

Austronesian parallels in Kojiki and Indo-Pacific sources of "folk Christianity"

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At least two motifs of "Kojiki" have specific Austronesian parallels. One of them, the origin of cultivated plants from the body of Goddess of Food, is well known. Another motif seems to be still unnoticed by the researchers.

The motif in question is included into the cosmogonic myth (ch. 1-6). When Idzanagi and Idzanami descend from the sky to primeval island, they are engaged into the dialogue asking each other about peculiarities of their bodies. Being informed about their male and female characteristics, Idzanami becomes to walk around the original column from the right and Idzanagi from the left. When they meet again, Idzanami says, "What a handsome youth!". Idzanagi says in response, "What a beautiful maiden!". They marry but Idzanami gives birth to a worm. Sky gods advice the first couple to repeat their marriage ceremony in such a way that the man and not the woman would speak first. After this Idzanami gives birth to the islands of Japan and other noble *kami*.

This episode has its counterparts in creation stories of Taiwan aboriginals. According to the Ami myth, after the flood brother and sister married each other but the sister gave birth to snakes and frogs. The Sun sent gods to teach the first couple the divine ceremonies and after this they begot normal children (Ho Ting-jui 1964: 39-40; 1967, no. 94: 268-269; Matsumoto 1928: 122-123]. In a version of this myth, brother and sister who survived the flood get from the Sun permission to marry each other but the sister gives birth to a crab and a fish. The Moon explains that because marriage among siblings is not generally allowed, they should copulate through a mat. After this the sister gives birth to a stone with four babies inside and these children become the ancestors of the Ami and the Chinese [Matsumoto 1927: 123; Walk 1949: 96]. In Paiwan version the motif of the re-marriage by the order of gods is absent but in other respects the story is similar to the Ami one. Brother and sister who survived the flood married each other but their first children were blind, maimed, etc. The next children were not so badly disfigured and the last ones were perfect [Ho Ting-jui 1967, no.93: 267-268].

There are parallels for such an episode in the stories of Ngaju of southern Borneo. Several versions of Ngaju creation myths were recorded, some of them similar to Paiwan one (first children of the primeval couple are animals or spirits but no re-marriage). However, at least one version contains the motif of the re-marriage initiated by gods. Mahatara throws from the sky two pieces of wood, they turn into a man and a woman. First the woman produces miscarriages which turn into different

spirits according to the place where each of them fell or was put (water, dry land, forest). After this Mahatara descends to earth to teach the couple how to carry out the marriage ceremony, and then the woman gives birth to three male ancestors [Mallinckrodt 1924 in Schärer 1966: 76-77].

The theme of the first couple who gave birth several times with some of the children becoming spirits or worms (reptiles, predator animals, etc.) while others became real humans is also found among Austronesians of Flores Island [Fischer 1932: 227] with less direct correspondences among the Mandaya of the Philippines (origin of spirits only) [Cole 1913: 172]. Geographically more distant parallels are found among the Tibeto-Burman and Dravidian peoples of South Asia and Burma: Lepcha [Sieger 1967: 112-113], Bugun [Elwin 1958a, № 4: 10-13; 1958b, № 5: 112-114], Kachin (origin of spirits only [Gilhodes 1909, № 33: 116-117]), Pulaya [Thaliath 1956: 1033-1034]. These Asian stories have close analogies further to the northwest among northern Russians and Belorussians [Belova 2004: 246], Karelians [Belova 2004: 245-248], Norwegians and Islanders [Christiansen 1964, № 39: 91-92; Simpson 1972: 28-29], Saami [Enges 1999: 229-230], Udmurt [Moshkov 1900: 202; Potanin 1883: 800], Komi [Limerov 2005, nos. 66, 353: 63, 404-405], northern Kirghiz [Tolstov 1931: 275]. Numerous versions recorded all across Western and Southern Europe and Northern Africa are slightly different. God visits the first woman who conceals from him part of her children. These children become not spirits or reptiles but the ancestors of the poor commoners while those children who had been demonstrated to God became the ancestors of the rich and the noble [Uther 2004, no. 758: 415-416].

European, North African and Central Asian cases are characteristic for the "folk religions" of the Christian and Muslim peoples. Though the primeval couple in all these stories is Adam and Eve, the motif of spirits and humans born by the first woman has nothing to do with the Bible or the Quran and finds no parallels in the early sources on Mediterranean and European mythologies. This motif is only one in a series of others (e.g. "Original earth wider than sky"; "Earth on the back of a bull and/or fish"; "Body of the first humans had hard covering from which finger and toe nails remained"; possibly "Sun cannot marry because his children would burn the world") which came from the east. In the Indo-Pacific Asia from the non-Aryan India till Austronesian world these motifs were part of actual mythological beliefs. After being brought to the west, they were incorporated into "folk Christianity" and "folk Islam" ignored by official Christian and Muslim doctrines.

What is the place of "Kojiki" in this trans-Eurasian picture? In comparison with the most of other East, South and Southeast Asian cases, "Kojiki" is rather vaguely related to the European stories and certainly was not its source. However, the Japanese case is

firmly connected with the Ami and Ngaju. All the three contain not only the motif of spirits or worms begot by primeval couple together with real people or gods but also the motif of the re-marriage by the order of the high gods after which only good children are born. Because no parallels for such a series of episodes are known among the Altaic (including the Koreans), Ainu and Paleoasiatic peoples, there is good reason to believe that all this story came to Japan from the south and not to the Austronesians from the north. With the A.D. 712 date of "Kojiki", we can presume that both motifs, i.e. "Spirits as well as humans/gods begot by primeval couple" and "New or formally arranged marriage ceremony corrects the nature of the first children" were deeply rooted in traditional mythology of Taiwan and island Southeast Asia. Consequently the transmission of all the series of motifs in question from east (southeast) to west (northwest) and not vice versa is plausible.

Additional argument in favor of the same conclusion presents the mythology of Tsimshian Indians of British Columbia. The Tsimshian creation myth [Boas 1895, № XXIII/2: 278; 1902: 72; Deans 1891: 34] has obvious parallels not only among the neighboring Talhtan [Teit 1919-1921, № 21: 216] but also in "Kojiki" (ch. 32), Nihon Shoki (ch. 2) and in the Philippines (Apayao, Tboli [Eugenio 1994, № 165, 182: 282, 307-308; Wilson 1947b: 87]; probably also Urawa Papuans [Schmitz 1960: 241-243 in Yamada 2002: 69]). The Tsimshian version lacks any traces of European borrowings and contains the motif of "Original skin as hard as finger or toe nails". Consequently, the latter motif had to be known in East Asia before some of the cultural ancestors of the Tsimshian moved to America. Making another logical step, we can conclude that the motif in question was brought to western Eurasia from the east.

The very fact of migration of folklore motifs across Eurasia from beginning of the formation of trans-Eurasian economic and cultural links in the last centuries B.C. does not seem strange. But the transmission of the entire class of motifs related to cosmology in only one direction, from east to west, deserves special attention and is not so easy to explain.