

FURTHER NOTES ON FAIRY TALES OF COMMON ORIGIN.

In connection with my small paper on *Fairy Tales of Common Origin* as published in JPRS., Vol. XXXIII, Part 2, pp. 143-146, the following extracts, taken from Miss Nora K. Chadwicks' learned paper *The Spiritual Ideas and Experiences of the Tatars of Central Asia* (1), may be of interest. In the epics of the Altai Tatars, mention is often made of women who can don swan garments and fly aloft singing. According to Tatar beliefs, which seem to be very much influenced by the ancient Nordic religion, there exists a supreme God, Bai Ülgön, generally called Kudai. He is the God Creator, "a man without a father". Under him are Jajas or "decreers of birth," living on a lower plane in the heavens, which remind one strikingly of the Nordic *Fylgjur* (protective spirits). These Jajas have daughters, seven or nine in number, who fly about in swan garments. It is furthermore said that earthly women, who also possess the power of donning garments of swan feathers and flying, may sometimes meet the daughters of the seven Kudais and play and swim with them in a golden sea.

Have we not here the whole stage set for the exploits of Lazybones who, it will be remembered, stole the swan feathers of Indra's seven daughters while they were bathing in a sylvan pool? It has also touching points with the tales from Melanesia and Scandinavia.

Among the Sema Nagas the following tale is told in their own words (2). A man had two sons, both their parents died, and the two brothers thus lived alone. Sky maidens used to come from heaven down the frontal post of their house and washed themselves. The brothers spied upon

(1) *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. LXVI, 1936, July & December.

(2) Dr. J. H. Hutton: *The Sema Nagas*, p. 329.

them. Two girls came down and washed. The brothers seized them. The elder brother being jealous (he had got the ugly girl, one must suppose!) managed to get his younger brother killed, and would seize his pretty wife. But she tricked him and ascended into heaven. There she gave birth to a male child. The child grew up and wished to go down to the earth to his father's village. His mother let him down by a thread tied to his waist. A crow came and broke the thread, and the boy was dashed to death."

When comparing this tale with the Melanesian one, given by Dr. Leo Frobenius, the similarity is striking, and due to the number of almost identical customs and ideas, of the various tribes of Assam, which are met with among the natives of the Insulinde and Melanesia, it seems reasonable to presume that the Melanesians also got their tale about Quat and the heavenly maidens from Assam *via* the Insulinde.

The myth about Lazybones and the girl in the elephant's tusk is also found in Champā, but in a somewhat altered form. In Paul Mus' *Etudes indiennes et indochinoises—Deux légendes chamées* (3) we meet the girl, who slips out of the elephant's tusk during the absence of the Chām King, Po Tabai, and, after having prepared the king's meal, again hides in the tusk. This elephant's tusk really belonged to Indra's many headed mount, the elephant Eravana, and was found in a pond by King Po Tabai's servants.

The story goes on telling how King Po Tabai surprises the girl who becomes his wife, but the idyll ends in disaster as the girl deceives her husband with an ogre. The girl confronted by the angry king with her infidelity is transformed into melting black lead which disappears inside the tusk. M. Paul Mus in an explanatory note says that the maid in the tusk, Nai Balā, in reality is the protecting house spirit of the king, and that the king's *merit* is connected with a white elephant. The maid, or nymph, in the elephant's tusk, belongs to the Indian tradition according to which a whole wonderful microcosmos exists inside both of Eravana's tusks. Here are found lotus ponds and dancing apsaras. The Pali commentary to Chagatidipani says that in each of Eravana's tusks are seven flower-filled ponds. Each lotus flower has seven petals, on each of which seven nymphs are dancing. Though this setting of the scene reminds one a little of the pond in our story about Lazybones and Indra's seven daughters, the connection between them is not easy to establish, though

(3) *vide* BEFEO, Vol. XXXI—1931, No. 1, p. 39.

the *apsaras* are of course also winged divine creatures. According to M. Mus, the above-mentioned ogre, Rak Binsvo'r, who seduces the maid in the tusk, is none other than Ravana, the demon prince of Laṅkā (Ceylon).

A Cambodian myth (4) relates how the gods of the Hindu Olympus shook for fear of this evil demon who always pursued the wives of these immortal gods. Even mighty Indra, king of the gods, was afraid and shut up his wives inside a cave, but Ravana, transformed into a chameleon, hides himself at the door of the cave and thus finds out the magic word by which Indra opens the rocky door. During the absence of the god, Ravana penetrates into his harem and, transforming himself into the likeness of Indra, he seduces the god's principal wife, Suciṭrā (5). Lazybones may therefore personify Ravana who steals Indra's seven daughters, but the myth as given by Dr. le May evidently consists of at least three independent tales which have become mixed up. Thus the girl in the tusk, the winged maidens and the three magic objects, the drum, the staff and the bag (6), are all different tales. It seems that we are here faced with several different currents of myths coming from India, that land of fairy tales, no doubt, and perhaps also from the north, which have been amalgamated into the Lāo or Thai Yuan folk tale about Lazybones.

It may be added that M. Mus in his *Cultes indiennes et indigènes au Chamu* (7) says that in another version of the aforementioned Cham tale, it is Indra himself who deceives his friend and ally, King Po Tabai with the damsel in the tusk. Here Indra transforms himself into the likeness of the king and thus fools the girl. However to accept this tale seems to wrong the god, though old Brahmanic texts do mention the erotical weaknesses of this mighty thunder god. (Like Zeus of the Greek pantheon).

My friend, His Highness Prince Dhani Nivat, has kindly drawn my attention to a passage in the Khon libretto (8) wherein is described the

(4) vide G. Coedès: *Notes archéologiques. Le Bayon d'Angkor Thom, les bas-reliefs*. Paris 1913.

(5) vide Henri Marchal's *Guide archéologique aux temples d'Angkor* p. 102. Galerie Nord, aile ouest, or in his English translation *Archeological guide to Angkor* p. 133-134.

(6) vide BEFEO. Vol. XXXIII, 1933, No. 1, p. 408.

(7) A very similar tale is found in Jataka No. 185 where these magic objects are a drum, a staff and a bag. Vide Prof. Poul Tuxen: *Fairy tales from Ancient India (Eventyr fra det gamle Indien)*, translated from the Pali texts, which may represent the *primary tale*.

(8) I am quoting from Prince Dhani's letter.

assumption by Indrajit, Ravana's favourite son, of the form of Indra in order to disguise himself and take his enemy unawares. The demon in the guise of Indra is mounted on Bravana, also a demon in disguise, which has 33 heads each having seven tusks, in each of which is a lotus pond. Each lotus pond in its turn contains seven blue flowers of the lotus (to be more exact—scientifically—one should say lilies rather than lotuses), each of which has seven petals. Each petal bears seven beautiful celestial damsels, each of whom has seven attendants, all of whom join in the ensemble of dance and song, intended to mislead the army of Rama drawn up in battle array.

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