and passed through their fields the *padi* grew very rapidly. As they entered the fields the *padi* was only up to their knees, but before they had passed through it was full-grown with full ears. As they approached

the house their relatives came to meet them, rejoicing over various pieces of good fortune that had befallen them. The words of the frog thus came true, and *Tokong* and his people continued to follow the new practice, and from them it was learned by others" (HOSE and MACDOUGALL 1912 II: 138-139).

The point that the frog demonstrated the procedure by decapitating a small frog suggests that the frog not only gave the advice, but also initiated the practice. In this case, the story comes nearer to that of the Wa, in which the primeval ancestors evolved from tadpoles initiated the practice of head-hunting. Similarities between the Bornean and Wa myths can be summarized as follows:

1. The head-hunting was initiated by a frog or by the primeval ancestors evolved from tadpoles.
2. The first head-hunting was followed by increased prosperity.
3. The modern practice of head-hunting of these tribes is the repetition of this first head-hunting.

It is quite possible, therefore, that the idea of the frog-initiator of head-hunting was a common feature of, at least one part of, the old head-hunting complex in Southeast-Asia.

On the other hand, it is also important that all the known frog or tadpole ancestor myths, except the Dhammai, in the mainland are reported from the Mon-Khmer (Austroasiatic) peoples, namely, Wa and Bahnar.

As stated above, the frog-ancestor motif is rather rare in Southeast Asia. Yet it should be taken into consideration that the tadpole-ancestors of the Wa might have some relation with the motif of the origin of mankind from an egg or eggs, which is widespread in Southeast Asia. Indeed the Palaung, who are another Mon-Khmer tribe in Upper Burma and linguistically closely related to the Wa, have an myth of the origin from an egg, which has some resemblances with the above quoted Wa origin myth.

We have two versions of the Palaung myth at our disposal. First, the version published by MILNE tells us as follows:

"In the times of long ago a Naga princess named I-ran-ti thought she would like to see the sun, and the world, where human beings lived; so she came up from her home, which was deep down in the earth. She changed her form, becoming like a beautiful girl; she came out into the light of day, and found herself in a garden on the banks of the Mao river near the borders of China. She felt very happy, and as she walked she sang to herself. Far up in the air was the Sun-prince, and when he heard the song and saw the beautiful girl, he turned his chariot towards the ground, assumed a human form, clothed himself in gorgeous attire, and alighted. He remained with her for seven days, wooing her until she loved him, then, tiring of her, he returned again to the heavens. He flew up into the air by his own force, and he left his chariot on the ground. Before he disappeared he told I-ran-ti that he was leaving the chariot in her care, and that he would return.

"In course of time I-ran-ti, because she was really a Naga, laid three eggs. She placed them in the chariot, and brooded over them to keep them warm. As for the Sun-prince, he cared for her no longer, and he wrote a letter telling her that he would not return but was sending her a magic gem wrapped in his letter. He put it into a

tiny bag, and hung the bag by a cord round the neck of a crow, which had golden feathers. So the crow said, "It is well", and flew down to the wilderness on the borders of China.

"When the golden crow reached the Mao river it was both tired and hungry. In that part of the country were many ogres, and the crow heard the voices of other crows calling to each other and saying, "Ak-ak, ik-ik, ak-ak", as they picked flesh from the bones left from an ogre feast. The golden crow thought that it would also like to eat, so it removed the little bag from its neck, and hung it on the branch of a tree that drooped over the waters of the river. It then flew to the other crows and remained with them enjoying the feast, and it did not hasten to return.

"A short time after the crow had left the bag, a fisherman in his boat came floating down the river. He saw the bag, climbed the tree, and when he opened the bag he took out the gem. It was so beautiful, and was of such a wonderful bright red colour, that he determined to keep it for himself. He quickly descended to the ground, substituted a pebble for the gem, and hung the little bag once more on the branch of the tree.

"After the golden crow had finished its meal, it hung the bag again on its neck, and flew away to the Naga princess. She was filled with joy when she found that the crow was a messenger from the Sun-prince; but when she read the letter, and saw that the "magic gem" was only a worthless pebble, she was quite furious with disappointment and anger, and she threw the pebble at the crow, which quickly flew away.

"When it reached the palace of the Sun-prince, and had told his master of the anger of the Naga princess, the Sun-prince understood that something had happened to his message. So he too was angry, and in his anger he painted the crow black, and told it that it could no longer live in the sky, but must go down to the world of men and remain there.

"Thus the Sun-prince and the Naga princess were angry with each other, and the world was dark because, for many days, the sun would give no light.

"The Naga princess, in her sorrow and rage, took her eggs and flung them far away. She also threw away her golden hair-pin. Where these things fell she neither knew nor cared. She changed herself to Naga form again, passed down into the depth of the earth, and so came to her own country.

"The hair-pin fell in the Wah country. It pierced quite through a mountain, and it was shattered to pieces; the wild Wahs still gather the gold from its dust; it is found in the sand of the streams.

"As for the eggs, one fell at what we now call the Jade Mines. It broke and turned all the rocks that it touched into jade. The second egg fell at Mogok, and it broke against a rock, and the rocks there became full of rubies and other precious stones. The third egg, thrown more gently, fell into the Mao river near the Chinese frontier and was caught in the forked branch of a floating tree. The tree floated down-stream till it landed on a sand-bank. Near by was a garden tended by an aged couple, who, when they came to the river's bank to seek for firewood, saw the stranded tree, and the egg resting unbroken in the forked branch. The old couple took the egg home with them and tended it with care.

"In the jungle near the garden an old hermit named Wi-to lived in a cave. One day the old couple carried the egg to him, and asked him what it could be. When he ex-

amined it, he told them that in seven days it would break, and a beautiful child would be found in it.

"The old man and woman were delighted, as they had always longed to have a child. And after seven days it happened as the hermit had said, and a beautiful baby-boy was found in the broken egg-shell. The old couple called the baby Kok-ya. He was a strong baby, and he grew into a handsome lad. When he was fifteen years old his father, the Sun-prince, who had watched over him from the skies, sent him a magic bow. His mother, the Naga princess, although she had married a Naga prince who lived deep down in the underground, often wondered what had happened to her eggs; so when her daughter, by her Naga husband, was thirteen years old, she told her about her eggs, and sent her up to the world of men to find out what had happened to them.

"The young Naga princess, whose name was Nang Shwe K'e, took the form of a young girl. She was lovely to look upon, and was most beautifully dressed. When she emerged from the dark passage by which she had ascended from the underworld, she followed the sandy shore of the river, and the grains of sand that she touched with her feet became silver.

"High up in the heavens was the Sun-prince, and he knew who she was. His son Kok-ya was lying asleep under a tree, and the Sun-prince made him dream of a lovely girl. The next day as he walked by the river, he saw the beautiful girl of his dream. He spoke to her, and they sat on a rock together, and they loved each other. Kok-ya took her to his home, where he still lived with his foster-father and -mother, and there the young people were married, and they lived with the old folks. In due time a daughter was born to them.

"At that time an enormous bird flew into the country where Koy-ya and his Naga wife were living. Its favourite food was human flesh, and it swooped down from the heavens and caught many of the people, killing them and eating them. When one day the great bird alighted on a tree close to Kok-ya's home, he took his magic bow, and shot the bird. The people who lived there were so grateful to him that they asked him to let them build their hut near his home, so as to be under his protection. There were eight families, and Kok-ya's made the ninth.

"They all lived happily in that place until on a certain day the Naga princess went to bathe. She had forgotten that if she went under water on the completion of seven days, or of seven months, or of seven or fourteen years (from the time of her transformation into the form of a human being), she would be turned again—whether she wished it or not—into a Naga in appearance. If she had washed only part of her body she would have still kept her human form, but unfortunately she dived into the river. She began immediately to turn into a Naga. As she did not return home, Kok-ya sent his daughter, now a girl of fourteen years of age, to look for her mother. By the time the girl reached the river her mother had become a Naga, except that her head and arms were still those of a beautiful woman. Her daughter saw her in the water, and the Naga mother said, "Fate had decreed that I must become wholly a Naga, and never can go to thy father again; but in memory of me make thy garments in stripes like the skin of a Naga, of silver and gold, and red and yellow; use nine colour if thou canst". She stretched her hand and touched her clothes that lay on the bank and they became of the colour of the scales of her skin. Having given these commands to her daughter, she dived under water

and was seen no more.

"Her daughter took the mother's garments and returned home. Afterwards she dressed herself in them, and the women of the eight families copied the dress in bright colours, and in stripes. The Palaung rulers are descended from this Naga princess, and their women-folk have always worn the brightly coloured dress.

"After a time Kok-ya took another wife, who bore him seven sons and four daughters, and besides these was the daughter of his Naga wife. In time these children all married, and the other eight families multiplied till there were ninety-nine families; and they formed themselves into a State not subject to China. Many people came from afar and settled there. The people all lived round Möng-Mao, and Kok-ya was their king" (MILNE 1924: 379-383).

Essentially the same story was reported by SCOTT:

"There was a serpent maiden, Princess Thusandi; who lived in the spirit lake in the Mogök Hills. Prince Hsuriya (Sanskrit Sūrya/"Sun"/), son of the Solar King, fell in love with her, and she loved him. The Dragon Princess was delivered of three eggs, and immediately afterward Prince Hsuriya was summoned home by his father, the King of the Sun. He had to obey, but when he reached the sun he sent a letter, together with the precious stone Manikopa, to the Naga Princess, giving it to two parrots as his messengers. The two birds on their way met others of their kind, and resting with them on a large tree, for a time forgot all about the letter and its enclosure. A Taungthū and his son came by, found the letter, took out the Manikopa, put some birds' droppings in its place, and went their way. After a time the parrots returned to a sense of their duty and carried the letter to the Naga Princess. She was delighted with the letter, but when she found what the enclosure was, she was so angry that she took two of the eggs and threw them into the Irrawaddy.

"One of the eggs moved upstream to Man Maw (Bhamo), where it was taken out of the river by a gardener and his wife and put in a golden casket as a curiosity. A male child hatched out of the egg, and the gardener and his wife brought him up, first under the name of Hsēng Nya and afterward of Udibwa ("Born of an Egg"). When Udibwa reached maturity, he married the daughter of the ruler of Sè-lan, a Shan chief on the China border. They had two sons, the younger of whom, Min Shwe Yo, became Emperor of China and took the title of Udibwa, which is given to the Emperors of the Chinese dominions by the Burmese down to the present day. From childhood the elder boy, Min Shwe Thè, was afflicted with a kind of leprosy. He preferred cold and mountainous places, and accordingly built the town of Sètawn Sam, on the crest of the Saga-bin Hills in Loi Lōng Tawng Peng, establishing himself there as Sawbwa, or Chief. From him all the Palaung Bo, or chiefs of the Palaungs, are descended.

"The Naga's second egg drifted down the Irrawaddy until it reached Paukhan (Pagān), where it stranded on the river-bank. It was picked up by a washerman and his wife, who put it away in a golden pot, in which it also hatched out a man-child. The baby was of so noble a bearing that the couple named him Min Rama, because they thought he must be of the Pagān Rama Min's family, and afterward he actually did become King of Pagān.

"The third egg the angry Princess threw away at Kyatpyin, in the centre of the

present Ruby Mines District of Burma. It fell on a rock and was shattered to pieces, this being the origin of the rubies and other precious stones that are still found there.

"Thus, as the Palaung Chronicle (which as yet exists only in manuscript) proudly announces, the Sawbwa of Loi Lōng, the Emperor of China, and Min Rama, who became King of Pagān, were all brothers and were descended from the Nāga Princess Thusandi. The Tawng Peng Sawbwa and all his people are her descendants, and the Rumai, or Palaung, women to the present day wear a dress which is "like the skin of a Nāga". The Nāga serpent must have been quite a gay creature, for the women's dress consists of a large hood which is brought to a point at the back of the head and reaches down over the shoulders. The border is white with an inner patch-work pattern of blue, scarlet, and black cotton velvet. The skirt is often composed of panels of cotton velvet of these various colours, with leggings to match, and the general effect is distinctly showy, apart from the broad silver torques, bangles, and ear-rings, and the wide belt of intertwined black varnished rattan hoops, often decked with cowries and seeds" (SCOTT 1918: 276-277, cf. SCOTT and HARDIMAN 1900, I-i, 484-485).

SCOTT and HARDIMAN remarked, "This story has very Burman characteristics about it, and its general lines are of the familiar kind which recall the statement that till King Nawrahta destroyed Thatōn the Pagān people were all serpent worshippers. The Udibwa of ancient days it is almost certain was the King of Yünnan Sen and therefore probably a Tai. It would seem therefore that the Rumai were in Tawngpeng and probably other parts of the present Shan States before the overthrow of the ancient Shan Kingdom of Nanchao and were isolated scattered by the irruption of the Tai." (SCOTT and HARDIMAN 1900, I-i: 485-486). Apart from the controversial point that the Nanchao were the Thai, the historical surmise of the authors is probably correct.

At first glance we are impressed by the differences between the Wa and Palaung traditions. For instance, the Wa myth contains two important elements what are foreign to the egg-origin-myth of the Palaung. They are:

1. The primordial parents-pair
2. The origin of head-hunting.

Yet some similarities become apparent, when we compare them more closely. Points of similarities are:

1. Eggs laid by a dragon-princess from a lake (Palaung) correspond to the tadpole ancestors (Wa).
2. The Naga princess came up from her underworld home to the world of men (Palaung), while the Wa ancestors came out of a cave.
3. The separation of male and female principles plays an important role in the stories (Wa: the separation of the male offsprings from the female ones; Palaung: the separation of the husband and the wife. The latter type appears also in the origin myth of the Mōng Mao Kingdom in the Shan States (SCOTT 1918: 272-274), which bears resemblance further to the Toyotama-hime (Princess Jewel)-myth of the ancient Japan (MATSUMOTO 1942: 321-322).
4. Dispersion of the descendants to different localities.
5. Furthermore, the suggestion of cannibalism and the mention of the Wa country in MILNE's version speak also for the relationship between the Palaung myth and the Wa.

Thus, despite the apparent differences it is not deniable that there exist some significant similarities between the Wa tadpole frog-ancestor-myth and the Palaung egg-origin myth. Now the motif of the origin of mankind or god/hero from egg is widespread in Southeast Asia and Oceania, as the studies by MISHINA (1948: 12-62), BAUMANN (1955: Karte 4 et passim) and HELLBOM (1963) demonstrate:

India (including the Munda), Tibet

Mainland Southeast Asia: Annam, Palaung, Burma (Möng Mao, King Tha-tun, King Wing-Mai), Chin, Lushai, Mikir, Khamti

East Asia: Korea (both northern and southern), Southeastern China, the Li on the Hainan Island

Indonesia: The Paiwan on Formosa, Nias, the Batak on Sumatra, southeast Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, Davao in Mindanao

Oceania: New Britain, Admiralty Islands, Torres Islands, Fiji, Palau, Nauru, Tahiti, Samoa, Maori in New Zealand, Hawaii.

Important in comparison with the Wa myth are the ones from Further India, *inter alia*, of the Annamese, and of the Chin. According to the Annamese myth, a hundred sons were born to the Lord Dragon by the Lady Mother. The hundred sons were called also "hundred eggs" and were believed to be the ancestors of the Hundred Viet (Hundred Yüeh). One day the Lord Dragon declared to Lady Mother: "I am of a dragon origin, while you are of the origin of (mountain) animals. Because of our contradictory nature, we can no more live together". Then the 100 sons were divided into two groups, the one half went to the mountain following their mother, the other to the south following their father (YAMAMOTO 1939: 262-269, cf. NEVERMANN 1952: 13). This recalls to us a part of the Wa myth: their primeval ancestors Ya Htawm and Ya Htai, who had been tadpoles, were blessed with children. Nine sons established themselves in the nine Wa glens, mostly in the west. The ten daughters settled on the fells. The separation of children according to the sex difference is the common element both in the Annamese and Wa myths.

Like the Annamese, the Chin speak of a hundred eggs in their egg-origin myth (FORBES 1878: 254, SCOTT and HARDIMAN 1900, I-i: 458). Judging from the description of WHITEHEAD, the Shö Chin seem to distinguish between the female and male line of ancestry. (WHITEHEAD 1907: 206, cf. HEINE-GELDERN 1921: 119, OBAYASHI 1955: 249-252).

These examples of the Annamese and the Chin resemble the Wa more closely than they do the Palaung, because in both the Annamese and Chin as well as in the Wa myths the separation of male and female offsprings is told of, while in the Palaung and the Shan traditions the separation of the father and mother is emphasized.

BAUMANN pointed out that the man-egg motif is distributed in the areas of high cultures and of their influences, not only concerning the above mentioned part of the world but also the other parts. Furthermore he calls attention to the fact that this motif often is connected with the motif of the separation of the male half from the female half (BAUMANN 1955: 361-362). His theory conforms well with the distribution in Southeast Asia, since the motif is lacking among many of the representatives of the early agricultural strata such as the Naga tribes in Assam, the inland tribes of Formosa and the Philippines as well as in Eastern Indonesia, much less among the primitive hunters tribes.

The question is now, to what extent we should recognize the influence of the egg-origin myth on the Wa tadpole-ancestor myth. We obviously cannot take the Wa myth for a mere

variant of the egg-origin motif, because the Wa tradition contains some important elements which do not necessarily belong to the egg-origin motif, e.g., the emergence of the ancestors from a cave, the sacred lake as a domicile of the ancestors, the idea of the primordial parents-pair, the origin of head-hunting and the subsequent multiplication of the offsprings. These features, partly also common to the Palaung version of the egg-origin myth, are to be ascribed, in my opinion, to a primitive Mon-Khmer agricultural stratum with a bilateral social organization (cf. OBAYASHI 1955). On the other hand, the separation of the descendants according to their sexual difference certainly is to be treated as a trace of influence from the egg-origin myth of more advanced peoples. This influence may have come to the Wa via the Palaung or the Shan. But as we have observed, the mode of separation of the male and female members in the Wa myth is more similar to the Annamese and Chin myths than to the Palaung or Shan ones. Therefore, we also have to reckon with the possibility that the influence came to the Wa from an unknown source other than and prior to the Shan, who settled in the Upper Burma relatively late, and influenced the Palaung culturally to some measure, or prior to the prevalence of Buddhism.

III. *Emergence of Men from a Gourd*

SCOTT reported another myth of the origin of the Wa:

"In the beginning of time, they say, three *pappada* ("hills") were inhabited by two beings, who were neither spirits nor human, and who, though they seem to have been of differing sex, had no earthly passions. They existed spontaneously from the union of earth and water. These the Wa call Yatawm and Yatai, while the Shans name them Ta-hsek-khi and Ya-hsek-khi. The Creator Spirit, who is styled Hkun Hsang Lōng, saw them, and reflecting that they were well suited to become the father and mother of all sentient beings, he named them Ta-hsang Ka-hsi ("Great All-Powerful") and Ya-hsang Ka-hsi ("Grandmother All-Powerful"); and from his dwelling-place in the empyrean, which is called Mōng Hsang, he dropped two *hwe-sampi*, or gourds, down to them.

"Picking up the gourds, Yatawm and Yatai ate them and sowed the seeds near a rock. At the end of three months and seven days the seeds germinated and grew into large creepers; and in the course of three years and seven months the creepers blossomed, each producing a gourd, which, by the end of the full period, had swollen to the size of a hill. At the same time Yatawm and Yatai and the twelve kinds of creatures (concerning whom no details whatever are given) came to know the sexual passion. There is here a kind of suggestion of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but with no hint of an assumption that Hkun Hsang Lōng did not intend the gourds to be eaten. When the gourds had reached their full size, the noise of human beings was heard inside one, and the noise of all kinds of animals inside the other.

"Ya-hsang Ka-hsi at the same time grew great with child and gave birth to a girl who had the ears and legs of a tiger, whence her parents called her Nang Pyek-kha Yek-khi ("Miss Queen Phenomenon") and made over to her all the expanse of earth and water and the two gourds. Apparently the eating of the first two gourds had brought death into the world as well as passion, for the two first beings, we are told, were now

well stricken in years, so that they call aloud and addressed the Nāts and Thagyas, the spirits and archangels, vowing that whatsoever was able to split the gourds should have their daughter to wife.

"At this time there was one Hkun Hsang L'rōng, who had come down from Mōng Hsang in the skies and by eating the ashes of the old earth had become so gross and heavy that he lost the power to reascend to his own country. This suggests the *thalesan*, or flavoured rice, of Burmese legend, which brought about the debasement and fall of the original celestial Brahmās. Hkun Hsang L'rōng was, therefore, constrained to remain upon earth and be associated with the spirits of the hills and dales, the trolls and pixies and kelpies, and he wandered far and wide. He passed through the three thousand forests of Himawunta (the Himalayas), he wandered to the foot of Loi Hsao Mōng, which seems to be a Wa equivalent for Mount Meru, and he crossed mighty rivers and fells to the sources of the Nam Kiu (the Irrawaddy), and thence over to the Nam Kōng (the Salween), which borders the Wa country on the west. Finally he came to the place where Yatawm and Yatai lived, and when he saw their young daughter Nang Pyek-kha Yek-khi, he fell in love with her, in spite of her tiger's ears and legs, and asked for her hand in marriage. The old people were not unwilling, but they told him of the vow which they had made to the spirits of the air, and insisted that only the man who had the power to split the two gourds should wed their daughter.

"Then Hkun Hsang L'rōng recalled the pilgrimages which he had made and the merit he had thereby gained for himself, and he called aloud and said: "If indeed I be a Bodhisattva who, in the fulness of time, am destined to become a Buddha and to save all rational beings, then may the Hkun Sak-ya (Indra) and the Madali Wi-hsa-kyung Nat, that powerful Spirit, descend and give me the two handed Sakya sword, the celestial weapon!" Thereupon the two eternal beings came down from the Elysian Fields and gave him the magic falchion, two-edged and wonderful. With this he cut open the two gourds; first that which enclosed all the animals of the earth, and then that in which the human beings were contained. Before he struck, however, he called to warn those inside. The hare and the crab were very anxious to get out. The hare curled himself up in a ball with his head between his legs and watched for the stroke of the sword; but the crab crept beside him and took no precautions. When the blade fell, the hare leaped out of the way, but the crab was cut in half. Such was the glory of the sword that there was no stain of blood upon it, and ever since crabs have remained bloodless creatures. Then Hkun Hsang L'rōng took up the shell of the crab and said: "If in truth this world is to be the abode of rational beings and the birth-place of the five Buddhas, then let this be for a sign, that where the shell of this crab falls, there shall a lake be found". With these words he flung the crab's shell down on the mountain-top, and thus the lake Nawng Hkeo was formed, and on its shores Hkun Hsang L'rōng built a city called Mōng Mai. This Nawng Hkeo Lake is the sacred mere of the Wa and covers a large area on the crest of a whale-back ridge not far from the Chinese frontier. Since this place was the motherland, and its inhabitants were the parents of all the generations of men, it was afterward named Sampula Teng, and the people were termed Sampula, the first of the children of men on this world, called Badda (Pāli *bhadda*, "god"). Hkun Hsang L'rōng, however, named it Mōng Wa ("the Country of the Wa") and said: "Whoso attacks or injures Mōng Wa and harms its children, the Wa Hpilu Yek-kha, may he be

utterly destroyed by the Sak-ya weapons!" He declared the land to be independent forever of all the countries surrounding it, so that it has remained a purely La Wa Hpilu Yek-kha region from the beginning till now; and he made the country rich with the seven kinds of metals—gold, silver, iron, copper, lead, tin, and the soil of the earth, the latter being a metal according to Burmese notions.

"The races of men that came out of the great gourd were sixty in number, and they were divided into four classes: those who lived on rice; those who lived on maize; those who lived on flesh; and those who lived on roots. Each had its own language and raiment and manner of living. From these are descended the five clans of Yang (Karens), two clans of Pawng (who they were does not appear), five clans of Tai (Shans), six clans of Hkè (Chinamen), ten clans of Hpai (also undermined), two clans who were neither Hkè nor Tai, and thirteen clans of Hpilu Yek-kha.

"There were nine aged persons who came out of the gourd when it was cut open, and Hkun Hsang L'röng, after making them his Ministers in Möng Mang-lün Sampula, arranged with them the distribution of the different races. The Hpilu Yek-ka lived in the centre, the Hpai in the south-east, the forty-one races of Hkun Hsang L'röng's family in the south-west, the Tai in the north-west, and the Hkè in the north-east.

"The six clans of the Pyamma Yek-kha and the twelve clans of the Twatahsa were among the descendants of Hkun Hsang L'röng. He was supreme sovereign and built the two cities of Nawng Hkeo and Nawng Awng Pu. He had three sons: Mang Lu, Mang Lai, and Mang Lön, and when they were thirty-seven years of age, in the year seventy of religion (673 B.C.), they went to Nawng Tarigu, the source of the Nam Kōng (the Salween), where the kings, Hpi Lu and Hpi Hpai, gave them their daughters in marriage. Mang Lön had a son, Mang Kyaw Sa, who married a Wa Princess and later had an amour with a Nāga Princess, who laid an egg in a teak forest in his country. The egg was hatched by a tiger, and the child who came from it took at first the name of Hkun Hsak, from the teak forest where he was born, though afterward he was known as Hsö Hkan Hpa ("the Tiger King") when he became famous and founded the city of Wing Mai" (SCOTT 1918: 288-292).

SCOTT commented on this tradition: "This is a jumble of Buddhism, totemism, and simple fantasy which seems to represent very well the vicissitudes, if not of the Wa States themselves, at least of the country round about" (SCOTT, loc. cit.). Also, "this is much disfigured by additions obviously taken from Shan and Buddhism history" (SCOTT and HARDIMAN 1900, I-i: 496).

However, there are two important elements in this story common to the cave myth with the head-hunting theme:

1. The primordial parents are called Ya Tawm and Ya Tai here as well as there.
2. The first parents were blessed with children, first after eating a certain food, i.e. man or gourd.

One of the interesting points in this Wa myth is the mention of Princess Tiger (Miss Queen Phenomenon) and of the Tiger King. Possibly this feature can be ascribed to a Shan influence, because among the Hsenwi Shan a tiger-ancestor-myth is told (TEMPLE 1910: 24).

The second interesting point is the classification of peoples according to the ways of their subsistence economy. "The races of men that came out of the great gourd were sixty

in number, and they were divided into four classes: those who lived on rice; those who lived on maize; those who lived on flesh; and those who lived on roots. Each had its own language and raiment and manner of living". It might be interpreted as a reflection of an ethnographical condition of bygone days in the Sino-Burman border area, in which rice-cultivators, maize-cultivators, hunters and roots-cultivators or roots-gatherers lived side by side there. If so, we are confronted here with the problem of the introduction of maize in this area. The maize goes back possibly as far as the age of Dongson Culture in the Mainland of Southeast Asia (HEINE-GELDERN 1958: 396). However, another possibility should also be taken into consideration, that is, the possibility that the maize was introduced first after the discovery of the New World by Europeans, and the mentioning of maize is a later addition, or possibly a later substitution of millets. Unfortunately, the myth does not give any accurate answer to the problem of which particular present-day tribes are the descendants of the peoples of the particular ways of subsistence.

The third interesting point is the motif of the birth or emergence of the tribal ancestors from the big gourd. As it is well known to ethnologists, the motif of mankind out of plants is very widely distributed in Southeast-Asia as well as in Eastern Asia. Variants of this motif are reported from:

Eastern Asia: Japan, Southern Korea, Quelpart Island, China (especially Southwestern China: historical non-Chinese tribes such as the Ai-lao, the Yeh-lang)

Further India: Assam, Khamti, Shan, Wa, Kachin, Chin, Lao, Tai, Champa, Mentr, Semang

Indonesia: Formosa (Pyuma, Tayal, Paiwan, Yami), Bontok-Igorot, Tagalog, Manobo, Moro, Ceram, Ceramlaut, Northern Nias, Mentawai, Pasé-Dynasty on Sumatra, Batak, Central-, Northern-, and Southeastern Tribes of Borneo (KÜHN 1935: 57-59, 134-135, MISHINA 1943: 250-291, MÜNSTERBERGER 1939, OBAYASHI 1961: 34-38).

The motif of the origin of mankind from plant probably goes back ultimately to early agricultural complexes in Southeast and East Asia, as it has already been suggested by MÜNSTERBERGER (1939: 231) and SCHMITZ (1960: 138-139, 242). However, this does not mean that the origin of mankind from plants ceases to exist in later cultures. On the contrary, it continues to flourish in younger cultures.

Three further points should be discussed in connection with the gourd-origin myth of the Wa.

First, of the whole Southeast Asia, the northern Further India favours as the kind of plant of origin, *inter alia*, the gourd (gourd: Lao, Wa, Kachin, Chin; gourd-seed: Assam, Shan; cucumber: Siam (KÜHN 1935: loc. cit., TEMPLE 1910: 24: ARCHAIMBAULT 1959: 38, 402, 409). Therefore it is clear that the Wa myth belongs to this gourd-cycle.

Second, we must also pay attention to the flood myths in Further India in this connection since the survivors, often a brother and a sister, escaped in a gourd or pumpkin, from which they emerged afterwards to populate the world. This motif is reported from the Yao, Lolo, Miao, Chung-chia, Thai, Lisu and Lahu (KÜHN 1935: 97-106, WALK 1949: 107-110, LI 1955: 175-177). Important is the fact that it is known also from the Lamet (IZIKOWITZ 1951: 22), the Khamuk (ROUX 1954: 298-300) and the Lawa (OBAYASHI 1964: 114-116), all of whom are the close relatives of the Wa both linguistically and culturally. However, the Wa myth is devoid of both the flood element and the brother-sister incest, so we cannot ally it to the flood-cycle. It belongs rather to the simple gourd origin discussed above.

Third, we have still to investigate the relationship between the gourd-origin myth and the egg-origin myth. As HELLBOM puts it, the egg is a fertility symbol *par excellence*. "An important fertility symbol is, however, also the calabash, notably in China. Worthy of note is that the calabash both in China and in other quarters inter alia on Hawaii as well as in Africa and on Jamaica replaces the egg in many tales with otherwise the same contents as the typical egg stories.

This replacement technique, for that matter ever so common place in the folk literature, is frequently to a large extent due to ecological, at times also cultural, factors" (HELLBOM 1963: 100).

Indeed in the last part of the Wa myth the motif of egg origin crops up, which is similar to the above quoted Palaung myth in the fact that eggs were born as a result of the love between a Prince from without and a Naga princess. But this part of the story is rather secondary or additional in the whole construction of the story. The problem is whether the whole plot is to be interpreted as a variant of the egg story or not. Even if we were to assume a close connection between the egg story and the gourd story in general, we would still have to presume a long existence of the gourd motif as a well established motif in the Further India. Two circumstances speak for this assumption: first, the wide and continuous distribution of the gourd motif there; second, the absence of the element of the separation of the male and female descendants in most of the versions there, including that of the Wa. So we should reject the interpretation of a direct and *in situ* replacement of the origin egg by the gourd in the Wa myth.

In conclusion, we have to interpret the gourd myth of the Wa as belonging to the gourd cycle of northern Further India; however, it does not belong to the egg origin myth.

As TEMPLE remarked, this gourd myth stems from the Tame Wa, but not from the Wild Wa (TEMPLE 1910: 24). Both the occurrence of the gourd motif among the Shan and Lao as well as the strong influence of the Shan culture on the Tame Wa allow us to presume that the gourd myth of the Tame Wa is a new theme diffused from the Shan.

IV. *Heavenly Origin of Men*

According to the above quoted gourd story of the Tame Wa the gourds from which the ancestors emerged were dropped from the Heaven. Now the Wa have another story which tells us of their heavenly origin in a more marked way.

LIANG cites a myth of the Wa in Burma:

"According to their tradition, the Wa descended from the heaven; A Wa woman wearing a silver band on her head, which had been given to her by the Moon, was the first to descend. Later the Sun gave a set of bow and arrows to a Wa man, and let him descend from the heaven. At the time of descent they had already seen the Salween River. Later these two Wa came together and formed a family, becoming the ancestors of the Wa. This Wa man was the Elephant King, who came to be famous in later times" (LIANG 1961: 149).

According to KÜHN, the motif of heavenly origin of man is known from China, Lolo, Singpho, Naga, Kachari, Daphla, Ahom, Borneo, Celebes and Ryukyu (KÜHN 1935: 55-57).

We can add to this list the Lao (ARCHAMBAULT 1959: 395) and the Nocte (ELWIN 1958: 51). Also the Palaung have a version:

"Long long ago, eight spirits came down to build the world. They came down gladly, talking together, because they had smelt odours ascending from the earth. The spirits came down to eat of the fragrant earth, and they found it so delicious that they remained nine thousand years. They had also eaten of the green leaves, and, after all these years, they were heavy with eating, and could no longer fly. So they were obliged to remain on the earth. Four of them turned into women and four became men, and they became the first parents of the human race. They were no longer ethereal beings, but were formed of four elements, as the human race now is. (The face of man is like the face of a monkey and ever has been). They made and ate food of every kind" (MILNE 1924: 364).

However, these versions generally lack the important elements of the Wa version, namely the idea of the primordial parents-pair and the connection of the dynastic founder to the sun and the moon as well as to the regalia made of precious metal. In this regard it is worthy of note that the versions most resembling the Wa are found among the Thai tribes in northern Further India. I quote here first the Shan myth:

Hkun Lu and Hkun Lai are generally accepted in all traditions as the first Shan kings.

"They are usually fabled to have come down from the sun and to have been accompanied by two ministers of state, one descended from the sun and the other from the moon; and they were also attended by an astrologer, descended from the family of Jupiter, and by a number of other mythical personages..." (SCOTT 1918: 275).

Essentially the same is the tradition of the Ahom in Assam:

"Die Chroniken der Ahom beginnen (nach ROBINSON) mit einer Berathung zwischen den zwei Königen des Himmels, Lengdum und Thenkham, die beschlossen, ihre beiden Brüder Khun lai und Khun tai als Könige auf Erden einzusetzen. Begleitet von Khun tun, dem Sohne des Mondes, und Khum bum, dem Sohne der Sonne, als priesterlichen Berathern, und mit zwölf Familien der Phokun oder Burunas stiegen sie auf einer goldenen Leiter vom Himmel herab, zum hohen Berggipfel Charai karang, der zuweilen mit einer der Spitzen der Patkoi-Kette identifirt wird..." (BASTIAN 1866: 83).

According to the myth of the White Tai of Phu-qui in the north of Vietnam:

"Autrefois, en ce monde d'ici-bas, il y avait de l'eau, il y avait de la terre, mais il n'y avait personne pour les mettre en ordre. Le ciel dit au seigneur 'I-t'u' et à la dame 'I-t'u' oñ: "L'eau, descendez la boire; la terre, descendez la mettre en ordre! "Et ils descendirent; il allèrent abattre les arbres de la forêt pour faire des rizières de montagne et avoir à manger". But when the rice ripened birds and rats devoured the rice. After the failure of 'I-t'u' and 'I-t'u' oñ, the Heaven let the seigneur T'in exploit the earth. Also he failed. At last the Heaven ordered Pu-yù and Ña-mù' to descend for exploitation of the earth. The seigneur Pu-yù was successful with the help of a silver ax and a gold one borrowed from the Heaven and is still revered by the people as the guardian god of the country in the form of a tree (MASPERO 1924: 60-63).

As we have seen, in the Shan version two sons of the Sun descended from heaven, accompanied by the two ministers of state, descended from the sun and the moon respectively. Sons of the Sun and the Moon descended also in the Ahom version. In the White Tai version, the first husband and wife failed to exploit the earth, but the last couple succeeded in it with the help of a silver ax and a gold one. So these two myths show strong resemblances with the Wa myth.

Alfred KÜHN in his discussion of the heavenly origin motif in Further India suggest a possible Indian influence, after enumerating the occurrence:

“Diese Aufstellung zeigt ein ausgesprochenes Überwiegen der indochinesischen Völker, welche in Reichweite des indischen Einflusses liegen. Damit soll noch nicht gesagt sein, daß die vorhandenen Mythen sämtlich ihr Dasein dem indischen Einflusse verdanken. Dazu ist der Gedanke von der Herabkunft der Menschheit zu allgemein menschlicher Art, als daß er nicht bei verschiedenen Völkern hätte unabhängig entstehen können. Aber wir dürfen wohl wenigstens sagen, daß gerade die Einwirkung ähnlicher Vorstellungen von Indien her ein Verschwinden dieser Überlieferungen bei den fraglichen Indochinesen verhütet hat, indem die alten Mythen (immer vorausgesetzt, sie seien bei den Indochinesen wirklich vorhanden gewesen) nicht durch andere indische verdrängt und ersetzt, sondern im Gegenteil wach gehalten wurden. Damit ist nur ein Erklärungsversuch, welcher jeder besseren Ansicht weichen kann. Ein abschließendes, unfehlbares Urteil wird kaum je gefällt werden können” (KÜHN 1935: 134).

Be that as it may Indian or other, we have enough reasons to suppose influences of some high cultures in many of the heavenly origin myths in Further India. This holds especially for the versions of the Thai peoples, because of the elements like dynastic founder, ministers of state, cosmological implications of royal lines and the regalia of precious metals.

We are now in the position to conclude that the heavenly origin myth of the Wa is to be ascribed to the influence of the Thai with high culture imprints. However, the problem of the primordial parents-pair remains to be resolved. As we have seen, in the Thai versions often two persons descended from the heaven to the earth. But the character of the primordial parents-pair is rather weak there. Perhaps this feature represents the indigenous concept of the Wa, on which the motif of heavenly origin was grafted.

V. Conclusion

The Wa on the Sino-Burmese borders have three different motifs of anthropogonic myths. The first is the emergence from a cave, and is to be considered their original motif. To this belong further the elements such as the sacred lake as a domicile of the ancestors, the tadpole ancestors, the idea of the primordial parents-pair, the origin of head-hunting and the subsequent multiplication of the offsprings. We may ascribe this motif to a primitive Mon-Khmer agricultural stratum with slash-and-burn cultivation of millet or other grains. Some influence of the egg-origin motif of high culture imprints affected this motif among the Wa to a small extent: introducing the element of the separation of the male offsprings and the female ones.

The second motif is the emergence of mankind from a gourd. This motif is reported

not from the Wild Wa, but from the Tame Wa. Therefore we are entitled to assume this second motif to be younger than the first one of the emergence from a cave. The Wa gourd myth belongs neither to the flood myth nor egg-origin myth, but to the gourd cycle of northern Further India. This motif seems to have diffused from the Shan to the Wa.

The third motif is the heavenly origin of mankind. The Wa myth is to be ascribed to the influence of the Thai with high culture imprints, which was grafted on the original Wa concept of the primordial parents-pair.

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