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Marinus Willem de VISSER

THE DRAGON IN CHINA



The dragon in China

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THE DRAGON IN CHINA AND JAPAN

par Marinus Willem de VISSER (1876-1930)

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CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#) : The Nāga in Buddhism, with regard to his identification with the Chinese dragon.

- § 1. The Nāga according to European scholars.
- § 2. The Nāga according to some translated texts.
- § 3. The Nāga as a giver of rain.
- § 4. Sūtras recited in rain ceremonies.

THE DRAGON IN CHINA

[CHAPTER I : The dragon in the Chinese classics.](#)

- § 1. *Yih king*.
- § 2. *Shu king*.
- § 3. *Li ki*.
- § 4. *Cheu li*.
- § 5. *I-li*.

[CHAPTER II : Divination and geomancy.](#)

- § 1. Lucky omen.
- § 2. Bad omens : A. Fighting dragons - B. Dead dragons - C. Dragons appearing at wrong times - D. Dragons appearing in wrong places.
- § 3. Dragon-horses.
- § 4. Geomancy.

[CHAPTER III : General information.](#)

- § 1. Enormous light-giving mountain gods.
- § 2. Nature of the dragons.
- § 3. What dragons like and dislike.
- § 4. Shape of the dragons.
- § 5. Male and female dragons.
- § 6. Different kinds of dragons.
- § 7. Kiao lung.
- § 8. Rearing and taming dragons.
- § 9. Dragons ridden by *sien*, or drawing the cars of gods and holy men.
- § 10. Dragon-boats.
- § 11. "Dragon-tail-road" and other words connected with the dragon.
- § 12. Dragon-gate.
- § 13. Dragon's dens.
- § 14. Dragon herds.
- § 15. Dragon's pearls.
- § 16. Dragon's eggs.
- § 17. Dragon's bones, skins, teeth, horns, brains, livers, placentae and foetus, used as medicines.
- § 18. Dragon's blood, fat and saliva.

The dragon in China

CHAPTER IV : Ornaments.

- § 1. Symbols of Imperial dignity and fertilizing rain, represented on garments, honorary gates, coffins etc.
- § 2. Nine different kinds of dragons, used as ornaments.
- § 3. Ornaments used by Wu-ist priests and mediums.
- § 4. The dragons and the ball.

CHAPTER V : Causing rain, thunder and storm.

- § 1. The gods of thunder, clouds and rain.
- § 2. Violent rains accompanied by heavy winds and thunderstorms.
- § 3. Rain magic and prayers.
- § 4. Buddhist rain ceremonies.

CHAPTER VI : Emperors connected with dragons.

- § 1. Hwang Ti rode on a dragon.
- § 2. Yao and Kao Tsu were sons of dragons.
- § 3. Shun was visited by a yellow dragon.
- § 4. Yu drove in a carriage drawn by dragons, and was assisted by a ying lung.
- § 5. Ming Hwang's vessel was moved forward by a dragon.
- § 6. Two yellow dragons threatened to upset Yu's vessel.
- § 7. Shi Hwang died on account of having killed a dragon.

CHAPTER VII : Transformations.

- § 1. The dragon's transformations are unlimited.
- § 2. Appearing as old men or beautiful women.
- § 3. Appearing as fishes.
- § 4. Appearing as snakes, dogs or rats.
- § 5. A cow transformed into a dragon.
- § 6. Appearing as objects.

CHAPTER VIII : The indian Nāga in China.

- § 1. Reborn as a dragon.
- § 2. Ponds inhabited by Dragon-kings.
- § 3. Temples of Dragon-kings.
- § 4. Palaces of Dragon-kings.

CHAPTER X : Conclusions.

Index

PREFACE

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p.v The student of Chinese and Japanese religion and folklore soon discovers the mighty influence of Indian thought upon the Far-Eastern mind. Buddhism introduced a great number of Indian, not especially Buddhist, conceptions and legends, clad in a Buddhist garb, into the eastern countries. In China Taoism was ready to gratefully take up these foreign elements which in many respects resembled its own ideas or were of the same nature. In this way the store of ancient Chinese legends was not only largely enriched, but they were also mixed up with the Indian fables. The same process took place in Japan, when Buddhism, after having conquered Korea, in the sixth century of our era reached Dai Nippon's shores. Before a hundred years had elapsed the Japanese mind got imbued with foreign ideas, partly Chinese, partly Indian. To the mixture of these two elements a third one, consisting of the original Japanese conceptions, was added, and a very intricate complex was formed. Whoever studies the Japanese legends has the difficult task of analysing this complex into its parts.

No mythical creature is more familiar to Far-Eastern art and literature than the dragon. It is interesting to observe how in Japan three different kinds of dragons, originating from India, China and Japan, are to be found side by side. To the superficial observer they all belong to one and the same class of rain bestowing, thunder and storm arousing gods of the water, but a careful examination teaches us that they are different from each other.

The Indian serpent-shaped *Nāga* was identified in China with the four-legged Chinese dragon, because both were divine inhabitants of seas and rivers, and givers of rain. It is no wonder that the Japanese in this blending of Chinese and Indian ideas recognized their own serpent or dragon-shaped gods of rivers and mountains, to whom they used to

The dragon in China

pray for rain in times of drought. Thus the ancient legends of three countries were combined, and features of the one were used to adorn the other. In order to throw light upon these facts we must examine the p.vi Buddhist ideas concerning the Nāgas which came from India to the East. Being not acquainted with the Sanscrit language, we have to refer to the works of European scholars and to translations, in order to explain the western elements found in Chinese and Japanese dragon legends. This being our only aim with regard to the Nāgas, we will deal with them only by way of introduction.

In the First Book we have systematically arranged the most interesting quotations concerning the dragon in China, selected from the enormous number of passages on this divine animal found in Chinese literature from the remotest ages down to modern times. In order to give the original conceptions we did not quote the numerous poems on the dragon, because the latter, although based upon those conceptions, enlarged them in their own poetical way...

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my hearty thanks to Professor De Groot, whose kind assistance enabled me to largely extend the Chinese part of this paper. Not only was his very rich and interesting library at my disposal, but he himself was an invaluable guide to me through the labyrinth of many a difficult Chinese passage. Moreover, from the very beginning his splendid works, especially the [*Religious System of China*](#), formed the basis of my studies in Chinese and Japanese religion and folklore.

I also tender my best thanks to Professor Speyer, who with great kindness gave me most valuable information concerning the Nāgas, and to Miss E. Schmidt, who kindly put her knowledge and time at my disposal in undertaking the weary labour of perusing the manuscript and correcting its language.

Leiden. M. W. de Visser.

INTRODUCTION

The Nāga in Buddhism, with regard to his identification with the Chinese dragon

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§ 1. The Nāga according to European scholars

^{p.001} In order to learn the Buddhist conceptions on the Nāga's nature, and the reasons why the Chinese identified this serpent with their four-legged dragon, we have to consult the works of some authorities on Buddhism : Kern, Hardy, Grünwedel and others. For the Nāga, known in the Far East, is clad in a *Buddhist* garb, and the legends about him which became popular in China and Japan were all imbued with Buddhism. Kern, in his *History of Indian Buddhism* ¹, states that the Nāgas occupy the eighth rank in the system of the world, after the Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas, Arhats, Devas, Brahmas, Gandharvas and Garuḍas, and before the Yakshas, Kumbhāṇḍas (goblins), Asuras (demons), Rākṣasas (giants), Pretas (ghosts, spectres) and the inhabitants of hell.

"They are water spirits, represented as a rule in human shapes, with a crown of serpents on their heads.

And in his *Manual of Indian Buddhism* ² we read that they are "snake-like beings, resembling clouds". As to the enumeration of the beings, this is different in some other texts, as we learn from a note in the same *Manual* ³. In the initial phrase of all the *Avadānas* Buddha is said to be worshipped by men, Devas, Nāgas, Yakshas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas ⁴. These are, however, not exactly the "Eight classes"

¹ [Histoire du Bouddhisme dans l'Inde, Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibl. d'études, X et XI, Vol. I, p. 310](#) (295).

² [Idem, p. 59 seq.](#)

³ [Idem, p. 60](#), note 1.

⁴ [Léon Feer, Avadāna-catāka, Annales du Musée Guimet XVIII, p. 2.](#)

The dragon in China

often mentioned in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist works. These are Devas, Nāgas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas ¹.

p.002 [Hardy's Manual of Buddhism](#) gives the following details concerning the Nāgas.

"The Nāgas reside in the loka (world) under the Trikuta-rocks that support Meru, and in the waters of the world of men. They have the shape of the spectacle-snake, with the extended hood (coluber nāga) ; but many actions are attributed to them that can only be done by one possessing the human form. They are demi-gods, and have many enjoyments ; and they are usually

¹ The phrase "Devas, Nāgas and (the remaining of the) eight classes" is very often found in the Chinese sutras. [Edkins \(Chinese Buddhism, p. 217\)](#) says : "Beings inferior to the Devas are called collectively the "Eight classes". This is a mistake, for, as Eitel (*Sanscr.-Chin. dict.* s. v. Nāga, p. 103) rightly explains, the Devas also belong to the Eight classes. But according to Eitel, the ancient Chinese phrase speaks of "Nāgas, Devas and (others of) the eight classes (龍天八部)". I never found them enumerated in this order in the Chinese sūtras, for the Devas were always placed before the Nāgas. Moreover, in the jātakas and avadānas the Devas always precede the Nāgas in the often repeated order of beings. In the "Sūtra on the original vow of the Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha" (Nanjō's *Catalogue*, nr 1003, translated from Sanscrit into Chinese at the end of the seventh century), p. 2b, the terms "Devas, Nāgas, Demons and Spirits", and "Devas Nāgas, and (the remaining of) the Eight Classes", are met side by side. I often found the phrase *Tenryū hachibu* in Japanese works. This is, of course, the logical order, as the Devas are of higher rank in the system of the world than the Nāgas and therefore ought to be mentioned before the latter. The fact that the Devas belong to the eight classes is stated in the *Ta-Ming san-tsang fah shu*, "Numbers (*i. e.* numerical terms and phrases) of the Law of the Tripiṭaka, collected under the Great Ming dynasty" (Nanjō, nr 1621), Ch. 33, p. 13 sq., where they are enumerated as Devas, Nāgas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas.

There is, however, a second phrase, namely "Men, Devas and (the remaining of) the Eight Classes", which we find in the *Sūtrālamkāra* cāstra (Nanjō, nr 1182, Great Japanese Trip. of Leiden, Ch. X, p. 4a and b), in two passages where the Buddhas Çakyamuni and Maitreya are said to honour Mahākācyapa "before men, Devas and (the remaining of) the eight classes". Huber (*Sūtrālamkāra*, nr 56, pp. 278 seq.) translates : "Les huit classes des Devas", but the Devas are not divided into eight classes and the character 人 (men) belongs, of course, to the same sentence and not to the preceding one. Men precede Devas when the different beings are enumerated, and the initial phrase of the Avadanas gives us their names : Men, Devas, Nāgas, Yakshas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas (cf. also Huber, l. l., pp. 462 seq. ; [Chavannes, Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripiṭaka chinois \(1910\), Vol. III](#), p. 61).

If the former phrase actually is found sometimes in ancient Chinese books in the wrong form given by Edkins, the Nāgas being placed before the Devas (I think I saw it once also in a Japanese work), this mistake must have risen from blending the former phrase with the latter, which mentions the Devas in the second place.

The dragon in China

represented as being favourable to Buddha and his adherents ; but when their wrath is roused, their opposition is of a formidable character".

With regard to Mount Meru Hardy says :

"The summit is the abode of Sekra (Çākra), the regent or chief of the dewaloka called Tawutisa (Trāyastriṃṣat) ; and around it are four mansions, 5,000 yōjanas in size, inhabited by *nāgas*, *garuḍas*, *khumbaudas*, and *yakas*".

In describing the dewa-lokas he says :

"The palace of *Virūpāksha* is on the west. His ^{p.003} attendants are the *Nāgas*, a kela-laksha in number, who have red garments, hold a sword and shield of coral, and are mounted on red horses ¹.

Grünwedel ² states that the attributes of this *Virūpāksha*, one of the four *lokapālas* or Guardians of the World, also called the "Four Great Kings" (*Caturmahārājas*), are a *caitya* (a sanctuary) or a jewel in the form of a *caitya* in the right, and a *serpent* in the left hand.

Before Gautama's attainment of Buddhahood a *Nāga* king, *Kāla* by name, became aware of the approaching event by the sound the *Bodhisattva*'s golden vessel produced when striking against the vessels of the three last Buddhas in *Kāla*'s abode. For they all had, like *Siddhārtha*, flung their golden bowls into the river ³.

As we shall see below, the *Nāga* king *Mucilinda*, who lived in the lake of this name, by his coils and hoods sheltered the Lord from wind and rain for seven days. The Indian artists often represented the Buddha sitting under *Mucilinda*'s extended hoods.

¹ P. 24.

² *Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei*, p. 181.

³ [Kern, Manual, p. 19](#) ; [Hist. du Bouddhisme dans l'Inde, Vol, I, p. 70](#) (64) (there he is called "roi du monde souterrain").

The dragon in China

Not always, however, were the Nāga kings so full of reverence towards the Buddha ; but in the end, of course, even the most obstinate one was converted. Nandopananda, e. g., tried to prevent the Lord's return from the Tushita heaven to the earth, but was conquered by Maudgalyāyana in the shape of a Garuḍa, and was then instructed by the Buddha himself ¹. When the Master had delivered a sūtra in one of the heavenly paradises, the Devas and Nāgas came forward and said : "We will henceforth protect correct doctrine" ². After Buddha's death the Nāga kings struggled with the kings of the Devas and eight kings of India to obtain a share in Buddha's relics ³, and got one third, and Ashōka gave Nanda a hair of Buddha's moustaches, while he threatened to destroy his kingdom if he refused. Nanda erected a pagoda of rock crystal for it on Mount Sumeru ⁴.

According to Northern Buddhism Nāgārjuna (± 150 A.D.), the founder of the Mahāyāna doctrine, was instructed by Nāgas in the sea, who showed him unknown books and gave him his most important work, the Prajñā pāramitā, with which he returned _{p.004} to India. For this reason his name, originally Arjuna, was changed into Nāgārjuna ⁵, and he is represented in art with seven Nāgas over his head ⁶.

The Mahāyāna school knows a long list of Nāga kings, among whom the eight so-called "Great Nāga kings" are the following : Nanda (called Nāgarāja, the "King of the Nāgas"), Upananda, Sāgara, Vāsuki, Takshaka, Balavān, Anavatapta and Utpala ⁷. These eight are often mentioned in Chinese and Japanese legends as "the eight Dragon-kings",

¹ [Hardy, l. l., pp. 302 seq.](#)

² [Edkins, l. l., p. 39.](#)

³ [Edkins, l. l., p. 58.](#)

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

⁵ Translated into *Lung-shu*, or Dragon-tree ; cf. [Edkins, p. 230](#) ; Eitel, l. l., p. 103. We find the name Nāgārjuna in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, Ch. XLI, Tawney's translation, Vol. I, p. 376 : a minister, "who knew the use of all drugs and by making an elixir rendered himself and king Chirāyus (Long-lived) free from old-age, and long-lived".

⁶ Grünwedel, l. l., pp. 30 seq., p. 46.

⁷ Grünwedel, l. l., pp. 190 seq.

The dragon in China

and were said have been among Buddha's audience with their retinues, while he delivered the instructions contained in the "Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law" (Saddharma Pundarīka sūtra, Hokkekyō ¹).

The Nāgas are divided into four castes, just like men, and form whole states.

"They are, says Grünwedel ², the Lords of the Earth more than any one else, and send, when having been insulted, drought, bad crops, diseases and pestilence among mankind.

With regard to the Nāgas in Indian art we have an excellent guide in [Grünwedel's *Buddhistische Kunst in Indien*](#). After having stated that the Vedas not yet mention them ³, but that they belong to the Indian popular belief, extended afterwards by the official brahmanic religion, he further remarks that they often penetrated in human shape into the Master's neighbourhood and even tried to be taken up among his followers, as we see on a relief of Gandhāra (p. 102, Fig. 47 ; the Nāga's true shape was detected in his sleep). For this reason one of the questions put, even today, to those who wish to be taken up into the Order is : "Are you perhaps a Nāga ?" There are three ways in which the Indian Buddhist art has represented the Nāgas. First : fully human, on the head an Uraeus-like snake, coming out of the _{p.005} neck and often provided with several heads. This form has been taken up in Tibet, China and Japan ⁴. Secondly : common serpents, and thirdly : a combination of both, *i. e.* snakes of which the upper part of the body looks human, snake's heads appearing above their human heads ; the lower part of the body entirely snake-like ⁵. The first mentioned shape is to be seen in Fig. 5 (p. 29), a relief representing Nāgas worshipping a small stūpa on a throne, and in Fig. 108

¹ [Hardy, I. I., p. 215.](#)

² I. I., p. 187.

³ Cf. L. von Schroeder, *Indiens Literatur und Cultur* (1887), p. 377.

⁴ Cf. p. 114, Fig. 57, a Japanese picture, after Chinese model, representing Buddha's Nirvāṇa. Among the lamenting creatures, which surround the Master's body, also Nāga kings with snakes above their heads are to be seen.

⁵ Cf. [Grünwedel, *Myth. des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei*](#), p. 89, Fig. 73.

The dragon in China

(p. 103), where a Garuḍa in the shape of an enormous eagle is flying upwards with a Nāgī (Nāga woman) in his claws, and biting the long snake which comes out of the woman's neck. A pillar figure of the stūpa of Bharhut represents Cakravāka, the Nāga king, standing on a rock in the water, with five snake's heads in his neck, while snakes are visible in holes of the rock ¹. Once, when Nāgas appeared before Buddha in order to listen to his words, he ordered Vajrapāṇi to protect them against the attacks of their enemies, the Garuḍas. An Indian relief shows us these Nāgas, the Nāga king Elāpatra and his consort, standing in the water, with snakes upon their heads, and worshipping Buddha, while in the background Vajrapāṇi is brandishing his sceptre against the expected Garuḍas. This Vajrapāṇi's main function is, according to Grünwedel, to give rain, and as a rainingod he is the protector of the *rain giving snake-gods*, the Nāgas ².

Foucher's very interesting paper on the Great Miracle of the Buddha at Ćrāvasti ³ repeatedly mentions the Nāga kings Nanda and Upananda, represented at the base of the Buddha's lotus seat. At the request of King Prasenajit the Buddha wrought two miracles : walking through the air in different attitudes he alternately emitted flames and waves from the upper or lower part of his body, and, secondly, he preached the Law after having multiplied himself innumerable times, up to the sky and in all directions. According to the *Divyāvadāna* the Buddha, after having completed the first miracle, conceived a wordly idea, which was immediately executed by the gods. Brahma and Ćakra placed themselves at the Buddha's right and left side, and the Nāga ^{p.006} kings Nanda and Upananda (who were said so have bathed the new-born Buddha and to have played a part in many episodes of his life) created an enormous, magnificent lotus upon which the Master sat down. Then the Buddha by means of his magic power created a great number of Buddhas, seated on lotuses or standing, walking, lying, over his

¹ Grünwedel, *Buddh. in Tibet und der Mongolei*, p. 15.

² L. I., p. 160.

³ Foucher, *Le grand miracle du Buddha à Ćrāvasti*, Journal Asiatique, Série X, Tome XIII, pp. 1-78.

The dragon in China

head, up to the highest heavens, and on all sides. This scene is recognized by Foucher on several Indian monuments. Often the two Nāga kings are seen under or on both sides of the lotus created by themselves. They are represented supporting the lotus in a kneeling attitude, entirely human but with five serpents over their heads ¹, or with human upper bodies and scaly serpent tails ².

In the Jātakas the Nāgas are always described as enormous serpents ; sometimes, however, they appear in later Indian (*i. e.* Graeco-Buddhist) art as real dragons, although with the upper part of the body human. So we see them on a relief from Gandhāra ³, worshipping Buddha's almsbowl, in the shape of big water-dragons, scaled and winged, with two horse-legs, the upper part of the body human. Most remarkable is a picture ⁴ which represents Garuḍas fighting with Nāgas before the preaching saint Subhūti. The Nāgas are depicted there in all their three forms : common snakes, guarding jewels ; human beings with four snakes in their necks ; and winged sea-dragons, the upper part of the body human, but with a horned, ox-like, head, the lower part of the body that of a coiling dragon. Here we find a link between the snake of ancient India and the four-legged Chinese dragon.

§ 2. The Nāga according to some translated Buddhist texts

After having referred to European scholars with respect to the Nāga in Buddhism, we may compare their results with some translated Indian texts. Being not acquainted with the Sanscrit language, we thankfully make use of these translations in order to illustrate the Buddhist dragon tales of China and Japan ; for, as I stated already in the Preface, this is the only aim of this Introduction.

¹ Pp. 19, 48 seq., fig. 3, a sculpture of the rock-temples of Ajaṅṭā ; cf. pp. 64 seq., fig. 11 ; pp. 74 seq., fig. 16, with two Nāgīs ; pp. 58 seq., fig. 8.

² P. 56 seq., fig. 7 (sculpture from Magadha).

³ Grünwedel, *Buddh. Kunst in Indien*, p. 20, fig. 10.

⁴ Grünwedel, *Buddh. in Tibet und der Mongolei*, p. 189. fig. 160.

The dragon in China

Professor Cowell's translation of the *Jātaka*, the canonical p.007 Pāli text, made up of those marvellous stories of the Buddha's former births, told by himself, contains seven tales which are vivid pictures of the great magic power of the Nāgas, especially of their kings, of the splendour of their palaces, and, on the other hand, of their helplessness against their deadly enemies, the Garuḍas. The Nāgas are semi-divine serpents which very often assume human shapes and whose kings live with their retinues in the utmost luxury in their magnificent abodes at the bottom of the sea or in rivers or lakes. When leaving the Nāga world they are in constant danger of being grasped and killed by the gigantic semi-divine birds, the Garuḍas, which also change themselves into men ¹. Buddhism has, in its usual way, declared both Nāgas and Garuḍas, mighty figures of the Hindu world of gods and demons, to be the obedient servants of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and saints, and to have an open ear for their teachings ². In the same way Northern Buddhism adopted the gods of the countries where it introduced itself and made them protectors of its doctrine instead of its antagonists.

Sometimes we read that the Buddha, in a previous existence, succeeded in reconciling even such bitter enemies as a Nāga and a Garuḍa king. He himself was sometimes born as a mighty Nāga king. Thus he reigned as King Campeyya in his "jewelled pavillion" in the river Campā, as King Samkhapāla in the lake of this name, and as King Bhūridatta in the sacred river Yamunā. In all these three cases he desired to be reborn in the world of men, and in order to attain this aim left his palace on fastdays and lay down on the top of an ant heap, observing the fast and offering his magnificent snake body to the passers-by.

¹ In Japan these birds have been identified with the Tengu : comp. my treatise on the Tengu, Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Vol. XXXVI, Part. II, pp. 25-98.

² Cf. [Chavannes, Contes et apologues, nr 343 \(Vol. II, p. 288\)](#), where a Garuḍa does not grasp a Nāga who has fled into the house of an ascetic on a small island in the sea ; cf. Vol. III, p. 82, where a wicked Nāga king is forced by an Arhat to go away, and [Vol. I, nr 151](#), p. 423, where the Buddha converts a very evil Nāga, whom innumerable Arhats could not convert.

The dragon in China

p.008 Patiently he underwent the most terrible tortures, without using his enormous power against the puny rogues who caused him so much pain. As Samkhapāla he was freed by a passing merchant, whom he thereupon treated as a guest in his palace for a whole year, and who afterwards became an ascetic. In the two other cases, however, he fell into the hands of a snake-charmer, who by means of magical herbs, which he spit upon him, and by virtue of the "charm which commands all things of sense", as well as by squeezing and crushing, weakened the royal snake, and putting him in his basket carried him off to villages and towns, where he made him dance before the public. In both legends the Bodhisattva is just performing before the King of Benares, when he is released on account of the appearance of another Nāga, Sumanā, his queen, or Sudassana, his brother ¹.

In the shape of a Garuḍa-king we find the Bodhisattva in another tale, where he finds out the secret way by which the Nāgas often succeed in conquering and killing the Garuḍas, namely by swallowing big stones and thus making themselves so heavy that their assailants, striving to lift them up, drop down dead in the midst of the stream of water, flowing out of the Nāga's widely opened mouths. Paṇḍara, a Nāga king, was foolish enough to trust an ascetic, whom both he and the Garuḍa used to visit and honour, and told him at his repeated request the valuable secret of the Nāga tribe. The treacherous ascetic revealed it at once to the Bodhisattva, who now succeeded in capturing Paṇḍara himself by seizing him by the tail and holding him upside down, so that he disgorged the stones he had swallowed and was an easy prey. Moved by Paṇḍara's lamentations, however, he released him and they became friends, whereupon they went together to the perfidious ascetic. The Nāga king caused this fellow's head to split into seven pieces and the man himself to be swallowed by the earth and to be reborn in the Avīci hell.

¹ A similar tale is to be found in [Chavannes's Contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka chinois, Vol. I, pp. 189 sqq., nr 50.](#)

The dragon in China

In the Kharaputta-jātaka we read about a Nāga king who was nearly killed by boys, when seeking food on earth, but was saved out of their hands by Senaka, king of Benares. We do not read what made the mighty Nāga so powerless against those children ; for there was apparently no question of fasting as in p.009 the above mentioned legends of the Bodhisattva. He went back to the Nāga world and from there brought many jewels as a present to the King, at the same time appointing one of his numberless Nāga girls to be near the King and to protect him. He gave him also a charm by means of which he would always be able to find the girl, if he did not see her, and afterwards presented him with another charm, giving knowledge of all sounds, so that he understood the voices even of ants ¹. So we find the Nāga king not only in the possession of numberless jewels and beautiful girls, but also of mighty charms, bestowing supernatural vision and hearing. The palaces of the Nāga kings are always described as extremely splendid, abounding with gold and silver and precious stones, and the Nāga women, when appearing in human shape, were beautiful beyond description. But the whole race was terribly quick-tempered, which made them, considering their deadly poison and their great magic power, very dangerous creatures. Even the breath of their nostrils was sufficient to kill a man, as we read in the above mentioned Kharaputta-jātaka, where the Nāga king, angry because the girl whom he had appointed to protect King Senaka, came back to the Nāga world, falsely complaining that the King had struck her because she did not do his bidding, at once sent four Nāga youths to destroy Senaka in his bedroom by the breath of their nostrils.

Often we find stories of men staying as guests in some Nāga king's palace and enjoying all its luxury, sometimes for seven days, sometimes even for a whole year ². The most interesting of all the Nāga tales is the

¹ In [nr 112 of Chavannes' *Contes et Apologues* \(Vol. I, p. 382\)](#) a Nāga king causes a king to understand all animals.

² In nrs 94 and 207 of Chavannes' *Contes et Apologues* ([Vol. I, p. 358](#), [Vol. II, p. 87](#)) an Arhat daily flies with his bed to the palace of a Nāga king, where he receives food.

The dragon in China

Bhuridatta-jātaka. We read there about "the Nāga world beneath the ocean", and about the Nāga palace "beneath the Yamuna's sacred stream", but at the same time the Nāga maidens, frightened by the Ālambāyana spell, a serpent spell obtained from a Garuḍa-king, "sank into the earth", and the "jewel of luck", which "grants all desires", when falling on the ground "went through it and was lost in ^{p.010} the Nāga world" ¹. So we see that whatever belongs to that world can disappear into the earth and needs not enter the water, because both are the Nāgas' domain ². The "jewel which grants all desires", which was guarded by the Nāga maidens but forgotten in their terror for the Garuḍa spell, is nothing but the "Nyo-i hōju", mentioned in the Chinese and Japanese legends. The same story teaches us that children of men and Nāgī (Nāga women) are "of a watery nature", and cannot stand sunshine or wind, but are happiest when playing in the water ³.

So far the Jātakas of Cowell's edition. It is a strange fact that in all these tales no mention is made of the Nāga's nature of *god of clouds and rain*, although this is the main reason why the Chinese identified him with their dragon. In the legends, translated from the Chinese Tripiṭaka by Chavannes ⁴, however, so much stress is laid on the rain giving capacity of the Nāga, that we need not doubt as to its predominance in Northern Buddhism.

From the *Lalita vistara* ⁵ we learn that in the fifth week after reaching perfect Enlightenment the Buddha went to lake Mucilinda, and the Nāga

¹ P. 97.

² Cf. [Hardy, Manual of Buddhism, p. 163](#), where king Bimbisāra, hearing that a mysterious being (the Bodhisattva) was seen, is said to have ordered his courtiers to watch him when he should leave the town. "If he be a demon, he will vanish ; if he be a deva, he will ascend into the sky ; if a Nāga, he will descend into the earth".

³ P. 82.

⁴ [Cinq cents contes et apoloques extraits du Tripiṭaka chinois \(1910\)](#).

⁵ Ch. XXII ; Chavannes also refers to the *Yoga sūtra*, Sect. III, 18, 19 and 49 ; cf. [Kern, Manual of Indian Buddhism, pp. 21 seq.](#) ; Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p. 136. In painting and sculpture the Buddha is frequently sitting under the extended hood of the Nāga ([Hardy, Manual of Buddhism, p. 182](#) ; [Grünwedel, Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei](#), p. 110, Fig. 87 and 88).

The dragon in China

king of the same name, who resided there, came out of the water and with his coils and hoods shielded the Lord from the rain for seven days, whereafter he assumed the shape of a youth and worshipped the Great Being. In the *Mahāvagga* ¹ the name of the lake and the Nāga king is Muchalinda, and

"in order to protect the Lord against the cold and the humidity, he seven times surrounded him with his coils and extended his hood over him".

According to Hardy

"in the sixth week, he went to the lake Muchalinda, where he remained at ^{p.011} the foot of a midella tree. At that time rain began to fall, which continued for seven days, without intermission, in all the four continents. The nāga Muchalinda having ascended to the surface of the lake, saw the darkness produced by the storm ; and in order to shelter Buddha from the rain and wind, and protect him from flies, mosquitoes, and other insects, he spread over him his extended hood, which served the purpose of a canopy".

It is highly interesting to compare with these passages the version of the same legend, found in the Chinese Tripiṭaka ². There he is said to have gone to Mucilinda's river (not lake) immediately after having reached Enlightenment. While he was sitting under a tree, his brilliant light penetrated into the Nāga's palace, just as in former times his three predecessors of this kalpa had spread their light, sitting on the same spot. The Nāga, delighted to see the new Buddha's light, arose from the water, and, surrounding the Lord with seven coils, covered him with his seven heads (not hoods). "*The Nāga, delighted, caused wind and rain for*

¹ Quoted by [Kern, Histoire du Bouddhisme dans l'Inde, Annales du Musée Guimet.](#)

² [Chavannes, I. I., Vol. I, Ch. VI, p. 275 sqq., nr 76](#) : Tōkyō ed. of the Tripiṭaka (1880-1885), VI, 5, pp. 82 sq. ; great Japan. ed., in Leiden and in the India Office, Ch. VI, pp. 15 sqq.

The dragon in China

seven days and nights" ¹. All that time the Lord sat motionless, protected by the royal snake, the first of all animals to be converted. This legend is to be found in the *Luh-tu tsih king* ², nr 143 of Nanjō's *Catalogue*, translated by Seng-hwui, who died A. D. 280 ³.

The same work contains many jātakas, in which the Nāgas are frequently mentioned, sometimes in company with Çakra, Brahma, the four devarājas and the gods of the earth ⁴. One day, when the Bodhisattva and Ānanda were Nāgas in order to complete ^{p.012} the expiation of their former evil deeds, "expanding their majestic spirit, they made heaven and earth shake ; *they raised the clouds and caused the rain to fall*" ⁵. And when Devadatta was a terrible Nāga, "he expanded all his force ; *lightning and thunder flashed and rattled*" ⁶.

The *Kiu tsah p'i-yü king*, "Old (version of the) Samyuktāvadāna sūtra" (miscellaneous metaphors), translated in the third century A. D. by the same Seng-hwui (Nanjō's *Catalogue*, nr. 1359) in some of its apologues mentions the Nāgas as bringers of rain. Such a being by its rain made the dike, along which a çrāmaṇera carried his master's rice, so slippery that the man repeatedly tumbled down and dropped the rice into the mud. His master summoned the Nāga, who in the shape of an old man prostrated himself before the Arhat and invited him to dine in his palace all the days of his life. The Arhat accepted this offer and daily flew with his bed to the Nāga's palace, after having entered abstract

¹ Chavannes translates : "Pour s'amuser, le naga déchaîna le vent et la pluie". I should prefer : "The Nāga, delighted, caused wind and rain". He was delighted because he could shelter the Lord from the wind and rain caused by himself. He did not think of amusing himself. But the main point of the question is the fact that the Nāga in this version is said to have caused the wind and the rain himself, while the other versions only state that there was wind and rain.

² "Collected sūtras on the six Pāramitās". Chavannes first thought that these sūtras had been collected by Seng-hwui himself ([Vol. I, p. 1, note 1](#)), but afterwards felt inclined to believe that it is a translation of one sanscrit text ([Introd., p. III](#)).

³ Nr 680 of Nanjō's *Catalogue*, partly translated by Beal under the title of "*Romantic legend of Sākyā Buddha*", does not contain this legend.

⁴ Cf. [Chavannes, I. I., Vol. I, Chap. V, pp. 160 sq., nrs 43](#) and 44.

⁵ [Chavannes, Vol. I, Ch. V, p. 181, nr 48](#).

⁶ [Chavannes, Vol. I, Ch. VI, p. 254, nr 70](#).

The dragon in China

contemplation. But his pupil, anxious to know from where his master had got the splendid rice grains which he discovered in his almsbowl, hid himself under the bed and clinging to one of its feet arrived with the Arhat at the Nāga's abode. The latter, his wife and the whole crowd of beautiful women respectfully saluted the çramaṇa and the çramaṇera, but the latter was warned by his master not to forget, that he, the çramaṇera himself, was a must higher being than the Nāga, notwithstanding all the latter's treasures and beautiful women.

"The Nāga, said he, has to endure three kinds of sufferings : his delicious food turns into toads as soon as he takes it into his mouth ; his beautiful women, as well as he himself, change into serpents when he tries to embrace them ; on his back he has scales lying in a reverse direction, and when sand and pebbles enter between them, he suffers pains which pierce his heart. Therefore do not envy him.

The pupil, however, did not answer ; day and night he thought of the Nāga and forgot to eat. He fell ill, died and was reborn as the Nāga's son, still more terrible than his father, but after death became a man again ¹.

p.013 Another time the Buddha's disciples are compared to a great Nāga who liked to give rain to the earth, but, fearing that the latter might not be able to bear the weight of the water, decided to make the rain fall into the sea ².

In the *Tsah p'i-yü king* ³, a work from the Korean Tripiṭaka, not to be found in Nanjō's *Catalogue* (for nr 1368, which bears the same title, is a different work) we find the following Nāga tales. A Nāga ascended to the sky and caused abundant rains to fall : for the devas they brought the

¹ [Chavannes, Vol. I, nr 94](#), pp. 358 sqq.

² [Chavannes, Vol. I, nr 138](#), p. 410.

³ Cf. Chavannes, II, p. 1, note 1. Both this work and the *Chung king chwen tsah p'i-yü king* (Nanjō, nr 1366) are said to be compiled by the bhikṣu Tao Lioh, but are probably two different editions of his work ; Kumārajīva seems to have translated Tao Lioh's work in 401 A. D.

The dragon in China

seven precious things, for mankind fertilizing water, and for the hungry demons a great fire which burned the whole of their bodies ¹.

Another Nāga who by means of a single drop of water could give rain to one or two or three kingdoms, nay to the whole Jambudvīpa, placed it in the great sea that it might not dry up ².

An exorcist of Nāgas went with his pitcher full of water to the pond of such a being and by his magic formulae surrounded the Nāga with fire. As the water of the pitcher was the only refuge the serpent could find, it changed into a very small animal and entered the pitcher ³.

Here we see the Nāgas not only as rain gods, but also as beings wholly dependent on the presence of water and much afraid of fire, just like the dragons in many Chinese and Japanese legends.

With regard to the precious pearls in the possession of the Nāgas as gods of the waters, we may mention a tale to be found in the *Mo ho seng chi lüh* ⁴ or "Discipline of the Mahāsāṃghikas" (Nanjō, nr 1119), translated in 416 by Buddhahadra and Fah-hien ⁵. There we read about a Nāga who wore a necklace of pearls, which he liked so much that he preferred it to his friendship towards a hermit. The latter, daily tortured by the Nāga's coils, wound around his body, succeeded in getting rid ^{p.014} of him only by asking him for the precious necklace ⁶. Also the Chinese dragons were said to have pearls at their throats.

The *Avadāna-çataka*, a hundred legends translated from the Sanskrit by Léon Feer ⁷ contain a few passages concerning the Nāgas. The most important one is the 91th legend ⁸, where Suparṇi, the king of birds, is

¹ [Chavannes, l. l., Vol. II, nr 167](#), p. 23 (Trip. XIX, 7, p. 3).

² [L. l., Vol. II, nr 193](#), p. 63 (Trip. XIX, 7, p. 8).

³ [L. l., Vol II, nr 179](#), p. 42 (Trip. XIX, 7, p. 5).

⁴ Mahāsāṃghika vinaya.

⁵ Nanjō, *Catal.*, App. II, nrs 42 and 45.

⁶ [Chavannes, l. l., Vol. II, nr 355](#), p. 319.

⁷ [Annales du Musée Guimet, Tome XVIII \(1891\)](#).

⁸ [Pp. 366 sq.](#)

The dragon in China

said to have seized from the ocean a little Nāga, which after having been devoured was reborn as Subhūti and by following the Buddha's teachings reached Arhatship. He remembered to have had five hundred rebirths among the Nāgas on account of a long row of wicked thoughts in previous existences. Now he used his supernatural power to convert both Nāgas and Garuḍas by protecting the former against five hundred Garuḍas and the latter against a gigantic Nāga, which he caused to appear. In this way the law of love was taught them, and they followed his teachings.

In another legend ¹ a Brahman is said to have been reborn as a Nāga because he had broken his fast ; seven times a day a rain of burning sand came down upon him till he succeeded in keeping a special fast. Then, after having died with abstinence of food, he was reborn in the Trāyastriṃṣat heaven.

In a third passage ² Virūpāksha, one of the four guardians of the world, who reigns on the West side of Mount Meru, is said to be surrounded by Nāgas (his subjects, who live in the West).

Finally, the Nāgas are mentioned among the divine beings who came to worship the Buddha : Çakra, the king of the gods, Viçvakarma and the four great kings surrounded by Devas, Nāgas, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Kumbhāṇḍas ³ ; another time they are enumerated as follows : Devas, Nāgas, Yakshas, Asuras, Garuḍas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas ⁴.

In Açvaghōṣa's *Sūtrālamkāra* ⁵ , translated into French from Kumārajīva's Chinese version by Edouard Huber, the Nāgas are often mentioned.

¹ [Nr 59, pp. 227 sqq.](#)

² [Nr 19, p. 83.](#)

³ [Nr 12, pp. 57 sq.](#)

⁴ [Nr 17, p. 77.](#)

⁵ Kumārajīva translated this collection of tales about A.D. 410 ; the original sanskrit text is lost, except some fragments, which, according to Huber, show that Kumārajīva not always understood the text. Huber's translation is based upon the Tokyo edition of the Tripiṭaka (XIX, 4). It is nr 1182 of Nanjō's Catalogue.

The dragon in China

"When the great Nāga causes the rain to fall, the ocean alone can receive the latter ; in the same way the ^{p.015} Saṃgha (alone) can receive the great rain of the Law ¹.

When a merchant, Kotīkarṇa by name, visited a town of pretas, these hungry demons uttered a long complaint, which contains the following verse :

"When on the mountains and valleys the Heavenly Dragons (the Nāgas) cause the sweet dew to descend, this changes into bubbling fire and spouts upon our bodies" ².

"Elāpatra the Nāgarāja, having violated the commandments by maltreating the leaves of a tree, after death fell among the Nāgas, and none of the Buddhas has predicted the time when he shall be able to leave them" ³.

"The tears (of those who, on hearing the Law of the twelve Nidānas, are moved by pity and weep with compassion) can entirely destroy the Nāga Vāsuki who exhales a violent poison" ⁴.

"The Rākṣasas and the Piçācas, the evil Nāgas and even the robbers dare not oppose the words of the Buddha" ⁵.

An evil Nāga guarded a big tree which stood in a large pond, and killed all those who took a branch or a leaf from it. When the bhiksus came to hew down the tree in order to build a stūpa, the people and a brahman warned them not to do so on account of the danger, but the bhiksus answered :

— With regard to the poisonous Nāga, you, brahman, glorify yourself. But we rely upon the Nāga of men (the Buddha), and,

¹ Ch. I, nr 3, p. 30 ; great Jap. Tripiṭaka of Leiden, nr 1182, Ch. I, p. 19.

² Ch. IV, nr 10, p. 100 ; great Jap. Trip. of Leiden, nr 1182, Ch. IV, p. 3a.

³ Ch. III, nr 11, p. 64 ; great Jap. Trip. of Leiden, Ch. III, p. 2a.

⁴ Ch. VIII, nr 45, p. 215 ; great Jap. Trip. of Leiden, Ch. VIII, p. 2a.

⁵ Ch. IX, nr 52, p. 255 ; great Jap. Trip. of Leiden, Ch. IX, p. 6a.

The dragon in China

placing our trust in Him, glorify ourselves... Among all the poisonous Nāgas, for this Nāga king you show yourself full of respectful thoughts. The Buddha is sweet and calm, He is the King of all beings, it is Him whom we revere, the Perfect one, the Bhagavat. Who would be able to subdue the poisonous Nāga, if not the Buddha's disciples ?"

Then they cut down the tree, and, to the astonishment of the brahman, no *clouds*, no *thunder*, no miraculous signs bore witness to the Nāga's wrath, as had formerly been the case even when one leaf of his tree was taken by a human hand ¹. The brahman, after having uttered his amazement and anger, p.016 because he thought that they had used magic incantations, fell asleep, and in a dream was addressed as follows by the Nāga :

— Be not angry ; what they did was done to show me their veneration. They have neither despised nor wounded me, for my body supports the stūpa ; moreover, the tree has become a beam of the stūpa, and I can protect it ; the stūpa of the Daṣabala, of the Exalted one, should I ever have been able to protect it (if not in this way) ?... There was still another reason, why I had not sufficient power (to resist the Buddha). I am going to tell you this reason, listen attentively : Takṣaka, the Nāga king, came here in person and took possession of this tree ; could I protect it ? Elāpatra, the Nāga king, himself came to this spot with Vaiṣramaṇa : was my power sufficient to resist those Devas and Nāgas, full of majesty ?

When the Brahman awoke, he became a monk.

This remarkable story shows us the Nāga as an inhabitant of a pond, but at the same time as a tree demon, in which function we often found the serpent in Chinese and Japanese tales, but never in Indian Nāga

¹ Ch. XV, nr 80, p. 447 ; great Jap. Trip. of Leiden, nr 1182, Ch. XV, p. 21a.

The dragon in China

legends. As a rain and thunder god he is said to produce clouds and thunder when he is angry. Takṣaka and Elāpatra are mentioned here as the mightiest of the Nāga kings, and Vaiṣramaṇa, the guardian of the North, king of the Yakshas, is probably confounded with Virūpāksha, the guardian of the West, king of the Nāgas. The whole legend is a typical specimen of the way in which Buddhism subdued the other cults.

After having learned the Nāga's nature from these Buddhist writings which made him known in China and Japan, we may venture one step into another direction, in turning to the *Kathāsaritsāgara* or "Ocean of the streams of story". This "largest and most interesting collection" of tales was composed by the Kashmirian court poet Somadeva, "one of the most illustrious Indian poets" ¹, in the eleventh century of our era, but the original collection, its source, entitled the Bṛhatkathā, is must older, and, according to Prof. Speyer,

"must have been arranged in that period of Indian history, when *Buddhism* exercised its sway over the Hindoo mind side by side with Ṣaivism and so many other manifold varieties of sectarian and local creeds, rites and theosophies.

"The main story and a large number of the episodes are ^{p.017} Ṣaiva tales, as was to be expected from the supposed first narrator being no other than the Supreme God Ṣiva himself ².

Next to legends of the *Buddhists* even mythological narrations from the Vedic age are to be found in this work, smaller collections being incorporated into it ³. Among the great number of interesting legends, contained in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, translated by Tawney (1880-1884), there are several in which the Nāgas play a more or less important part.

¹ Cf. Speyer, *Studies about the Kathāsaritsāgara*, Verhandelingen der Koninldijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks Deel VIII, nr 5 (1908) ; p. 2.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*.

The dragon in China

The first thing which strikes us is the total absence of passages devoted to their capacity of *giving rain*. Combining this with the same observation made above with regard to the *jātakas* of Cowell's edition, we feel inclined to believe that this part of the Nāgas' nature has been particularly developed by the Northern Buddhists. The original conceptions regarding these semidivine serpents, living in the water or *under the earth*, seem to have attributed to them the power of raising *clouds* and *thunder*, and of appearing as clouds themselves, but not as rain giving beings. It is, of course, a very obvious conclusion that cloud gods produce rain, but it seems that this idea, which made them the benefactors of mankind, first rose in the minds of the adherents of the Mahāyāna school. According to the original ideas, on the contrary, they seem to have only given vent to their *anger* in terrifying mankind by means of dense clouds, thunder and earthquakes. Highly interesting in this respect is the following story, to be found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* ¹.

In the Vindhya forest in the northern quarter there was a solitary aṣoka tree, and under it, in a lake, stood the great palace of a mighty Nāga king, Pārāvātāksha by name, who obtained a matchless sword from the war of the gods and the Asuras. In order to get this sword an ascetic, assisted by a prince and his followers, threw enchanted mustard-seed upon the water, thus clearing it from the dust which concealed it, and began to offer an oblation with snake-subduing spells.

"And he conquered by the power of his spells the impediments, such as *earthquakes*, *clouds*, and so on. Then there came out from that aṣoka tree a heavenly nymph, as it were, murmuring spells with the tinkling of her jewelled ornaments, and approaching the ascetic she pierced his soul with a sidelong glance of love. And then the ascetic lost his self-command and forgot his spells ; and the shapely fair one, embracing him, flung from his hand the vessel of oblation. p.018 And then the

¹ Ch. LXX, Vol. II, p. 149 sq.

The dragon in China

snake Pārāvatāksha had gained his opportunity, and he came out from that palace *like the dense cloud of the day of doom*. Then the heavenly nymph vanished, and the ascetic beholding the snake terrible with flaming eyes, roaring horribly ¹, died of a broken heart. When he was destroyed, the snake lay aside his awful form, and cursed Mṛigānkadatta (the prince) and his followers, for helping the ascetic, in the following words :

— Since you did what was quite unnecessary after all coming here with this man, you shall for a certain time be separated from one another.

Then the snake disappeared, and all of them at the same time had their eyes dimmed with darkness, and were deprived of the power of hearing sounds. And they immediately went in different directions, separated from one another by the power of the curse, though they kept looking for one another and calling to one another.

Nāgas injuring the crops are mentioned in another passage, where Svayamprabhā, queen of the Asuras residing in Pātāla land,

"makes herself surety (to king Merudhvaja) that the Nāgas shall not injure the crops" ².

The seven Pātālas are the netherworld ³, the "home of the serpent race below the earth" ⁴, but also the Asuras, "who escaped from the slaughter in the great fight long ago between the gods and asuras", had fled to Pātāla and lived there. As to the Nāgas having their abode in Pātāla land, we may refer to the following passages of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*.

¹ This is probably thunder and lightning.

² Ch. CXIX, Vol. II, p. 551.

³ Vol. II, p. 549, note 1.

⁴ Vol. I, nr. 185, note 3.

The dragon in China

"On the extreme shore he set up a pillar of victory, looking like the king of the serpents emerging from the world below to crave immunity for Pātāla".

"Do you not remember how he went to Pātāla and there married the daughter of a Nāga, whose name was Surūpā ?

When Kadrū and Vinatā, two wives of Kaçyapa, had a dispute as to the colour of the Sun's horses, they made an agreement that the one that was wrong should become a slave to the other. Kadrū, the mother of the snakes, induced her sons to defile the horses of the Sun by spitting venom over them ; thus they looked black instead of white, and Vinatā, the mother of Garuḍa, king of birds, was conquered by this trick and made Kadrū's slave. When Garuḍa came to release her, the snakes asked the nectar from the sea of milk, which the gods had begun to churn, as a substitute, p.019 and Garuḍa went to the sea of milk and displayed his great power in order to obtain the nectar.

"Then the god Vishnu, pleased with his might, deigned to say to him :

— I am pleased with you, choose a boon.

Then Garuḍa, angry because his mother was made a slave, asked a boon from Vishnu :

— May the snakes become my food".

Vishnu consented, and Garuḍa, after having obtained the nectar, promised Indra to enable him to take it away before the snakes should have consumed it. He put the nectar on a bed of Kuça grass and invited the snakes to take it there after having released his mother. They did so, and Garuḍa departed with Vinata, but when the snakes were about to take the nectar, Indra swooped down and carried off the vessel.

"Then the snakes in despair licked that bed of Darbha grass, thinking that there might be a drop of spilt nectar on it, but the effect was that their tongues were split, and they became

The dragon in China

double-tongued for nothing. What but ridicule can ever be the portion of the over-greedy ? Then the snakes did not obtain the nectar of immortality, and their enemy Garuḍa, on the strength of Vishnu's boon, began to swoop down and devour them. And this he did again and again. And while he was thus attacking them, the snakes *in Pātāla* were dead with fear, the females miscarried, and the whole serpent race was well-nigh destroyed. And Vāsuki the king of the snakes, seeing him there every day, considered that the serpent world was ruined at one blow : then, after reflecting, he preferred a petition to that Garuḍa of irresistible might, and made this agreement with him :

— I will send you every day one snake to eat, O king of birds, on the hill that rises out of the sand of the sea. But you must not act so foolishly as to enter Pātāla, for by the destruction of the serpent world your own object will be baffled.

When Vāsuki said this to him, Garuḍa consented, and began to eat every day in this place one snake sent by him : and in this way innumerable serpents have met their death here".

Thus spoke a snake, whose turn it was to be devoured by Garuḍa, to Jīmūtavāhana, "the compassionate incarnation of a Bodhisattva" ¹, son of Jīmūtakeṭu, the king of the Vidyādhara on Mount Himavat. And Jīmūtavāhana,

"that treasure-house of compassion, considered that he had gained an opportunity of offering himself up to save the snake's life. He ascended the stone of execution and was carried off by Garuḍa who began to devour him on the peak of the mountain.

At that moment a rain of flowers fell from Heaven, p.020 and Garuḍa stopped eating, but was requested by Jīmūtavāhana himself to go on.

¹ Vol. I, p. 174.

The dragon in China

Then the snake on whose behalf he sacrificed his life, arrived and cried from far :

— Stop, stop, Garuḍa, he is not a snake, I am the snake meant for you.

Garuḍa was much grieved and was about to enter the fire to purify himself from guilt, but following Jīmūtavāhana's advice determined never again to eat snakes, and to make revive those which he had killed. The goddess Gaurī by raining nectar on Jīmūtavāhana made him safe and sound, and Garuḍa brought the nectar of immortality from heaven and sprinkled it along the whole shore of the sea.

"That made all the snakes there (whose bones were lying there) rise up alive, and then that forest, crowded with the numerous tribe of snakes, *appeared like Pātāla* come to behold Jīmūtavāhana, having lost its previous dread of Garuḍa".

Pātāla-land, the seven under-worlds, one of which was called Rasātala (sometimes equivalent to Pātāla), was inhabited by Nāgas, Asuras, Daityas and Dānavas (two classes of demons opposed to the gods and identified with the Asuras). There were temples of the gods (Çiva ¹, Durgā, the Fire-god), worshipped by the demons. As to its entrances, these are described as mountain caverns ² or "openings in the water" ; or wonderful flagstuffs rising out of the sea with banners on them showed the way thither. Sometimes human kings were allowed to visit this Fairy land. Chandraprabha e.g., after having offered to Çiva and Rudra, with his queen and his ministers, with Siddhārta at their head, entered an opening in the water pointed out by Maya, and after travelling a long distance, arrived there. And king Chaṇḍasinha with Sattvaçila plunged into the sea and following the sinking flagstaff

¹ II, 198, in the form of Hātakeçvara. We read on p. 109 of the *Sang hyang Kamahāyānikan*, an interesting old-Javanese text translated by J. Kats, that Içvara, Brahmā and Viṣṇu by order of Vairocana filled heaven with gods, the earth with men, and the netherworld (Pātāla) with Nāgas.

² I, 446. "There are on this earth many openings leading to the lower regions". II, 197.

The dragon in China

reached a splendid city. Also king Yaçaḥketu, after diving into the sea, suddenly beheld a magnificent city, with palaces of precious stones and gardens and tanks and wishing-trees that granted every desire, and beautiful maidens. This agrees with the description of the Nāga palaces which we found in the Jātakas.

A temple of Vāsuki, the king of the snakes, is mentioned in the ^{p.021} same work ¹. There was a festive procession in his honour, and great crowds worshipped him. His idol stood in the shrine, which was full of long wreaths of flowers like serpents, "and which therefore resembled the abyss of Pātāla". To the South of the temple there was a large lake sacred to Vāsuki,

"studded with red lotusses, resembling the concentrated gleams of the brilliance of the jewels on snakes' crests ; and encircled with blue lotusses, which seemed like clouds of smoke from the fire of snake poison ; overhung with trees, that seemed to be worshipping with their flowers blown down by the wind.

Other passages relate about Nāgas assuming human shapes ², either to escape Garuḍa (who in this work is always mentioned as one being), or to embrace a Nāgi. In the former case Garuḍa himself persecuted the Nāga in human form, in the latter the snake-god, discovering that he was deceived by his wife during his sleep, "discharged fire from his mouth, and reduced them both (her lover and herself) to ashes".

§ 3. The Nāga as a giver of rain

We have seen above that the Nāga's capacity of raising clouds and thunder when his anger was aroused was cleverly converted by the

¹ Ch. LXXIV, Vol. II, p. 225. Vāsuki is also mentioned Vol. I, p. 32, where Kīrtisena, his brother's son, is said to have married Çrutārthā, the daughter of a Brahman. His daughter Ratnaprabha is mentioned Vol. I, p. 544. He cursed a Nāga king who had fled from battle, Vol. II, p. 171. The serpent Vāsuki served as a rope with which to whirl round mount Mandara, when the sea was churned and produced Çrī or Lakshmī, Vol. II, p. 568, note 1.

² Ch. LXI, Vol. II, p. 54 ; Ch. LXIV, Vol. II, p. 98.

The dragon in China

Mahāyāna school into the highly beneficent power of giving rain to the thirsty earth. In this way these fearful serpents by the influence of Buddha's Law had become blessers of mankind. It is clear that in this garb they were readily identified with the Chinese dragons, which were also blessing, rain giving gods of the water.

The four classes into which the Mahayanists divided the Nāgas were :

1. *Heavenly Nāgas* (天龍), who guard the Heavenly Palace and carry it so that it does not fall.

2. *Divine Nāgas* (神龍), who benefit mankind by causing the clouds to rise and the rain to fall.

3. *Earthly Nāgas* (地龍), who drain off rivers (remove the obstructions) and open sluices (outlets). p.022

4. *Nāgas who are lying hidden* (伏藏龍) guarding the treasures of the "Kings of the Wheel" (輪王, Çakravartī-rājas) and blessing mankind ¹.

The *Taiheiki* ², a Japanese work, relates an Indian tale in which a Dragon (*i. e.* Nāga) king is said to have caused rain. A *sien* (仙, the Chinese equivalent for a wonder-working ascetic), annoyed by this, caught all big and small dragons of the inner and outer seas, and shut them up in a rock. Owing to their absence not a drop of rain fell for a long time, and the crops were spoiled by the heavy drought. Then the king, moved with compassion for his people, asked his advisers how this ascetic's power could be broken and the dragons let loose. The answer

¹ Cf. the Japanese Buddhist dictionary *Bukkyō iroha jiten*, written in 1901 (sec. ed. 1904) by Miuka Kensūke, vol. II, p. 56 ; the Chinese work *Ts'ien k'ioh kū lei shu*, written in the Ming dynasty by Ch'en Jen-sih. The same Chinese work enumerates as follows the three sorrows (患) of the Indian dragons :

1. Hot winds and hot sand, which burn their skin, flesh and bones.
2. Sudden violent winds, which blow away the palaces of the dragons and make them lose their treasures, clothes, etc., so that they can no longer hide their shapes.
3. Golden-winged bird-kings (Garuḍa kings) who enter the dragons' palaces and devour their children.

² Written about 1382, Ch. XXXVII, p. 6.

The dragon in China

was, that a beautiful woman could seduce him and thus put a stop to his magic capacity. So the King despatched the greatest beauty of his harem to the cottage of the ascetic, who immediately fell in love with her and, losing his supernatural power, became an common man and died. The dragons, no longer under his influence, flew away to the sky, and caused the winds to blow and the rain to fall.

A passage from Jin-Ch'au's *Buddhist Kosmos* ¹, dealing with the Nāga kings, and translated by Beal in his *Catena of Buddhist scriptures from the Chinese*, mentions four sūtras, one of which, the *Mahāmegha* sūtra, shall be treated below in § 4. As to the *Lau-Tán* (?) sūtra, the title of which is not explained by Beal, so that we know neither the Chinese characters nor the Sanscrit equivalent, this sūtra is said there to contain the following passage :

"To the North of Mount Sumeru, under the waters of the Great Sea, is the Palace of Sāgara Nāgarāja, in length and breadth p.023 80,000 yōjanas ; it is surrounded by precious walls, a beautiful railing, garden and parks, adorned with every species of decoration.

This Sāgara, one of the eight Great Nāga kings mentioned above, apparently obtained the principal rank among the rain bestowing Nāgas of the sea, worshipped by the Northern Buddhists.

From the *Saddharma smṛtyupasthāna sūtra* ², which Beal, without giving the Chinese title, wrongly calls *Saddharma Prākasa sāvana sūtra*, but which I found in Nanjō's *Catalogue* sub nr 679, Beal quotes the following passage :

"Down in the depths of the Great Sea 1,000 yōjanas is a city named Hi-loh, its length and breadth 3,000 yōjanas ; it is occupied by Nāgarājas. There are two sorts of Nāgarājas : 1.

¹ *Fah-kai-on-lih-to* (*Fah-kai* is *Dharmadhātu*).

² Nanjō, nr 679.

The dragon in China

Those who practise the Law of Buddha ; 2. Those who do not do so. The first protect the world ; the second are opposed to it. Where the good Nāgas dwell it never rains hot sand, but the wicked Nāgas are subject to this plague, and their palaces and followers are all burned up. Whenever men obey the Law, and cherish their parents, and support and feed the Shamans, then the good Nāgarājas are able to acquire increased power, so that they can cause a small fertilizing rain to fall, by which the five sorts of grain are perfected in colour, scent, and taste... If, on the contrary, men are disobedient to the Law, do not reverence their parents, do not cherish the Brahmans and Shamans, then the power of the wicked dragons increases, and just the opposite effects follow ; every possible calamity happens to the fruits of the earth and to the lives of men".

Finally, the *Buddhāvatamsaka mahāvaipulyci sūtra* ¹ contains a large number of interesting passages with regard to the Nāgas as gods of clouds and rain. Beal translates as follows :

"In the midst of the Palace of the Nāga-rāja *Sāgara* there are four precious gems, from which are produced all the gems of the Ocean. Here also is the Palace of Jambuketu, the Nāga-rāja's eldest son ; also the palace of *Vāsuki* Nāga-rāja, and eighty myriads of other Dragons, each having his separate palace."

"There are five sorts of Dragons : 1. Serpent-dragons ; 2. Lizard-dragons ; 3. Fish-dragons ; 4. Elephant-dragons ; 5. Toad-dragons". p.024

"*Sāgara* Nāga-rāja, assuming the appearance of Maheshvara, exerting his great strength, mightily assists all sentient

¹ Nanjō, nrs 87 and 88. litt. *Mahāvaipulya Buddhāvatamsaka sūtra* ; nr 87 is translated by Buddhahadra (who worked A. D. 398-421, cf. Nanjō, Appendix II, nr 42, p. 399) and others ; nr 88 is a later and fuller translation by Çikshānanda, A.D. 695-699.

The dragon in China

creatures. His influence extends from the four continents up to the Paranirmita Vaçavartin Heaven. He spreads out the *clouds* diversified with every colour, excites the varied brightness of the *lightning*, causes the changing peals of *thunder*, raises propitious *breezes*, distils *fertilizing showers*. But though this Nāga-rāja is well affected towards men, the good principles which prevail in the world are the real source of propitious rain falling. Again it is said that *Anavatapta* Nāga-rāja raises the widespreading vapoury clouds which cover Jambudvīpa and distil soft and nourishing rain, causing the various herbs and grains to spring up and flourish, and the fountains and rivers to swell with refreshing streams.

Beside in this passage translated by Beal the same sūtra often mentions Sāgara and the other Nāga-kings as givers of rain. In the Chinese translation of the end of the seventh century A. D. (Nanjō, nr 88) we read e. g. :

"Further, there are innumerable Great Nāga-kings, called Virūpāksha, Sāgara, etc. etc., who by raising the clouds and diffusing the rain put an end to the vexations caused to all living beings by burning heat ¹."

"When the Great Sea-Nāga-king (Sāgara) sends down the rain, He (the Enlightened One) can separately count the drops, and in one thought make out (their number) ²."

Comparisons especially, mostly in stanzas, of the rain-giving Nāga kings to Buddha and his Law, are very numerous ³.

"The Supreme Nāga king Sāgara, when raising the clouds covers the whole earth and distributes the rain over all places,

¹ Ch. I, p. 18a, b.

² Ch. XV, p. 18b.

³ Cf. Ch. XV, p. 21b ; XVII, 19a ; XXXVIII, 22b ; XLII, 6b, 15b ; LI, 11b ; LII, 1b-LII, 3b ; LXXX, 22a.

The dragon in China

and in his heart there is but one thought — so do also the Buddhas, the Kings of the Law : great clouds of compassion spread everywhere, and, on behalf of all those who practise religious austerities, rain down on each and on all without distinction."

"Like Anavatapta Nāgarāja sends down the rain everywhere on Jambudvīpa and thus can cause all the plants and trees to shoot up and grow, and it (the rain) does not come forth from his body but from his heart — in the same way also the ^{p.025} beautiful words of the Buddhas everywhere rain upon the Universe (Dharmadhātu) ¹.

Thus this sūtra is a striking evidence of the great blessing power attributed by Northern Buddhism to the Nāga kings as givers of rain.

§ 4. Sūtras recited in rain ceremonies

The most important of the sūtras, recited by the Northern Buddhists for causing rain in times of drought, is the Mahāmegha sūtra, "The Sūtra of the Great Cloud". Nanjō's *Catalogue of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka* contains four Chinese translations of this text : nrs 186—188, and 970. The titles of the translations are a little different from one another ², but the original work is the same. Jñānagupta translated it first between A. D. 557 and 581 (nr 187), and a second time between A. D. 589 and 618 (nr 186). In A. D. 585 another translation was made by Narendrayaças (nr 188). Nr 970, which has the same Chinese title as nr 188, is a later translation. The Sanskrit text still exists, and an extract of it is given by

¹ Ch. LI, p. 11b.

² Nr 186 : "Mahāvaipulya Great Cloud sūtra for asking rain".

Nr 187 : "Great Cloud sūtra for asking rain".

Nr 188 : "Great Cloud wheel sūtra for asking rain". On p. 11b of the Chinese text we find the name of the Tathāgata "Great Cloud wheel". Bendall (p. 303) translates "great cloud circle", but 輪 is wheel.

Nr 970 : same title as nr 188.

The dragon in China

Bendall, in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society ¹ ; this agrees with nr 186, while Beal, in his *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese*, gives an abstract of nr 188. According to De Groot ² the sūtra was translated by Amoghavajra, the second patriarch of the Yoga school in China, disciple of Vajrabodhi (the first patriarch of the same school, who in 719 arrived in China). This is apparently nr 970 of Nanjō's *Catalogue*, designated as "a later translation".

From Bendall's extract we learn that the contents of the *Mahāmegha sūtra* are as follows.

"On one occasion the Venerable One dwelt in the palace of the Snake-Kings Nanda and Upananda, in the summer pavillion of the circle of mighty clouds filled with ^{p.026} precious gems and jewels, accompanied by a mighty assemblage of bhikshus, and by a mighty assemblage of bodhisattvas, and a mighty host of kings, to wit, Nanda the Snake King, and Upananda (here follows a list of 185 snakes) ³, attended, I say, by 84 hundreds of thousands of millions of krores of snakes assembled and seated together" :

All the Nāgas saluted the Lord, bending their clasped hands towards him, whereupon they stood on one side and made supplications.

"Let us worship, let us reverence, esteem, honour the samudras (infinite-numbers) of Bodhisattvas... *riding upon the*

¹ New Series, Vol. XII (1880), pp. 286 sqq.

² *Le Code du Mahāyāna en Chine*, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Deel I, n° 2 (1893), [Ch. VIII, pp. 148 sqq.](#)

³ Among these Nāga-kings the Chinese text gives names as : Moon-cloud, Sea-cloud, Great Cloud-receptacle (store-house), Nāga-king who sends down the rain, Nāga-king of Cloud and Rain, Great Rain, King of Clouds, etc. On p. 2a of nr 188 we find the Nāga-king Kumbhīra (Crocodile), *i. e.*, as [Beal \(*Catena*, p. 423\)](#) rightly remarks, the well-known god *Kompira* of Japan. When at the Restoration the Shintōists reclaimed all their temples from the Buddhists, they wrongly declared *Kompira* to be an obscure Shintō deity, called *Kotohira*, and thus took possession of all the shrines of this Nāga-king, the protector of sailors and of those who travel on sea.

The dragon in China

sea-clouds, immeasurable and innumerable, with samudras of *cloud-bodies*".

Then the "Great Supreme King of Snakes" asks :

— How, O Venerable One, may all the troubles of all the snakes subside ; (and how) may they (thus) gladdened and blessed, send forth rain-torrents here, seasonably for Jambudvīpa ; make all grasses, bushes, herbs, forest-trees to grow ; produce all corn ; give rise to all juices, whereby the men of Jambudvīpa may become blessed ?"

The Master answers, that all the troubles of the Nāgas may subside and they may be reborn in the Brahma-world by exercising charity. Further, they must put into action the Sarvasukhandadā dhāraṇī, and repeat the names of the Tathāgatas,

"whose families and races are sprung from the one hair-tip of Vairocana, speedy producers of happiness [consisting of] a circle of clouds".

Here follows a large number of names of Tathāgatas, among which in the Chinese text such are found as : "Tathāgata who stores up the great clouds", "Tathāgata the displaying of whose nature sends forth the clouds", "Tathāgata who holds in his hands (and directs) the clouds and the rain", "Great raiser of the clouds", "Great disperser of wind and clouds" ^{p.027}, "Great cloud wheel" etc.

"By the utterance of these names of Tathāgatas, O snake-king, all woes of all snakes are set at rest, and [though] fraught with ills they create here in Jambudvīpa showers in season and for a season, and make all grass, shrubs, herbs, forest-trees, and corn to grow".

¹ Cf. the name of the sūtra itself : "Great Cloud wheel sūtra for asking rain", translated by Nanjō into, "Sūtra on asking rain of the Great Cloud wheel".

The dragon in China

At the request of the Nāga king the Buddha utters a Dhāraṇī called Mahākaruṇodbhava, "which causes rain in time of drought and checks excessive rain", and invokes the Nāgas :

"O mighty snakes, bring rain here by the appointment of the truth of all Devas, hail ! By the appointment of the truth of Brahma, rain here in Jambudvīpa, hail !"

Then follow prescriptions for the Great Cloud-circle (or *wheel*) rite.

"He who desires a mighty rain must perform this rite in an open space, overspread by a blue canopy, shaded by a blue banner, on a clear spot of earth ; (being) a prophet of the Law, seated on a blue seat, fasting according to the aṣṭāṅga, with well-washed limbs, clad in pure raiment, anointed with fragrant odour, wearing the three white stripes, he must recite it for a day and night continuously facing the east ; he must place four full vessels, filled with pure blue water, after prayers to the Tathāgatas also, according to his power, an oblation, and flowers and odours ; then the prophet of the Law, after having painted towards the four quarters with liquid cow-dung on a reed, in the eastern quarter three hastas high must depict the snake-king called Triṣṭrīshaka (Three-crested), with cow-dung : in the southern quarter him called Pancaṣṭrīshaka (Five-crested) five hastas high ; in the western, seven hastas high, Saptaṣṭrīshaka (Seven-crested) ; in the northern, Navaṣṭrīshaka (Nine-crested), nine hastas high... Afterwards, at a season of drought, he shall recite this chapter, 'The Great-cloud-circle', for one day or for two, until it needs shall rain seven nights".

Then by numerous invocations the snake kings are summoned. On p. 309 we read that this "Whirlwind" chapter, also called "The Heart of all Serpents" must be recited by the prophet of the Law, after three snake kings with their retinues having been painted with cow-dung for thrice

The dragon in China

seven days uninterruptedly : a triple-crested one in the East, a seven-crested one in the West, ^{p.028} and a nine-crested one in the North.

"A blue canopy and blue dress, blue banner (are to be used) and all the offering is to be made blue".

"The cloud-monarchs too must be depicted, emitting a shower, and rubbing against one another ; at the end masses of rain-birds and lightning are to be painted",

and offerings of parched rice, fish, flesh and honey-food without curds must be made. After all these preparatory measures the prophet of the Law, pure and clad in pure raiment, must recite this "Whirlwind" chapter, "the Heart of Snakes".

Beal ¹ gives a short abstract of this sūtra (nr 188), as he found it in the Chinese Tripiṭaka. Of the great Nāga kings enumerated in the beginning the third one is *Sāgara* ², the principal sea god of Chinese Buddhists, who often called him simply "The Sea-dragon-king". By this name he is also indicated in the titles of the two sūtras nrs 456 and 457 of Nanjō's *Catalogue* ³. The fourth Nāga king, *Anavatapta*, was well-known in Japan, as we will see below ⁴. To him nr 437 of Nanjō's *Catalogue* is devoted (translated A. D. 308) ⁵. In the fifth place the Nāga king *Manasvin* ⁶ is mentioned. Then follows *Varuṇa*, the Nāga king, different from the deity of this name, called in China the Deva of the Water, which name reminds us of the famous *Suitengū* of Tokyo. Professor Speyer had the kindness to point out to me that in the

¹ [A catena of Buddhist scriptures from the Chinese \(1871\), p. 419 sqq.](#)

² The first and second are *Nanda* and *Upananda*. *Sāgara* is written 娑伽羅. Cf. Eitel, *Sanskrit-Chinese dictionary*.

³ Nr 456 : "Buddhabhāshita Sāgara Nāgarāja sūtra".

Nr 457 : "Sūtra on the Seal of the Law, spoken by Buddha for the sake of the Nāga-king Sāgara".

⁴ Book II, Ch. III, § 4.

⁵ *Anavatapta nāgarāja pariṣṛkkhā sūtra*. The Chinese title is quite different.

⁶ Cf. Eitel, l. l., s.v. *Mānasa*, where *Manasvin* is wrongly said to be the tutelary deity of lake *Mānasarovara* (in Tibet identified with lake *Anavatapta*, cf. Kawaguchi, *Three years in Tibet*, Ch. XXVI, pp. 139 sqq.).

The dragon in China

Mahāvastu, where the Buddha blesses Bhallika and Trapuṣa, among the protectors of the West Virūpāksha, the Nāgas and Varuṇa are mentioned. As to Virūpāksha, one of the four guardians of the world, he is the sovereign of all the Nāgas. Varuṇa, the Brahmanic god of heaven, is at the same time the regent^{p.029} of the sea, and, as one of the eight Lokapālas, guardian of the West¹. It is remarkable that there were apparently two beings of the same name, both deities of the water and of the West, Varuṇa the deva and Varuṇa the Nāga king.

After *Takshaka*, *Dhṛtarāshṭra*² and *Vāsuki*, of whom the first and the third both belong to the eight great Nāga kings of Northern Buddhism³, *Mucilinda*, also called *Mahāmucilinda*, who, as we have seen above, protected Çakyamuni during the seven days of meditation, and *Elāpatra*, who consulted the Buddha about rebirth in a higher sphere, are enumerated, followed by 176 others.

The same Nāga kings, except *Mucilinda* and *Elāpatra*, are mentioned in the so-called *Anumantraṇa*, an invocation of the Nāgas found in the Bower MS. from Mingai, about which R. Morris⁴ writes the following :

"As regards to the contents of the MS., fol. 3 apparently contains a charm which is intended to force the Nāgas or snake-deities to send rain. The mutilated line 1 enumerates, it would seem, various plants which are to be used as ingredients for an oblation. Line 2 gives the Mantra for the oblation... The end of line 2 and the following lines to the end of the page contain the so-called *Anumantraṇa*, a further invocation of the snake-deities, intended to propitiate them by a declaration of the worshipper's friendly relations with various individual Nāgas. This snake-charm, which appears to be Buddhistic, was

¹ Cf. Eitel, I. I., s.v.

² Beal calls him *Dītarāksha*, but Morris writes *Dhṛitarāshṭra* (*Dhṛtarāṣṭra*).

³ See above p. 4, cf. pp. 20, 21, 23.

⁴ *Journal of the Pāli Text Society*, 1891—3, pp. 63 seqq., Notes and queries by the Rev. R. Morris, nr 44. Cf. the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Vol. V, nr 2.

The dragon in China

probably composed in Southern India. For it mentions 'the district on the banks of the Golā', *i. e.* the Godāvarī... The language of this piece is the incorrect Sanskrit, mixed with Prākṛit forms, which is common in the Buddhist works of *the early centuries of our era*, as well as in the Buddhist and Jaina inscriptions of the same period.

Morris compares the list of names found in the *Anumantraṇa*, p.030 each time preceded by the words "I keep friendship with", with those mentioned in the Great Cloud-wheel Rain-asking sūtra in Beal's Catena, those found in the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka sūtra* and those of Southern Buddhism. Nanda and Upananda, Anavatapta, Takshaka, Dhṛtarāshtra and Virūpāksha are mentioned in all these lists, Sāgara (wrongly called Samhāraka in the Mingai MS.) in the three former, as well as Vāsuki, while Varuṇa and Manasvin are not found in the Lotus and in Southern Buddhism. Further, the MS. gives several other names, as Nairāvana, Kṛshṇa, Gautamaka, Maṇi, Daṇḍapāda etc. Dhṛtarāshtra and Virūpāksha are the regents of the East and the West, and also Nāga kings ; as to Nairāvana, this is, according to Morris, perhaps Vaiḍraṇa, the regent of the North. Kṛshṇa and Gautamaka are mentioned in the Divyāvadāna as two Nāga kings.

Prof. De Groot ¹ gives a very interesting description of the whole rain ceremony, as it is performed in Chinese Buddhist monasteries in times of drought, by order of the authorities or of influential laymen. An altar is erected, mostly in the court-yard before the great temple of the Triratna, but sometimes at the foot of the mountain on which the monastery is situated ; there a Kwan-yin temple is often appointed for these ceremonies and for the prayers for rain, sent up by the mandarins and the people. Once or twice De Groot saw a shrine dedicated to Sāgara Nāgarāja, the special sea-god of the Chinese Buddhists ; it was opened only in time of drought.

¹ [Code du Mahāyāna en Chine, Ch. VIII, pp. 148 sqq.](#)

The dragon in China

The altar corresponds with the prescriptions of the sūtra, mentioned above ¹. On the gates of the four sides dragons are painted, two on each, with their heads turned to the inside. The cow dung of the Hindus is replaced in China by a yellow reddish clay, which is used for adorning the platform inside the enclosure. The estrade upon this platform is covered with blue silk, as well as the tables for the sūtras, utensils, offerings, and the chairs of the performing monks, of whom the leader looks to the East, the others to the North and South.

According to De Groot, the colour blue is chosen in China because this is the colour of the East, from where the rain must come ; this quarter is represented by the Azure Dragon, the highest in rank among all the dragons. We have seen, however, that ^{p.031} the original sūtra already prescribed to use the blue colour and to face the East. Moreover, the Azure Dragon has nothing to do with Buddhism. The Chinese Buddhists only copy an ancient Indian rite. Indra, the raingod, is the patron of the East, and Indra-colour is *nila*, dark blue or rather blue-black, the regular epitheton of the rain clouds ². If the priest had not to face the East but the West, this would agree with the fact that the Nāgas were said to live in the Western quarter and that in India the West corresponds with the blue colour. Facing the East, however, seems to point to an old rain ceremony in which Indra was invoked to raise the blue-black clouds.

On the eastern, southern, western and northern tables tablets are placed on which the principal dragons of these quarters, whose Indian names are mentioned above, are painted, with three, five, seven and nine heads instead of the crests or hoods of the Nāgas. Often other tablets representing attendants of these great dragons stand at their sides. All the dragons have waves at their feet and clouds above their heads. Finally, twenty eight black poles with long blue flags, each with a burning oil lamp between four flower vases filled with fresh flowers,

¹ Cf. also nr 177 of the Supplement of the Tripiṭaka (third volume of bundle 3), p. 380b.

² Professor Speyer had the kindness of pointing this out to me. One of the many passages where a blue-black colour is mentioned is Mahābhārata, Book III, 16, 13.

The dragon in China

represent the twenty eight constellations. We find these twenty eight blue banners mentioned on p. 21a of the Chinese text of the sūtra (Nanjō, nr 186) ; Bendall's translation of the Sanscrit text, however, speaks only of one blue banner ¹. De Groot explains the fact that all the poles are black by the connection of this colour with the North, with Yin and the water ². This may be right, as the sūtra itself does not mention the colour of the poles, so that the Chinese in this respect could follow their own ideas.

In the morning of the first day of the ceremonies the leading priest with the abbot and the highest authorities of the monastery offer incense in the great temple of the Triratna, and, while the dhāraṇīs of Kwan-yin are recited, the temple and the rain altar are purified by sprinkling pure water upon them (as amṛta). Now the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, dragon-kings and saints may descend upon the altar without contaminating themselves. The leading monk and the abbot rise from their seats and offer incense ; at the same time the choir thrice sings a lamentation about the p.032 drought and a prayer for rain, followed by an invocation of the Triratna. Then some moments of profound silence allow the officiating monk to sink into dhyāna and to see by his mental eyes the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, dragon-kings and saints descending and listening to the prayers. On awakening he orders to recite seven times the dhāraṇī of the "Light-king of the Great Wheel" (*i. e.* the sun), in order to correct the mistakes which might be made in the ritual. Thereupon the monks invoke by name all the 187 Nāga kings mentioned in the sūtra and thrice recite the first kind of dhāraṇīs, given by the Buddha to these kings according to the same holy text. These magic formulae are accompanied by the sound of vajra bells, and followed by a terrible noise of drums and cymbals in order to make them more powerful. Then follows the invocation of all the 54 rain-giving

¹ Pp. 303, 309.

² *Black* horses were the principal offerings to the rain gods of Japan.

The dragon in China

Tathāgatas, enumerated in the sūtra, each monk having a small incense-burner in his hand, which they also used in invoking the Nāga kings. After a second dhyāna of the leading monk having rendered efficacious the second kind of dhāraṇī, given by the Buddha and recited by the monks in the same way as the former, the ceremony is closed by expressing the hope that the rain may soon come, sent by the Triratna and the dragon kings. A little later, in the course of the forenoon, the offerings, placed on the altar, are solemnly presented to the dragons, and songs and prayers are sent up to them, as well as to the Triratna and all the devas. Often a paper figure of one of the Taoistic "Celestial Generals", with a written request for rain in his hand, is burned, that he may take it to Heaven.

In the afternoon the leading monk with the abbot and as many other monks as they want take their seats upon the altar and recite the Great-Cloud-Wheel sūtra. All these ceremonies are daily repeated till it rains sufficiently. If the drought lasts too long, Kwan-yin's dhāraṇīs and prayers for rain are continued night and day, small groups of monks relieving one another in all the buildings of the monastery. The main point of the ceremony is the purity of the altar and of the priests themselves ; for the drought, like all calamities caused by some crime of men, can only be stopped by pure ceremonies performed by pure priests. Especially because they never eat animal food, the monks are religiously cleaner and therefore much more able to make rain than laymen.

As to the ceremonies for stopping too abundant rains, called "praying for good weather" these are described by De Groot ^{p.033} in the same chapter. The same sūtra may be used, because it has the power of ruling the rain, but these ceremonies are seldom performed on such an extensive scale. As a rule a yellow paper tablet with an invocation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who reside above the rays of the sun and are mentioned in the "Sūtra of the vajra brilliant flames (the beams of the

The dragon in China

sun), which puts a stop to wind and rain", is erected in the hall of the Triratna and offerings are made to them. Then Kwan-yin is invoked and this Bodhisattva's dhāraṇīs are recited, or those of the "Medicine-Master, Tathāgata of the *liu-li* (one of the saptaratna, probably the bluish precious stone called vaiḍūrya) light", *i. e.* the sunlight, and the latter's name is invoked a thousand times. De Groot explains this Medicine-Master to be the oriental Sun, who cures Nature and drives away all illnesses caused by the demons of Darkness. His cult, the counterpart of that of Amitābha, the occidental Sun, is based upon a sūtra, which we find mentioned in Nanjō's *Catalogue* sub nr 171 ¹. This Tathāgata is the well-known *Yakushi Nyorai* of Japan. It is quite clear that he is considered to be most powerful in causing the rains to stop and refreshing the earth by his rays. Thereupon Çakyamuni, the Buddhas who are above the brilliant flames, and all the Nāgas are supplicated to grant good weather, and besides the two former the Medicine-Master and Kwan-yin are each invoked thrice in kneeling attitude. Finally, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are, as always, praised as the refuge of all. The same ceremonies are repeated by other monks till the rain stops, and then a larger number of them for the last time celebrates the rites as a sign of gratitude and satisfaction.

In Japan, which in summer time, has much more to suffer from ^{p.034} continuous and heavy rains than China, ceremonies for stopping rain are frequently mentioned in the annals, as we shall see below ². But also rain prayers were very frequent, and the Buddhist priests eagerly took advantage of the opportunity to surpass the Shintoists and extend their

¹ *Bheshajyaguru vaiḍūryaprabhāsa Tathāgata pūrvapraṇidhāna guna sūtra*, "Sutra on the merits and virtue of the original vow of the Medicine-Master, the Tathāgata Vaiḍūrya light ; translated by Hüen Tsang, A.D. 650. Cf. nrs 170, 172, 173. According to Nanjō, nrs 170, 171 and 172 are later translations of the twelfth Sutra of nr 167 ; the main title of this work is *Buddhabhāshita mahābhishekarddhidhāraṇī sūtra*, "Sutra on the divine dhāraṇī of the Great washing of the top of the head (baptism), spoken by Buddha". This is apparently the *Kanjō-kyō*, "Sutra on the washing of the top of the head", recited in the fifth month of A.D. 880 in the Sacred Spring Park at Kyōto, for stopping the abundant rains (*Sandai jitsuroku*, Ch. XXXVII, p. 541).

² Book II, Ch. III.

The dragon in China

sphere of influence. Thus the Great-Cloud-Wheel sūtra (Nanjō, nr 188), mentioned above, was recited by fifteen Buddhist priests in the Sacred Spring park (*Shinsen-en*) at Kyōto, in the sixth month of the year 875 of our era ¹. At the same time sixty other priests in the Taikyokuden, one of the buildings of the Imperial Palace, recited parts of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra ², which is very often mentioned in the Japanese annals as having been partly read in rain ceremonies ³. Sometimes also the Vajra-prajñāpāramitā sūtra ⁴ was used. In the fifth month of A.D. 880 the Kanjō-kyō ⁵, "Sūtra on washing the top of the head (baptism)", was recited in the Sacred Spring park for stopping the abundant rains.

Also in China other sūtras are used in rain ceremonies, e. g. the *Vajra-prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, the *Buddhabhāshita Sāgara Nāgarāja sūtra* ⁶, "Sutra on the Sea-dragon-king (*i. e.* Sāgara), spoken by Buddha", etc. This is logical, for, as De Groot ⁷ remarks, according to the 39th commandment of the Mahāyāna code all punishments for crimes committed — and drought is such a punishment — are to be taken away by reciting the sūtras and vinayas of the Mahāyāna.

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¹ Cf. below, Book II, Ch. III, § 3 ; *Sandai jitsuroku*, Ch. XXVII, p. 414.

² *Mahāprajñā sūtra*, Nanjō's Catalogue, nr 1, gives the full title, and states that it was translated in A.D. 659 by the famous pilgrim Hūen Tsang.

³ Cf. *Sandai jitsuroku*, Ch. XX, p. 335 (sixth month, 871) ; Ch. XXIII, p. 372, (fifth month, 873) ; Ch. XXV, p. 386 (second month, 874) ; Ch. XXXII, p. 466 (seventh month, 877) ; Ch. XXXVII, p. 543 (sixth month, 880).

⁴ *Sandai jitsuroku*, Ch. XXIII, p. 372 ; Nanjō, nrs 10-12.

⁵ See above p. 33, note 3 ; *Sandai jitsuroku*, Ch. XXXVII, p. 541 ; Nanjō, nr 167.

⁶ Nanjō, nr 456 ; translated A.D. 265-316. Cf. nr 457, "Sūtra on the Seal of the Law spoken by Buddha for the sake of Sāgara Nāgarāja". These sūtras were spoken in Sāgara's palace at the bottom of the sea.

⁷ L. I., p. 156 ; cf. p. 72.

Book I. The dragon in China

CHAPTER I

The dragon in the Chinese classics

§ 1. *Yih king*

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p.035 The oldest Chinese work which mentions the dragon is the *Yih King*. We read there the following explanation of the lowest line of the first of the diagrams, which corresponds with Heaven :

"First, nine : a dragon hidden in the water is useless."

According to the commentators the meaning of this sentence is that the lowest line of this diagram, representing the dragon lying in the deep, is a sign that it is not the time for active doing. Therefore Legge ¹ translates :

"In the first (or lowest) line, undivided (we see its subject as) the dragon lying hid (in the deep). It is not the time for active doing".

This translation is more explicative than true, for the text simply gives the words :

"First, nine : a dragon hidden in the water is useless".

As to the word *nine*, this is explained by the commentary entitled "*Traditions of Ch'eng*" to mean the "fullness of *Yang*", because it is three times three, *i. e.* a multiplication of the undividable number which represents *Yang*. As the undivided strokes of the diagrams are symbols of *Yang* and the divided ones of Yin, the meaning of the two first words

¹ Section I, p. 57.

The dragon in China

of the sentence is, as Legge translates, that the lowest line is undivided. The characters 勿用, however, do not mean : "it is not the time for active doing", but simply : "useless" ¹. The dragon, symbolized by the lines of the diagram of Heaven, because he is the *Yang* creature *κατ' ἔξοχήν*, is represented by the ^{p.036} lowest line as still lying in the depth of the waters. In this condition the heavenly giver of fertilizing rains is still useless to mankind. This must be the original meaning of these words, but the diviners concluded from this uselessness of the hidden dragon that one had to abstain from active doing.

The second line of the same diagram is explained by the *Yih king* as follows :

"Nine, second ; a dragon is seen in the rice fields ; advantage ; a great man will be seen"

Legge translates :

"It will be advantageous to meet with the great man".

Although this translation follows the commentators, the meaning is clearer if we divide the sentence as we have done above. The appearance of a dragon in the rice fields gives advantage, *i. e.* the fertilizing rain gives good crops. The original meaning of the character 利, which consists of *rice* and a *knife*, is apparently *harvest*, which was, of course, identical to advantage. Further, "a great man will be seen". Here we see the dragon representing great (especially holy) men, who are as full of *Yang* as the dragon himself. Even in those olden times his appearance apparently was considered to be an omen of the birth of great and holy men, especially of Emperors, the holiest men on earth.

In the third line the dragon is not mentioned, but in the fourth we read that he is "*perhaps leaping in the pool*" (but not yet rising above

¹ Prof. De Groot kindly pointed out to me the simple and clear meaning of this and the following sentences.

The dragon in China

the surface). *"There will be no evil (咎)"*. The word *evil* seems to be more logical in a divinatory sentence than "mistake".

The fifth line is described as *"A flying dragon in the sky ; advantage ; a great man will be seen"*. It is, of course, of the utmost benefit to mankind, if the rain-bringing dragon is soaring in the sky. At the same time it is an omen of the appearance of a great man.

Finally, the topmost line is explained as

"The dragon exceeding the proper limits (i. e. flying too high). There will be regret".

The simplest explanation of these words is that, if a dragon flies too high, he is too far from the earth to return and the rain does not reach it, a reason of regret to himself and to mankind. At the same time the great man, symbolized by the dragon, repents all exaggeration on his part.

p.037 The *Yih king* goes on as follows :

"The number nine is used (in this diagram). If a herd of dragons is seen divesting themselves of their heads, this means good fortune".

The lowest line of the second diagram, which represents Earth (坤 , *Kw'un*), is explained as

"Dragons fighting in the open field ; their blood is dark (not purple, as Legge translated) and yellow".

Apparently a thunderstorm, with dark and yellow clouds flying through the sky, is described in this way. For in a passage of Appendix V of the *Yih king* ¹, ascribed to Confucius, we read :

"K'ien (Heaven) is a horse, Kw'un (Earth) is a cow, Chen (Thunder) is a dragon".

And, again, in the same Appendix ² :

¹ *Shwuh-kwa chw'en*, (Ch. 17), p. 12. Legge, Appendix V, p. 429, Chapter VIII, 12.

² Ch. 17 ; Legge, p. 430, Ch. XI, 17.

The dragon in China

"Chen is thunder, is a dragon, is dark and yellow"

The same diagram represents also *Spring* and the *Eastern quarter*, which are identified with the *Azure Dragon* ¹.

In Ch. 11 (p. 2) of the *Yih king* the words "A dragon lying in the deep is useless" are illustrated by "Yang is below", which means : "The Sun is under the horizon", *i. e.* the dragon lying in the deep is as useless as the sun under the horizon.

In the same chapter (same page) we read :

"A dragon is seen in the rice fields ; blessing power (德) is spread everywhere".

This is a clear explanation of the word *advantage* in the above passage on the fifth line of the first diagram.

As to the "*Dragons fighting in the open field*", in this chapter these words are followed by : "*Their way (tao) is exhausted*", *i. e.* their blessing actions are completed to the last. As rain is the blessing conferred upon mankind by the dragons, this sentence may easily be explained by the fact that in a thunderstorm, when the dragons fight in the sky, the rain comes down in torrents.

p.038 An Appendix of the *Yih king* says :

"The hibernating of dragons and snakes is done in order to preserve their bodies".

Here we see dragons and snakes being closely connected and regarded as belonging to the same kind of animals. Also in later times the same fact is to be observed.

On considering the above passages of the *Yih king* we arrive at the conclusion that the ideas on the dragon prevailing in China at the present day are just the same as those of the remotest times. It is a water animal, akin to the snake, which uses to sleep in pools during winter and arises in

¹ Cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol . I, p. 317](#) ; [III, p. 964, 987](#).

The dragon in China

spring. It is the god of thunder, who brings good crops when he appears in the rice fields (as rain) or in the sky (as dark and yellow clouds), in other words, when he makes the rain fertilize the ground. But when he flies too high and cannot return, the thirsty earth must wait in vain for his blessings, and sorrow prevails. As this beneficent being is full of *Yang*, it symbolizes those among men who are fullest of Light, namely great men, and its appearance is considered to be an omen of their coming, *i. e.* of their birth. In the first place the greatest and fullest of *Yang* among them all, the Emperor, is, of course, symbolized by the dragon. He is, indeed, the representative of Imperial power, as we shall see later on.

When black and yellow clouds covered the sky, and thunder and lightning raged, the ancient Chinese said, like those of to-day :

"The dragons are fighting ; look at their blood spreading over the sky".

And at the same time the heavenly dragons caused the rain to pour down upon the grateful earth.

Even when the dragons were only leaping in their pools, no calamity was to be feared, and when a herd of them, even headless, was seen in the sky, this was a felicitous sign. Winter, when they hibernate and sleep in pools, is the dry season in China. But in spring, in the third of the twenty four seasons into which the year was divided even in olden times, the "Resurrection of the hibernating animals" ¹ takes place, and it begins to rain a little. In the "beginning of summer", however, *i. e.* in the first of the six summer seasons, "the winds arrive p.039 and the dragons ascend to the sky" ², for this is the time when the abundant rains come down, a blessing to mankind.

¹ "Resurrection of hibernating animals", is the name of this season ; cf. [De Groot, Vol. III, p. 968](#).

² *Yih wei*, quoted in the famous encyclopaedia entitled *K'in ting ku kin t'u shu tsih ch'ing*, (published in 1725, cf. [De Groot, Vol. I, Introd. p. XXI](#)).

The dragon in China

§ 2. Shu king

In the *Shu king* ¹ we read the following words of the Emperor Shun to Yu :

"I wish to see the emblematic figures of the ancients : the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountain, the *dragon*, and the variegated animals (pheasants) which are depicted (on the upper sacrificial garment of the Emperor)".

So we see that even in the early times of Shun's predecessors, *i. e.* in the days of Hwang Ti (who is said to have reigned in the 27th century B. C.) and Yao, the dragon belonged to the six symbolic figures painted on the upper garment of the Emperor. This was, no doubt, due to its blessing power as rain-giving god of thunder and clouds.

§ 3. Li ki

The *Li ki* ² says :

"What is called the four *ling* (靈) ? The unicorn, the phoenix, the tortoise and the dragon, they are called the four *ling*. As the dragon is considered to be a domestic animal, fishes and sturgeons do not flee away".

Couvreur translates *ling* by : "animaux qui donnent des présages", but it has a stronger meaning, as we may learn from De Groot's *Religious System* ³. Therefore I should prefer to translate it by "*spiritual beings*". The effective operation of the *tsing* (精) or vital spirit of these four creatures is, indeed, enormously strong, and therefore they may be justly called "the four *spiritual* animals par excellence". It is no wonder that their appearance was considered to ^{p.040} be an omen, but this was only the consequence of their "*spirituality*".

¹ Legge, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. III, Part II, Book IV, § 1, p. 58.

² [Couvreur, Li ki, Vol. I, p. 524.](#)

³ [Vol IV, p. 12.](#)

The dragon in China

In art. 4 of the same Chapter of the *Li ki* ¹, where the halcyon days of the holy emperors of antiquity are described, we read :

"The male and female phoenixes, and the male and female unicorns were all in the marshes beyond the city walls ; the tortoise and the dragon were in the ponds of the Imperial Palace",

i. e. the four *ling* were all in the neighbourhood, spreading their blessings over the Palace and the country.

Further, in another passage of the *Li ki*, also devoted to the ancient sovereigns ², the following words are to be found :

"They (the monarchs of old) chose (litt. followed, accommodated themselves to) felicitous places in order to make sacrifices to the Emperor of Heaven in the suburbs. The sacrifices ascended and reached Heaven. Then phoenixes descended, and tortoises and dragons arrived".

Finally, in the first, second and third months of spring ³,

"the Emperor ascends his carriage adorned with bells, drawn by azure dragons ⁴ and carrying a blue banner (旂, *k'i*, adorned with dragons joined ⁵)".

The azure dragon is, as we stated above, the symbol of Spring, the season when "thunder resounds, lightning begins to flash, and the hibernating animals all move, open their doors (*i. e.* come out of their chrysalides) and begin to come out".

¹ [Couvreur, p. 536.](#)

² [Couvreur, Vol. I, p. 563.](#)

³ [Couvreur, I, Ch. IV, pp. 332](#) (first month), 340 (second month), 347 (third month).

⁴ Horses higher than eight ch'ih, *i. e.* 1,60 meter, were called dragons ([Couvreur, I, p. 332](#)).

⁵ *Cheu li*, Section *Ch'un kwan*, "Spring officials", *Szě shang* ; Ch. XXVII, p. 24, gives the names of the nine banners ruled by the *Szě shang*, "Banner rulers". "Dragons joined form the *k'i*, (the second banner)" [c.a. : [Tcheou-li, trad. Biot, vol. II, p. 133.](#)]

The dragon in China

§ 4. Cheu li

We have seen the dragon mentioned in the *Shu king* among the twelve symbolic ornaments of the ancient sacrificial robe of ^{p.041} the Emperor. Further, the *Cheu li* has taught us (above p. 40, note 7) that the banner called *k'i*, 旂, was adorned with *dragons joined* (i. e. twisted about each other). The same work ¹ states the following :

"In general as *tsieh* (official tablets) of the envoys of the Empire, in mountainous countries *tiger* tablets are used, in plain countries tablets *painted* with *human* figures, and in watery countries *dragon* tablets. The tablets are all made of metal".

It is clear why the ornaments of these official tablets were divided in this way. For, as the commentator Ching K'ang-ch'ing remarks on this passage,

"in the mountains are many tigers, in the plains many men, and in the waters many dragons".

Thus the dragon symbolized the water.

A third passage of the *Cheu li* ², which treats of the Winter officials, says that, in painting and embroidering,

"Water is represented by means of dragons".

Chao P'uh's ³ commentary explains these words as follows :

"The dragon is a divine being in the water. If one represents water without representing dragons, there is nothing to show the divinity of its phenomena".

As to Ching K'ang-ch'ing, he simply states :

"The dragon is a water creature ; it is (depicted or embroidered) on clothes".

¹ Sect. *Ti kwan*, s. v. *chang tsieh*, Ch. XIV, p. 39. [c.a. : [Tcheou-li, trad. Biot, vol. I, p. 334.](#)]

² Section *Tung kwan*, Ch. XLII, (painting and embroidering), p. 5b. [c.a. : [Tcheou-li, trad. Biot, vol. II, p. 516.](#)]

³ A commentator of the Sung dynasty. Although only his family name is mentioned, and there was another commentator of the same family name, namely Chao Kw'ang, of the T'ang dynasty, probably we have here to do with the former.

The dragon in China

§ 5. I li

A dragon banner is mentioned in the *I li* ¹, where Imperial hunting parties are described. We read there :

"In the frontier _{p.042} regions : when a tiger is hit : dragon banner".

This is, at least, probably the meaning of the very short text. Ching K'ang-ch'ing explains it as follows :

"'In the frontier regions' (竟 is used here for 境) means shooting with the rulers of neighbouring countries. They paint a dragon on the banner ² ; moreover it is a variegated pattern. 'Full silk' forms the banner" ³.

In hunting parties with foreign rulers probably a signal was given with this dragon banner when a tiger (the dragon's deadly enemy) was shot.

The ancient texts referred to in this chapter are short, but sufficient to give us the main conceptions of old China with regard to the dragon. He was in those early days, just like now, the god of water, thunder, clouds and rain, the harbinger of blessings, and the symbol of holy men. As the Emperors are the holy beings on earth, the idea of the dragon being the symbol of Imperial power is based upon this ancient conception.

For the sake of clearness the further texts will be treated in separate chapters according to the kind of information they give. In each chapter, however, chronological order will be observed.

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¹ [c.a. : [Couvreur, I li, p. 176.](#)]

² 旛, *chen*, according to Wells Williams, *Dict.*, s. v. p. 44 : "a silken banner of a reddish color, plain and triangular".

³ (通帛 *t'ung poh*, was, according to Ching K'ang-ch'ing, in the same work, Ch. XXVII, p. 24b, "deep red, in accordance with the main colour of the Cheu dynasty").

CHAPTER II

Divination

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§ 1. Lucky omens

p.043 The birth of great sages and Emperors was preceded by the appearance of dragons and phoenixes. In the night of Confucius' birth (B.C. 551) two azure dragons descended from the sky and came to his mother's house. She saw them in her dream and gave birth to the great sage ¹. The biography of the Emperor Wu ², the famous man of the Han dynasty (B.C. 140-87), contains the following passage in regard to his birth :

"The Emperor Hiao Wu of the Han dynasty was the son of the Emperor King. Before he was born the Emperor King dreamt that a red hog descended from the clouds and straightly entered the Ch'ing fang koh (Exalted Fragrance Corridor). The Emperor King awoke and sat down under the corridor. Actually there was a red dragon. It was like fog and in coming darkened the doors and windows. When the Imperial harem went to look (what was happening), there was above the corridor a cinnabar coloured vapour which increased enormously and rose. After the vapour had dispersed they saw a red dragon coiling and revolving between the rafters. The Emperor King called a diviner, the Old Yao by name, and asked him about the matter. The old man said :

— This is a lucky omen. This corridor certainly will produce a man who shall rule the world. He shall expel the barbarians

¹ *Shih i ki*, written by Wang Kia, probably in the 4th century ; Ch. III, p. 4b.

² *Wu Ti nei chw'en*, "Inner traditions on the Emperor Wu", ascribed to the famous historiographer Pan Ku, who died A. D. 92 ; p. 1a.

The dragon in China

and thus bring with him lucky omens. Therefore he shall be the most glorious ruler of the Liu family. But it (may mean) also a great prodigy.

The Emperor King ordered the Imperial Consort Wang to move to the Exalted Fragrance Corridor, wishing thereby to act in accordance with Old Yao's words. Thereupon he changed the p.044 name of the corridor into *I lan tien*, 'Hall of the Flourishing Orchid ¹'. After more than ten days the Emperor King dreamt that a divine woman held up the sun in both her hands and gave it to the Consort Wang. She swallowed it, and after fourteen months gave birth to the Emperor Wu. The Emperor King said :

— I dreamt that a red vapour changed into a red dragon. The diviners considered this to be a lucky omen ; (therefore) he (the new-born son) must be called Lucky (*kih*).

One of the ten lucky signs which were seen in the course of one day under the reign of Yao, one of the five holy Emperors of ancient times, was a dragon which appeared in the pond of his palace ².

The appearance of *yellow* or *azure* dragons, often mentioned in the annals ³, was nearly always considered to be a very good omen. Only if they came untimely or on wrong places they were harbingers of evil, as we shall see below. They were mostly seen in the night, spreading a brilliant light all over the neighbourhood. Such a nightly apparition illuminated the palace of Kung Sun-shuh under the reign of the Emperor Kwang Wu (25-57 A. D.). The former considered it such a good omen, that in 25 A. D. he proclaimed himself Emperor of Shu (White Emperor)

¹ The orchid being the symbol of harmony, because the *Shi king* compares the dwelling together in harmony of brothers with the smell of orchids ; the new name of the corridor was still more felicitous than the former.

² *Shuh i ki*, written by Jen Fang, in the earlier part of the 6th century. Ch. 上, p. 4b.

³ Cf. T. S., Ch. 128, p. 7b, 8a, 9 ; Ch. 129, pp. 1 sq.

The dragon in China

and changed the name of the era into Lung-Hing, "Dragon's rise" ¹. A black, horned dragon was seen one night by Lü Kwang ², who lived in the fourth century A. D. Its glittering eyes illuminated the whole vicinity, so that the huge monster was visible till it was enveloped by clouds which gathered from all sides. The next morning traces of its scales were to be seen over a distance of five miles, but soon were wiped out by the heavy ^{p.045} rains. Then one of Lü Kwang's attendants said to him :

— A dragon is a divine animal and an omen of a man's rise to the position of a ruler. So you will attain this rank".

On hearing this, Lü Kwang was very much rejoiced ; and actually he became a ruler after some time ³. The dragons being such important omens, it is no wonder that Imperial proclamations often were issued on account of their appearance ⁴.

Finally, we may quote a divinatory work ⁵ which says :

"When the beginning rise of an Emperor or King is about to take place, a dragon appears in the Yellow River or in the Loh. All examine his head : if the head is black, men are correct ; if white, the Earth is correct ; if red, Heaven is correct".

§ 2. Bad omens

A. Fighting dragons

From olden times high floods, tempests and thunderstorms have been ascribed by the Chinese to dragons fighting in rivers or in the air. Although, according to the *Yih king* ⁶,

¹ *Tung kwan han ki*, Ch. XXIII, written in 107 A.D. by Liu Chen, and continued in 172 A.D. by Ts'ai Yung.

² Cf. [Giles, Chin. Biogr. Dict., pp. 555 sq.](#)

³ *Pao P'oh-tsze*, written by Koa Hung, in the fourth century ; Ch. IV.

⁴ The Emperor-Wen of the Han dynasty *e. g.* did so in B.C. 165, Books of the Early Han Dynasty, Ch. IV ; comp. the Emperor Süen's proclamation in the summer of B. C. 52 (*ibidem*, Ch. VIII, p. 14a).

⁵ The *Yih k'ien tsoh tu*, quoted in the T. S., Ch. 130, p. 2b.

⁶ See above, p. 37.

The dragon in China

"the *tao* of dragons, fighting in the open field, is exhausted",
i. e. their blessing power makes the rain pour down in torrents, on the other hand such severe thunderstorms often cause much damage and calamities. Therefore, however welcome a dragon fight in the air might be in times of drought, in ordinary circumstances the threatening armies in the sky were looked at with great fright. Moreover, the people believed the damage produced by dragon fights in rivers or in the air to be not limited to the actual calamities of the present, but to extend itself to the near future, in other words, they were considered to be very bad p.046 omens, foreboding inundations, disorder, war, nay even the dynasty's fall. As gods of water, clouds, and rain they caused high floods by their fights, and as representatives of the Imperial power their victory or defeat meant rebellion, war, and even the fall of the reigning House.

According to the *Tso chw'en* ¹ a high flood was ascribed to dragons fighting in a pool in the nineteenth year of the reign of Chao, Duke of Lu (523 B. C.).

"There were great floods in Ch'ing ; and [some] dragons fought in the pool of Wei, outside the She gate. The people asked leave to sacrifice to them ; but Tsze-ch'an refused it, saying :

— When we fight, the dragons do not look at us. Why should we look at them, when they are fighting ? If we offer a deprecatory sacrifice to them, they will leave their abodes. If we do not seek the dragons, they also will not seek us".

Then the matter was given up.

The *Yih lin* ² says :

¹ Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. V, Part II, pp. 674 sq. (Book X, year XIX). [c.a. [Couvreur, Tso tchouan, vol. III, p. 302.](#)]

² A work on divination, quoted by the T. S., Ch. 130, p. 3a.

The dragon in China

"If six dragons have angry fight with one another under an embankment, and the azure or yellow dragons do not conquer, the travellers will meet hardships and trouble".

As we have seen above, the azure and yellow dragons especially were harbingers of felicity ; so their defeat was a sign of coming trouble, probably caused by inundations.

In regard to impending war and ruin we may quote the following passages from the Histories.

In the *Books of the Sui dynasty* ¹ we read :

"In the Liang dynasty (A. D. 502-557), in the second year of the T'ien kien era (503), there were dragons fighting in a pool in Northern Liang province. They squirted fog over a distance of some miles.

As to the evils of dragons and snakes the *Hung fan wu hing chw'en* ² says :

"These are trouble and damage of dragons and beasts. That which belongs to Heaven is symbol of the Ruler. If the Heavenly breath is injured, and the Tao of the Ruler is wounded, also the dragons are injured. Their fights are symbols of weapons and shields. p.047

King Fang ³ says in his *Yih féi heu* ("Flying observations on divination") :

"When the hearts of the multitude are not quiet, dragon fights are the bad omens thereof.

¹ Ch. XXIII, nr 18, 下, p. 17a.

² Cf. [De Groot, vol. V, p. 491, note 1](#) : "A work based on a section of the *Shu king* entitled *Hung fan* or The Great Plan. It seems to have been held in great esteem in the sixth century as an expositor of prognostics. It was then composed of eleven chapters, with a commentary by Liu Hiang, so that it must have existed previous to our era."

³ A famous diviner of the first century of our era, author of the *Yih chw'en* (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 204](#)) and of the *Yih yao*, (cf. below, Bad omens, D.).

The dragon in China

At that time the Emperor for the first time ascended the throne, and there was a riot of Ch'en Poh-chi and Liu Li-lien. Danger and fear prevailed in the empire.

The same annals ¹ contain the following passage :

"In the sixth month of the fifth year of the P'u t'ung era (524 A. D.) dragons fought in the pond of the King of K'üh o (?). They went westward as far as Kien ling ch'ing. In the places they passed all the trees were broken. The divination was the same as in the second year of the T'ien kien era (503 A. D.), namely that their passing Kien ling and the trees being broken indicated that there would be calamity of war for the dynasty, and that it was a sign that the Imperial tombs would be destroyed. At that time the Emperor considered the holding of discussions to be his only task, and did not think of ploughing. His fighting generals were careless, his soldiers idle, and the Tao of the Ruler was injured. Therefore there was the corresponding fact of the dragons' evil. The Emperor did not at all become conscious (of the danger). In the first year of the T'ai Ts'ing era (547 A. D.) there was again a dragon fight in the waters of Li cheu. The waves seethed and bubbled up, and clouds and fog assembled from all sides. White dragons were seen running to the South, followed by black dragons. That year Heu King came with troops to submit, and the Emperor accepted his submission without taking precautions. The people of the realm were all frightened, and suddenly rebellion arose. The Emperor in consequence thereof had a sad death".

He died in 549, and eight years later the Liang dynasty came to an end.

In A. D. 579 a black dragon was killed by a red one. Moreover, in the same year there was a fight of a white dragon with a black one, the result

¹ Same chapter, section and page.

The dragon in China

of which was that the white one ascended ^{p.048} to the sky and the black one fell on the earth and died ¹. As black was the colour of the Later (*i. e.* Northern) Cheu dynasty, these dragon fights were forebodings of its approaching fall, which actually took place two years later.

As to inundations announced beforehand by dragon fights, we may refer to the *History of the Sung dynasty*, where we read that in the fifth year of the K'ien Tao era (A.D. 1169) such a battle in the air was seen amidst a heavy thunderstorm.

"Two dragons fled and pearls like carriage wheels fell down on the ground, where they were found by herdsboys. In the following years inundations afflicted the country".

Sometimes dragon fights are mentioned not as omens, but only as causing heavy storms which destroyed a large number of houses and government buildings and killed hundreds of people, carrying them into the air together with their domestic animals, trees and tiles, over a length of more than ten miles. Such a storm raged in the fourth month of the ninth year of the Hwang t'ung era (1149) above the Yu lin river in Li cheu ².

Devastation caused by lightning was believed to be the result of sacred fire, sent by Heaven to stop dragon fights.

"In the fifth month of the year yih-wei (probably 1295) on a place near the lake at I hing, all of a sudden there were two dragons which twisting around each other and fighting both fell into the lake. Their length had no sharp limits. In a short space of time a heavy wind came riding on the water, which reached a height of more than a chang (ten ch'ih or feet). Then there fell from the sky more than ten fire balls, having the size of houses of ten divisions. The two dragons

¹ *Wang Shao chw'en*, "Biography of Wang Shao", *Books of the Sui dynasty*, Ch. LXIX, nr 34, p. 2a.

² *Kin shi*, *History of the Kin Dynasty* (A.D. 1206-1368), Ch. XXIII.

The dragon in China

immediately ascended (to the sky), for Heaven, afraid that they might cause calamity, sent out sacred fire to drive them away. Supposed that Heaven had been a little remiss for a moment, then within a hundred miles everything would have turned into gigantic torrents. When I recently passed by boat the Peachgarden of Teh Ts'ing, those ^{p.049} paddy fields were all scorched and black, some tens of acres in all. Then we moored the boat to the bank and asked those villagers (for the reason). They said :

— Yesterday noon there was a big dragon which fell from the sky. Immediately he was burned by terrestrial fire and flew away. For that what the dragons fear is fire" ¹.

B. Dead dragons

When dragons, wounded in a battle, tumbled down and died, this was believed to be a very bad omen. The *Books of the Han dynasty* ² relate the following :

"On the day jen-tszě of the sixth month of the seventh year of the Yen-hi era (A. D. 164), under the Emperor Hwan, there was a dragon which died on Mount Yé Wang in Ho néi (one of the districts of that time). Its length was about some tens of chang. Siang K'iai was of the following opinion :

'Taking into consideration that the dragon is a felicitous symbol of an Emperor or King, and that the *Yih lun ta jen* says : "In the T'ien-feng era (A. D. 14-19) there was a dead dragon in the Hwang-shan palace. The Han troops killed Mang (*i. e.* the Emperor Wang Mang, killed in A. D. 22), and Shi Tsu (*i. e.*

¹ *Kwei sin tsah shih*, (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. II, p. 399](#) : "a collection of miscellanies written by Cheu Mih, in the earlier part of the fourteenth century), quoted T. S., Ch. 130, p. 8b.

² *Shuh Han shu*, Ch. XVII, nr 5, p. 2a.

The dragon in China

Kwang Wu, the first Emperor of the Eastern Han dynasty) rose again (ascended the throne, in A. D. 25)", this omen must be a sign of change (of the dynasty)'.

In the 25th year of the Kien-ngan era (A. D. 220) the Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty replaced the House of Han". p.050

In the fifth year of the Kien-teh era (A. D. 576), under the Later Cheu dynasty, a black dragon fell from the sky and died. The dragon is the symbol of the Ruler, black was the colour of the dynasty, and falling and dying is a most unlucky omen ¹. So it was a foreboding of the Emperor's death, which happened two years later (A. D. 578), and of the dynasty's fall (A. D. 581), which was announced also by the dragon fights mentioned above.

C. Dragons appearing at wrong times

When dragons appeared at wrong times, they were forebodings of evil instead of omens of felicity. The time is wrong for a dragon to appear, when the Son of Heaven himself does not walk in the Tao, thus throwing into disorder both the Tao of Heaven and men. So did the Emperor K'ung Kiah of the ancient Hia dynasty, twenty centuries before Christ. Sze-ma Ts'ien ² says the following about this monarch :

"The Emperor K'ung Kiah having ascended the Throne, loved the matters of the kwéi and the shen and was disorderly (in his behaviour, *i. e.* he disturbed the Tao). As the virtue of the House of the Hia rulers was declining, the feudal lords rebelled against it. Heaven sent down two dragons, a female and a male. K'ung Kiah could not feed them ; he had not yet found the Dragon-rearer Family ³. T'ang of Tao (*i. e.* the House of the Emperor Yao) having declined, one of his descendants was Liu

¹ *Books of the Sui dynasty.*

² *Historical Records*, Ch. II, Jap. ed. with commentaries and notes, Cf. [Chavannes' translation, Vol. I, p. 168.](#)

³ *Hwan-lung shi.*

The dragon in China

Léi, who from the Dragon-rearer family learned to tame dragons, in order to serve K'ung Kiah. K'ung Kiah bestowed upon him the family name of Yü-lung_{p.051} (Dragon-ruler), and he received the succession of Shi Wéi. The first of the dragons, the female, died, (whereupon) he took it and gave it the Emperor to eat. As His Majesty ordered to seek (the dragon), Liu Léi got afraid and fled. K'ung Kiah died, and his son, the Emperor Kao, ascended the Throne".

A different form of the same legend, according to which K'ung Kiah was presented by the Emperor of Heaven with two teams of dragons, which were reared by Liu Léi till one of them died and was given as food to His Majesty, is to be found in a passage of the *Tso chw'en*, which we will partly quote in Chapter IV § 8, in regard to the Dragon-rearer family having been invested with this name by the Emperor Shun. As to our present subject, however, *i. e.* the evil omen of dragons appearing at a time when the Tao is violated, we may refer to another passage of the *Historical Records*, where the fall of the Hia dynasty, is apparently brought into connection with the appearance of two dragons. We read there the following.

"In the third year (of his reign) (B. C. 779), King Yiu fell deeply in love with Pao Szě. Pao Szě gave birth to a son, Poh Fuh, and King Yiu wished to degrade the Crownprince. The mother of the Crownprince was the daughter of the Marquis of Chen and was queen. Afterwards, when King Yiu had got Pao Szě and loved her, he wished to degrade Queen Chen and at the same time send away the Crownprince I Kiu, (in order to) make Pao Szě queen and Poh Fuh Crownprince. The great astrologer of Cheu, Poh Yang, after having read the historical records, said :

"(The House of) Cheu is lost".

The dragon in China

Now follows the explanation why the astrologer had such pessimistic views. Chavannes ¹ points out that the following is borrowed from the *Kwoh yü* ², one of the many works used by p.052 Sze-ma Ts'ien.

"In olden times, when the rulers of the Hia dynasty were declining (in virtue and power), there were two divine dragons which stopped at the palace of the Emperor and said : 'We are two rulers of Pao'. The Emperor tried to find out by divination whether he should kill them, send them away or keep them, but to none of these questions he received a favourable answer. When he cast lots, however, as to the question whether he should request (the dragons) to give him their foam to store it away, the answer was favourable. Then a piece of cloth was spread and a written communication was offered to them. The dragons disappeared and their foam remained ; it was put in a case and stored away. When the Hia dynasty was lost, this case was transmitted to (the House of) Yin ; when (the House of) Yin was lost, it was transmitted again to (the House of) Cheu. During these three dynasties no one dared open it ; but at the end of the reign of King Li it was opened and looked into. The foam flew through the palace and could not be removed. King Li ordered his wives to undress and to raise cries in unison (naked) against the foam. The foam changed into a black lizard ³ and in this form entered the rear departments of the palace (the female departments). A young concubine of the seraglio, who had reached the age when one loses his milk-teeth (seven years), met it. When she had reached the age when young girls put a hair-pin in her hair (*i. e.* the age of fifteen, when they get marriageable), she was

¹ [Les Mémoires Historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien, Vol. I, p. 281](#), cf. [Introduction, Chap. III, pp. CXLVII, sqq.](#)

² "Discourses concerning the States", often called the "Exterior Commentary" on the *Ch'un ts'iu*, and ascribed to the author of the *Tso chw'en*.

³ [Hüen yuen. Cf. Chavannes, vol. I, p. 282, note 5.](#)

The dragon in China

pregnant. Without having a husband she gave birth to a child, which she abandoned with fright.

At the time of King Suen (King Li's son) a little girl sung, saying : 'A bow of wild mulberry wood and a quiver of reed are sure to destroy the dynasty of Cheu'. King Suen heard this, and as there were a married couple who sold these utensils, he ordered them to be seized and put to death. They escaped and being on the road saw lying there the child which the young concubine of the seraglio had just abandoned. They heard it crying in the night, pitied it and took it up. The man and his wife then fled to (the land of) Pao. The people of Pao, having committed some crime, asked for (permission to) present to the King the girl whom the young concubine had abandoned in order to atone therewith for their misdeed. (Thus) the girl came from Pao, and this became Pao Szě. In the third year of King Yiu's reign the King went to the seraglio, saw Pao Szě and fell ^{p.053} in love with her. She gave birth to a son, Poh Fuh. Finally the King degraded Queen Chen and the Crownprince, and made Pao Szě queen and Poh Fuh crownprince. The Great Astrologer Poh *Yang* said :

— The misfortune is complete ; there is no help for it.

Then we read that the Emperor, who by all manner of devices tried to make the woman laugh, did not succeed until by a false sign of an enemy's attack he caused the lords to come up in great haste. This made Pao Szě burst into laughter, but it was the cause of the King's death, and the ruin of the dynasty, for when the enemy actually came, the lords, whom the King had deluded several times by false alarms, did not come to the rescue. Thus the King was killed, Pao Szě was taken prisoner, and the treasures of the House of Cheu were all taken by force.

The dragon in China

Japanese legends tell us that Pao Szě was reborn in the twelfth century as *Tamamo no mae*, the Emperor Konoë or Toba's concubine, who changed into a fox ¹.

It is clear that in the above passages the dragons were harbingers of evil, because the Emperors did not walk in the Tao.

In A. D. 553 a dragon was seen ascending near the Imperial Palace, and the next year a huge black serpent rose from the Palace moat to the sky, spreading a dazzling light and followed by a small snake. Calamity was predicted on account of these apparitions, and the Emperor tried to avert the evil by offerings of money ², magic, Buddhist prayers and philanthropy ; but it was all in vain, for at the end of the same year he was killed ³.

The *History of the Liao dynasty* ⁴ says :

"[In the first year of the T'ien-hien era (A.D. 926)] the Emperor (T'ai-Tsu, 907-926) stopped at Fu-yü-fu and did not take any precautions. That evening a big star fell before his tent, and on the day sin-szě, when he captured the castle of Tau-tszě, the Emperor saw a yellow dragon coiling and winding, about one mile in length. The brightness of its light blinded the eye ; it entered the Imperial ^{p.054} lodging house. There was a purple, black vapour which hid the sky, remained the whole day, and then dispersed. That very day the Emperor died".

¹ Cf. my treatise on "*The Fox and the Badger in Japanese Folklore*", Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Vol. XXXVI, Part 3, pp. 51 sqq.

² The dragons are fond of money, comp. the Japanese work *Seiyūki*, (written by Tachibana Nankei, in 1795-1797), *Zoku Teikoku Bunko*, Vol. XX, Ch. II, p. 259. This has perhaps something to do with their liking for the vital spirit of copper (cf. below, Book II, Ch. III, § 3).

³ *History of the South (Nanshi*, written by Yen Sheu, who lived in the first half of the seventh century A. D.), Ch. VIII.

⁴ *Liao shi*, (906-1168), *T'ai-Tsu pen ki*, "Fundamental history of (the Emperor) T'ai-Tsu", Ch. II, p. 6a.

The dragon in China

Sometimes a dragon's appearance was a sign of impending calamity in the form of inundations. Such was the case in A. D. 967, according to the *Books of the Sung dynasty* ¹. We read there the following :

"In the summer of the fifth year of the K'ien-teh era (967) it rained in the capital, and a black dragon appeared. Its tail was on the border of the clouds, and it flew from Northwest to Southeast. The diviners explained it to be (an omen of) big floods. The next year in twenty four prefectures the water destroyed the ricefields and the houses" ³.

D. Dragons appearing in wrong places

If a dragon, symbol of Imperial power, is born in a commoner's house or comes out of his well, this is a very bad omen for the dynasty, the Emperor personally, or one of his feudal lords, for it means degradation from the highest dignity to a common state, and death of the ruler or of one of his representatives.

The *Books of the Tsin dynasty* ² contain the following passage :

"Under the reign of Sun Hao of the Wu dynasty (the fourth and last Emperor of that dynasty, A. D. 242-283), in the T'ien-ts'eh era (A. D. 275-276), a dragon was hatched in (the house of) a family in Ch'ang-sha, and ate the chickens. King Fang ³ says in his *Yih yao* :

— If a dragon is hatched in a man's house, a ^{p.055} king will become a commoner.

Afterwards Hao submitted to Chin (the Chin dynasty).

In the same section of this work ⁴ we read the following :

¹ *Sung-shu* (A.D. 960-1279).

² (A. D. 265-420), Ch. XXIX, nr 19, 下, p. 24a.

³ The famous diviner of the first century before our era, mentioned above, p. 47, note 1.

⁴ Ch. XXIX, nr 19, 上, p. 23b.

The dragon in China

"Under the Emperor Ming of the Wei dynasty (A.D. 227-239), in the first year of the Ts'ing-lung era (233), on the day kiah-shen of the first month, a blue dragon appeared in a well at Mo-p'o (a place) in the suburbs. If only a lucky omen rises at a wrong time, it becomes an evil. How much more is this the case, when it (the dragon) is in straits in a well ! This is not a felicitous omen ! It was wrong that Wei on account of it changed the name of the era. Yu Pao says :

— From the end of the reign of the Emperor Ming under the Wei dynasty the appearances of blue and yellow dragons were signs corresponding with the fall and rise of its rulers. As to the fate of the land of Wei, blue is the colour of wood and yet it does not conquer metal ; it was a sign of yellow getting the throne and blue losing it. The frequent appearance of blue dragons means that the virtue of the sovereign and the fate of the dynasty are in inner conflict with each other. Therefore Kao Kwei Hiang Kung (Ts'ao Mao, A. D. 241-260, who in 254 became the fourth Emperor of the Wei dynasty) was utterly defeated in war.

"According to Liu Hiang's ¹ explanation the dragon, the symbol of dignity, when being imprisoned in a well means calamity consisting in a feudal lord being about to be secretly seized. In the Wei dynasty there was no dragon which was not in a well. It was an omen of the oppressive measures of those men who occupied the highest ranks. The poem on the 'Dragon lying in the deep', written by Kao Kwei Hiang Kung, has this meaning".

The *Books of the Early Han dynasty* ² relate the following :

"In _{p.056} the second year of the reign of the Emperor Hwei (B. C. 193), in the morning of the hwei-yiu day of the first month,

¹ (B. C. 80-9), a famous author and minister, cf. [Giles, Biogr. Dict., p. 501 nr. 1300.](#)

² Ch. XXVII.

The dragon in China

there were two dragons which appeared in a well at Li-wen-ling (a village), east of the palace of Lan-ling. They were seen till the evening of the yih-hai day ; then they went away. Liu Hiang is of the following opinion :

'If a dragon, a symbol of dignity, is in straits in the well of a commoner, this means calamity consisting in a feudal lord being about to be secretly seized'.

Afterwards the Empress-Dowager Lü secretly killed Ch'u, the king of San Chao ¹, and also Lü was finally murdered. King-fang says in his Yih chw'en :

'When those who have virtue meet injuries (*i. e.* are put to death), the bad omens of this are that dragons appear in wells'.

Further, he says :

'In cases of execution or violent cruelty black dragons come out of wells'.

The "*Biography of Chang Wen-piao of Ch'u*" gives the following tale :

"When Wen-piao was going to plot his rebellion and, still being engaged in preparing it, had not yet settled (his plans), one of his followers dreamt at night that a dragon was coiling above Wen-piao's chin. Wen-piao was very much rejoiced and said : 'This is Heaven's appointment' (to the Throne, *i. e.* it is a sign that I shall ascend the Throne). Then he settled his plans, raised troops, and was defeated. Men of knowledge said :

— As the dragon is a divine being and yet came out of his chin, this was an omen that calamity should be at work and that his shen (soul) should go away.

Here again the dragon appeared in a wrong place.

¹ Cf. [Giles, p. 553, nr 1442](#), s. v. Lü Hou : "To make the throne secure, she poisoned the Prince of Chao, another son of the late Emperor by a concubine."

The dragon in China

§ 3. Dragon horses

The *Li ki* ¹ says :

"The Ho (river) sent forth the horse with _{p.057} the map (on his back)".

This was the "River Map" from which Fuh-Hi fashioned the eight kwa (八卦), the diagrams used in divination. The *Shu king* ² mentions this map among the precious objects preserved at the Court in B.C. 1079. Legge ³ treats of it in his Introduction to the *Yi king* with regard to the well-known passage of an Appendix of this Classic ⁴, running as follows :

"The Ho gave forth the scheme or map, and the Lo gave forth the writing, (both of) which the sages copied".

According to one of the commentators on the *Yih king*

"the water of the Ho sent forth a *dragon horse* ; on its back there was curly hair, like a map of starry dots. The water of the Lo sent forth a divine tortoise ; on its back there were riven veins, like writing of character pictures".

This conception, apparently based upon the above passage of the *Li ki*, became common in later times, and the *San ts'ai t'u hwui* ⁵ gives a picture of this dragon horse. As to the appendix of the *Yih-king* ⁶, quoted by Szě-ma Cheng in the "Annals of the three sovereigns" ⁷, there neither the river nor the horse are mentioned, but it is simply stated that Fuh-Hi was the first to trace the eight diagrams.

¹ Legge, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXVII, Book VII (*Li yun*), Sect. IV, nr 16, p. 392. [Couvreur, Li ki, Vol. I, p. 536.](#)

² Legge, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. III, *Shu king*, Part V, Book XXII, p. 239.

³ Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XVI, Introduction, pp. 14 sqq

⁴ Appendix III, Sect. I, Ch. 11, § 73 ; Legge, p. 374 ; Ch. V.

⁵ Written by Wang K'i, at the time of the Ming dynasty.

⁶ Ch. XV, p. 4, Legge's translation, p. 382.

⁷ *San-hwang pen-ki* ; Chavannes' translation, Vol. I, p. 6.

The dragon in China

In the *Shui ying t'u* ¹ the following description of a dragon horse is given :

"It is a benevolent horse, the vital spirit of river water. Its height is eight ch'ih five ts'un ; its neck is long, and its body is covered with scales. It has wings at its shanks, and its hair hangs down its sides. Its cry consists of nine tones, and it walks on the water without sinking. It appears at the time of famous sovereigns".

This reminds us of the description given _{p.058} by K'ung Ngan-kwoh ² in his commentary on the *Shu king* ³, which runs as follows :

"A dragon horse is the vital spirit of Heaven and Earth. As a being its shape consists of a horse's body, yet it has dragon scales. Therefore it is called 'dragon horse'. Its height is eight ch'ih five ts'un. A true dragon horse has wings at its sides and walks upon the water without sinking. If a holy man is on the throne it comes out of the midst of the Ming river, carrying a map on its back".

The *T'ung kien ts'ien pien wai ki* ⁴, which refers to this passage, says :

"At the time of T'ai Hao (*i. e.* Fuh-Hi) there was a lucky omen consisting of a dragon horse which carried a map on its back and came out of the Ho river. Therefore in giving titles to the officials he began to arrange them by means of the dragon, and called them 'Dragon-officers'.

¹ Written before the Ch'en dynasty (AD 557-589 by Sun Jau-chi, and quoted in the *T'ien chung ki* (written under the Ming dynasty by Ch'en Yao-wen), Ch. LV.

² A famous scholar in the reign of the Han emperor Wu (B. C. 140-85), who in B. C. 97 transcribed the ancient tablets discovered in the wall of the house of the Confucian family, and made a commentary on the whole. Cf. Legge's Introduction to his translation of the *Shu king*, Sacred books of the East, Vol. III, p. 8.

³ Quoted in the T. S., Ch. 128, p. 1b.

⁴ "Extra writings" belonging to the "Preceding part" of the *Tszě-chi t'ung kien kang-muh*, "A chronological survey of the Mirror of History, composed to assist Government", an imperial edition of 1707, based upon the *Tszě-chi t'ung kien* written by Szě-ma Kwang, between 1065 and 1084. It consists of three parts : from Yao's time to B.C. 402 ; the main work (B. C. 402-A. D. 960) ; and the Supplement (A. D. 960-1367).

The dragon in China

As to these titles we read in the *Annals of the Three sovereigns* ¹ :

"He (Fuh-Hi) had the lucky omen of a dragon ; by means of the dragon he arranged the officials and called them 'Dragon-officers'".

The *Tso-chw'en* ² gives the same matter in an extensive passage regarding the titles of the officials of the first Emperors.

The *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* ³ describes a dragon horse which appeared p.059 in A.D. 741 and was considered to be a good omen for the Emperor. It was spotted blue and red, and covered with scales. Its mane resembled that of a dragon, and its neighing was like the tone of a flute. It could cover three hundred miles. Its mother was a common horse which had become pregnant by drinking water from a river in which it was bathed. This agrees with the statement of the *Shui ying t'u* quoted above about the dragon horse being the vital spirit of river water. The same horse is described as follows in another work of much later date ⁴ :

"A horse with dragon scales, the tail of a huge serpent, frizzy hair, round eyes and a fleshy crest".

When the Emperor fled from the capital to the West, this horse entered a river, changed into a dragon and swam away.

Another dragon horse, which appeared in A. D. 622, had a scaly dragon's body, spotted with five colours, and a horse's head with two white horns. In its mouth it carried an object about three or four ch'ih long. This horse was seen on a river, marching about a hundred steps on the surface of the water, looking about and then disappearing ⁵.

¹ [Chavannes, Vol. I, p. 7.](#)

² Book X, year XVII (17th year of Duke Chao) ; Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. V, Part II, pp. 666 sq. [c.a. [Couvreur, vol. III, p. 276.](#)]

³ "The Work of Imperial Autopsy of the T'ai p'ing period", composed by an Imperial committee of thirteen scholars...

⁴ The *Yuen kien lei han*, written in 1710 by Chang Ying and others ; Ch. 433.

⁵ *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*, Ch. 435.

The dragon in China

Finally, we may refer to a passage of the *Shih i ki* ¹, where we read that the Emperor Muh of the Cheu dynasty in the thirty second year of his reign drove around the world in a carriage, drawn by eight winged dragon horses.

§ 4. Geomancy

The so-called *fung-shui* ("wind and water") is a geomantical system, prevalent throughout China from olden times down to the present age. The tiger and the dragon, the gods of wind and water, are the keystones of this doctrine. I deem it superfluous to treat of it *in extenso*, because Professor p.060 De Groot ² has given already a full account of its origin, elements, meaning and influence.

"It is, says he, a quasi-scientific system, supposed to teach men where and how to build graves, temples and dwellings, in order that the dead, the gods and the living may be located therein exclusively, or as far as possible, under the auspicious influences of Nature" ³.

The dragon plays a most important part in this system, being "the chief spirit of water and rain" ⁴, and at the same time representing one of the four quarters of heaven (*i. e.* the East, called the Azure Dragon ⁵, and the first of the seasons, spring) ⁶.

"The word Dragon comprises the high grounds in general, and the water-streams which have their sources therein or wind their way through them. Hence it is that books on Fung-shui commonly commence with a bulky set of dissertations, comprised under the heading : 'Rules concerning the Dragon', in reality

¹ Written in A-D-357 by Wang Kia, Ch. III, p. 1a.

² [Religious System of China, Vol. III, Ch. XII, pp. 935-1056.](#)

³ [P. 935.](#)

⁴ [P. 949.](#)

⁵ [P. 949.](#) The four quarters are called : the Azure Dragon (East), the Red or Vermilion Bird (South), the White Tiger (West) and the Black Tortoise (North) ([De Groot, vol. I, p. 316](#)).

⁶ [P. 951.](#)

The dragon in China

dealing with the doctrines about the situation and contours of mountains and hills and the direction of water-courses" ¹.

Finally, we may quote the following passage from the same work ² :

"Amoy is unanimously declared by all the wise men of the town to be indebted for its prosperity to two knolls flanking the inner harbour, and vulgarly styled *Hò-t'aô soaⁿ*, or 'Tiger-head Hill', and *Lîng-t'aô soaⁿ* or 'Dragon-head Hill'. The latter, which is situated on the opposite shore, on the islet of Kulangsu, is crowned with huge boulders poised in a fantastic manner, upon which professors have had several blocks of granite arranged for the purpose of helping the imagination to discover the outlines of a dragon on the spot. The costs of these improvements were borne by some well-to-do citizens, anxious to promote their own prosperity and that of their fellow townsmen".

A "Dragon's head Mountain" is mentioned in the *Sin shi San Ts'in ki* ³, where we read the following :

"The Dragon's head Mountain is 60 miles long ; its head enters the water of the Wei (a large-tributary of the Yellow River), its tail reaches the Fan river. The height of its head is 20 chang, the tail goes p.061 gradually down to a height of five or six chang. It is said that in olden times there was a strange dragon which came from the southern side of the mountain in order to drink the water of the Wei. The course it followed shaped itself into a mountain of clay, and therefore (the mountain) was called after it.

As we shall see below ⁴ also in Japan a great number of names of mountains point to the same ideas concerning the connection between mountains and dragons.

¹ [p. 951.](#)

² [Pp. 959 seq.](#)

³ "Annals of the three Ts'in states written by Sin".

⁴ Book III, Ch. IX, § 2, A.

CHAPTER III

General information

@

§ 1. Enormous light-giving mountain gods

p.062 The *Shan hai king* ¹ describes the god of Mount Chung as follows :

"The god of Mount Chung is called 'Enlightener of the Darkness'. By looking (*i. e.* by opening his eyes) he creates daylight, and by closing his eyes he creates night. By blowing he makes winter, by exhaling he makes summer. He neither eats nor drinks nor does he rest. His breath causes wind. His length is a thousand miles. He is in the East of Wu-k'i ('Without bowels'). As a living being, he has a human face, the body of a snake and a red colour. He lives 'at the foot of Mount Chung'".

The commentator Kwoh P'oh ² explains this passage in the following words :

"'Enlightener' is a dragon ; he enlightens the nine *yin* (darknesses, *i. e.* the nine points of the compass at the opposite, dark side of the earth, which is a flat disk ; these nine points are North, South, East, West, North-east, North-west, South-east, South-west, and the Centre)".

According to the *Hwai nan tszě* it is

"a god with a human face and a dragon's body, but without legs" ³.

We may quote here a passage from the *T'ung ming ki* ⁴, a work of the beginning of our era, to which De Groot refers as follows :

¹ A very old classic.

² Who died in A. D. 322 ; author of the *Shan hai king t'u tsan*.

³ Quoted in the commentary.

⁴ Ch. III.

The dragon in China

"The *T'ung ming ki* says, that in the year 99 before our era the emperor Wu convoked a meeting of magicians and ^{p.063} learned men, at which Tung Fang-soh spoke as follows :

— I made a journey to the north pole, and came to a mountain planted with fire, which neither the sun, nor the moon ever illumines, but which is lighted to its uttermost bounds by a *blue dragon* by means of a torch which it holds in its jaws.

The dragon being full of *Yang*, it is quite logical that he should diffuse light, as we have also seen above (Ch. II, § 1, p. 44). The *Yih lin* ¹ says :

"A black dragon vomits light and makes Darkness (Yin) turn into Light (*Yang*)".

§ 2. Nature of the dragons

In Kwan Chung's philosophical work entitled *Kwan tszě* ², "The philosopher Kwan", we read the following :

"Those who, hidden in the dark, can live or die, are *shi* (著, a plant the stalks of which are used in divination), tortoises and dragons. The tortoise is born in the water ; she is caused to disclose (what she knows) in the fire, and then becomes the first of all creatures, the regulator of calamity and felicity. A dragon in the water covers himself with five colour. Therefore he is a god (*shen*). If he desires to become small, he assumes a shape resembling that of a silkworm, and if he desires to become big, he hides (covers) the world. If he desires to ascend, he strives towards the clouds, and if he desires to descend, he enters a deep well. He whose transformations are not limited by days, and whose ascending and descending are not limited by time, is called a god (*shen*)".

¹ An old divinatory work.

² Ascribed to Kwan Chung, who died in B. C. 645. Ch. XV, p. 4, nr 39.

The dragon in China

The philosopher Han Fei ¹ says :

"Ah, a dragon, as being an ^{p.064} animal, is so mild, that one may approach him (be familiar with him, *i. e.* tame him) and ride on him. But under his throat he has scales, lying in a reverse direction, one ch'ih (foot) in diameter. If a man touches them, the dragon is sure to kill him".

The Classics have taught us that the dragon belongs to the four creatures that have the most *ling*, *i. e.* whose *shen* manifests itself in the most powerful way. The '*Rh ya yih* ² goes further and states that the dragon possesses the most *ling* of all creatures. According to the *Shui ying t'u* ³

"the yellow dragon is the quintessence of *shen*, and the chief of the four dragons. If a king does not drain off ponds and lakes, their water can penetrate into deep pools, and the yellow dragons, following their nature, swim in ponds and lakes".

Lü Puh-wei ⁴ relates the following :

"Confucius said :

— A dragon (*lung*) eats what is pure and moves about in what is pure. A *chi* (螭) eats what is pure and moves about in what is muddy. A fish eats what is muddy and moves about in what is muddy. Now I, in ascending do not reach the dragon (*i. e.* I am not such a high being as the dragon), and in descending do not reach the fishes (*i. e.* I am not such a low creature as the fishes) ; I am (like) the *chi*.

¹ Han Fei tszě (4th century B. C.), Ch. IV, nr 12, p. 9a.

² The Appendix to the '*Rh ya* (a vocabulary probably dating from pre-Christian times, cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., I, p. 302](#)), "a broad elaboration of this old dictionary by the hand of Lo Yuen, who flourished in the latter half of the 12th century." ([De Groot, IV, p. 166.](#))

³ Written before the Ch'en dynasty (A.D. 557-589) by Sun Jeu-chi.

⁴ The reputed father of Shi Hwang, the founder of the Ts'in dynasty (B. C. 249-206), in his work entitled *Lü-shi ch'un-ts'iu*, "Annals of Lu".

The dragon in China

Hwai nan tszě ¹ goes as far as to declare the dragon to be the origin of all creatures, as we learn from the following passage :

"All creatures, winged, hairy, scaly and p.065 mailed, find their origin in the dragon. The *yü-kia* produced the flying dragon, the flying dragon gave birth to the phoenixes, and after them the *lwan-niao* and all birds, in general the winged beings, were born successively. The *mao-tuh* ("hairy calf") produced the *ying-lung*, the *ying-lung* gave birth to the *kien-ma* (and afterwards the *k'i-lin* and all quadrupeds, in general the hairy beings, were born successively. The *kiai-lin* produced the *kiao-lung*, the *kiao-lung* gave birth to the *kwun-keng*, and afterwards the *kien-sié* and all fishes, in general the scaly beings, were born successively. The *kiai-t'an* produced the *sien-lung*, the *sien-lung* gave birth to the *yuen-yuen* ("original tortoise") and afterwards the *ling-kwei* ("divine power manifesting tortoise") and all tortoises, in general the mailed beings were born successively".

The same author says that

"mankind cannot see the dragons rise ; wind and rain assist them to ascend to a great height" ².

The *Ta tai li ki* ³ states that

"the essence of the scaly animals is called dragon",

and that

"the dragon does not ascend if there is no wind".

In the *Historical Records* ⁴ we read a quotation from *Chwang tszě* ⁵, where Confucius after having talked with Lao tszě says :

¹ "The philosopher of Hwai-nan", i. e. Liu Ngan...

² Ch. XVII. Cf. Ch. IX : "The *ying-lung* ascends riding on the clouds".

³ Compiled by Tai Teh, under the reign of the Emperor Süen of the Han dynasty (B.C. 73-49) ; Ch. V, p. 7b.

⁴ Ch. LXIII, p 2a.

⁵ (4th cent. B. C.), Ch. III.

The dragon in China

— As to the dragon, we cannot understand his riding on wind and clouds and his ascending to the sky. To-day I saw Lao tszě ; is he not like the dragon ?

According to the *P'i ya* ¹

"none of the animals is so wise as the dragon. His blessing power is not a false one. He can be p.066 smaller than small, bigger than big, higher than high, and lower than low. Therefore according to the *Yih king, Kien* (the first diagram) by means of the dragon rules Heaven, and *Kw'un* by means of the horse rules the Earth ; the dragon is a heavenly kind of being, the horse an earthly one.

Li Tao-yuen ², in his commentary on the *Shui king*, states that the expression 'fishes and dragons consider the autumn days as night' means that

"at the autumnal equinoctium the dragons descend and then hibernate and sleep in pools".

The *'Rh ya yih* quotes the following passage from a work of Wang Fu ³ :

"When rain is to be expected, the dragons scream and their voices are like the sound made by striking copper basins. Their saliva can produce all kinds of perfume. Their breath becomes clouds, and on the other hand they avail themselves of the clouds in order to cover their bodies. Therefore they are invisible. At the present day on rivers and lakes there are sometimes people who see one claw and the tail (of a dragon), but the head is not to be seen. In summer, after the fourth month, the dragons divide the regions amongst themselves and each of them has his territory. This the reason why within a distance of a couple of acres there

¹ Composed by Luh Tien, (1042-1102) ; Ch. I, nr 1, p. 1.

² Who lived under the Northern Wei dynasty (A. D. 386-536), quoted in the *P'i ya*, Ch. I, nr 1, p. 2a.

³ Who lived at the time of the Han dynasty. He is the author of the *Tsien fu lun*,...

The dragon in China

may be quite different weather, rain and a clear sky. Further, there are often heavy ^{p.067} rains, and those who speak about these rains say : 'Fine moistening rain is heavenly rain, violent rain is dragon rain'. Dragon fire and human fire are opposite. If dragon fire comes into contact with wetness it flames, and if it meets water it burns. If one drives it away by means of fire, it stops burning and its flames are extinguished.

The *P'i ya* states the same fact with regard to the dragon fire, referring to the *Nei tien*, and in the same passage says the following :

"The dragons are also born from eggs. When they intend to hatch, the male dragon's cry makes the wind rise, and the female dragon's cry makes the wind abate, and the wind changes... According to popular belief the dragon's vital spirit lies in his eyes, for this is the case because he is deaf. The 'Discussions on the spontaneous phenomena of Yin and Yang' ¹ say : 'The *li-lung's* ² pupils see a mustard plant or a straw at a distance of a hundred miles'. Further they say 'A dragon can make (litt. change) water, a man can make fire'. Further : 'A dragon does not see stones, a man does not see the wind, fishes do not see the water, demons do not see the earth'. Sun Ch'oh tszë ³ says : 'Kao Tsu (probably the Emperor of the Han dynasty, who reigned B. C. 206-159) drove in a dragon carriage, Kwang Wu (who reigned A. D. 685-717) drove in a tiger carriage'.

§ 3. What dragons like and dislike

The *'Rh ya yih*, in the passage of Wang Fu above mentioned, says :

¹ The same work is quoted in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, Ch. 43, p. 40, with the title : *Yin-yang pien-kwa lun*, "Discussions on the phenomena of Yin and Yang". The fact that it is quoted in the *P'i ya* proves that it dates from the eleventh century or earlier.

² A famous poet of the 4th century A. D.

³ A famous poet of the 4th century A. D.

The dragon in China

"As to his character as a being the dragon's nature is rough and fierce ; yet he is afraid of iron and likes precious p.068 stones and *k'ung-ts'ing* ¹, and is fond of roasted swallow flesh. Therefore persons who have eaten swallows must not cross the sea.

Further he (Wang Fu) says :

"The kiao-lung is afraid of leaves of the Melia Azederach ², and of five-coloured silk thread. Therefore from the time of the Han dynasty (down to the present day) those who offered to *K'uh Yuen* ³ took five-coloured silk thread and with this tied together the leaves of the Melia Azederach. Among the ancients there were the Dragon-rearer ⁴ and the Dragon ruler ⁵ families, who ruled the dragons only by means of their knowledge of what they desired and disliked".

The *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* ⁶, the famous standard work on Natural History and Materia Medica, written in the latter half of the 15th century by Li Shi-chen, says :

"The small writings (essays) contain the following. The dragon's nature is rough and fierce, and yet he likes beautiful gems and *k'ung-ts'ing*, and is fond of (roasted) swallows. He is

¹ *i. e.* the *Yin-shih*, the "Stone of Darkness".

² "A tree bearing lilac flowers, the 'Melia Azederach' or 'pride of India' ; the phoenix likes it, but the dragon abhors it" (Wells Williams, *Chin. Dict.*, p. 536, s. v.)

³ *i. e.* K'uh Ping, a minister of the state of Ch'u, who lived about B.C. 314, the maker of the famous poem entitled Li sao. As his royal master would not follow his advise, he drowned himself in the Poh lo river. Every year, at the 5th of the 5th month, the anniversary of his death is celebrated and little dumplings wrapped in leaves are offered to him and eaten in his memory. Cf. [de Groot, Fêtes annuelles à Emoui, Vol. I, pp. 313 sqq.](#) The Japanese *Tango no sekku*, the "Exact moment of the opposition" (of Yin against Yang, *i. e.* the summer solstitium, with which it formerly must have been identical) is originally the same festival. It is a dragon festival, at which the dragons by sympathetic magic in the form of dragon-boat races are called up to give fertilizing rains. The story about K'uh Yuen is apparently a later explanation of this ancient festival.

⁴ *Hwan-lung*. Cf. above, p. 50.

⁵ *Yü-lung*. Cf. above, p. 50.

⁶ "Collectanea of Plants". Ch. 43, p. 1.

The dragon in China

afraid of iron, of the *wang* plant ¹, of p.069 centipedes ² of the leaves of the *lien* tree (Melia Azederach), of five-coloured silk thread. Therefore those who have eaten swallows avoid to cross the water, and those who pray for rain use swallows ; those who suppress water calamity (inundations) use iron, those who stir up the dragons (to cause them to make rain) use the *wang* plant, and those who offer to K'uh Yuen use leaves of the Melia Azederach and coloured silk thread, wrapping dumplings in them which they throw into the river. Also when physicians use dragon's bones they must know these particulars about the dragon's nature as to their likings and hatreds.

The beautiful gems remind us of the Indian dragons ; the pearls of the sea were, of course, in India as well as in China and Japan, considered to be in the special possession of the dragon-shaped sea-gods. As to the *k'ung-ts'ing*, this is explained to be a hollow stone with water inside, or the vital spirit (精, *tsing*) of copper. Swallows are also mentioned as food of the *shen* ³. The same particulars are to be found in the *Nan pu sin shu* ⁴, where we read that the dragons are afraid of wax, and that their fat makes silk garments impermeable to water.

¹ Not mentioned in the Chinese dictionary of Wells Williams, Giles and Couvreur, but found in the Japanese dictionary entitled *Kanwa daijiten*, p. 1232, where we read : " 藨, *bō, mō*, a special kind of plant resembling 燕麥 ("swallow-oats", also called *karasumugi*, *avena fatua*), *minogome* (according to Brinkley's dict. "Beckmania cruceiformis") ; its grains are used as food". The 藨, *kō*, is described there as a special kind of plant with a red stalk and white flowers. Its leaves resemble those of the 葵, *aoi* (hollyhock ; Wells Williams, p. 487 : "the sunflower ; a term for some malvaceous plants, as the Malva, Althea, and Hibiscus ; it also includes other large leaved plants"). The 藨草, *kang-ts'ao*, is described by Wells Williams (Dict. p. 319, s. v.) as "a trailing plant, *vitis ficifolia*, which bears white flowers and small grapes that are said to remove stupidity" But the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* gives 藨, not 藨.

² Wu-kung.

³ See below, p. 76.

⁴ Written by Ts'ien Yih, in the later Sung dynasty.

The dragon in China

In regard to the dragons' fear of *iron* we may mention a ^{p.070} legend to be found in the *T'ien chung ki* ¹, where we read the following. In A. D. 762 the dike of a river was broken, and each time when the repairs were nearly finished, it broke again. At last somebody told that in the time of the Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (who reigned from A. D. 502 to 549) in a similar case thousands of pounds of iron were buried under the dike, whereupon the work could be completed. On hearing these words the superintendent of the work ordered to do the same, and lo ! the thundering noise under the ground was no longer heard on the spot where the iron was laid, but gradually went away, and the dike was soon repaired.

"The reason may be, says the author, that the eyes of the dragons are hurt by the pungent nature (litt. taste) of iron or gold, and that they flee to protect their eyes".

§ 4. Shape of the dragons

Wang Fu ² says :

"The people paint the dragon's shape with a horse's head and a snake's tail. Further, there are expressions as 'three joints' and 'nine resemblances' (of the dragon), to wit : from head to shoulder, from shoulder to breast, from breast to tail. These are the joints ; as to the nine resemblances, they are the following : his horns resemble those of a stag, his head that of a camel, his eyes those of a demon, his neck that of a snake his belly that of a clam (*shen*), his scales those of a carp, his claws those of an eagle, his soles those of a tiger, his ears those of a cow. Upon his head he has a thing like a broad eminence (a big lump), called *ch'ih muh*. If a dragon has no *ch'ih muh*, he cannot ascend to the sky.

¹ See above, p. 57, note 8. Ch. LVI.

² About this author see above, p. 66, note 3 ; this passage, quoted in the *'Rh ya yih*, is not to be found in Wang Fu's *Ts'ien fu lun*.

The dragon in China

The *P'i ya* states that

"the dragon's 81 scales form a number ^{p.071} consisting of nine times nine. Nine is *Yang*. The carp's 36 scales form a number consisting of six times six. Six is Yin.

In the *Yang kuh man luh* we read :

"The dragon has five fingers.

Finally, the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* ¹ teaches us that

"a dragon has whiskers at the sides of his mouth and a bright pearl under his chin ; under his throat he has scales lying in a reversed direction ; upon his head he has a broad eminence called in writing *ch'ih muh* ; if a dragon has no *ch'ih muh*, he cannot ascend to the sky. His breath turns into clouds, and then can change into water and into fire (rain and lightning)...

The *Shih tien* says :

"When dragons copulate they change into two small snakes.

§ 5. Male and female dragons

The difference between male and female dragons is described as follows :

"The male dragon's horn is undulating, concave, steep ; it is strong at the top, but becomes very thin below. The female dragon has a straight nose, a round mane, thin scales and a strong tail ².

The *Shing i ki* ³ relates of a painter, who was very skilled in painting dragons, but whose work one day was criticized by a man and a woman.

¹ Ch. 43, p. 1a.

² *Kwang poh wuh chi*, an "Enlarged *Poh wuh chi*" of later times (1607), by Tung Sze-chang, (Cf. [Wylie, p. 187](#)). The *Poh wuh chi* itself is a work of Chang Hwa, who lived in the fourth century, at the time of the Tsin dynasty (A. D. 265-420). This passage is quoted in the *Wakan sansai zue*, CI, XLV, p. 674.

³ Written by Chang Kiün-fang, in the Sung dynasty (960-1280).

The dragon in China

They said that he did not distinguish male from female dragons, although they were different in reality. When he got angry and asked them how they knew this, they p.072 answered that they were dragons themselves and were willing to show him their shapes, whereupon they changed into a male and a female dragon.

§ 6. Different kinds of dragons

The *Shuh i ki* ¹ says :

"A water snake (*shui yuen*) after five hundred years changes into a *kiao*, a *kiao* after a thousand years changes into a *lung*, a *lung* after five hundred years changes into a *kioh-lung* ("horned dragon") and after a thousand years into a *ying-lung*.

Quite different, however, is, as we have seen above (p. 65), Liu Ngan's statement in his work entitled *Hwai nan tszě*, according to which the "*flying dragons*" are the offspring of the bird *yü-kia* ("the winged barbel" ; this is the reason, says the commentary to this passage, why these dragons have wings) ; the *ying-lung* are the issue of a quadruped called *mao-tuh* ² ; the *kiao-lung* are the issue of a fish called *kiai-lin* ; the *sien-lung* are the issue of a mailed beast called *kiai-t'an* ; and the *k'üh-lung* are produced by a sea plant called *hai-lü*. When the *yellow dragon*, born from yellow gold a thousand years old, enters a deep place, a yellow spring dashes forth, and if from this spring some particles ³ arise these become a yellow cloud. In the same way blue springs and blue clouds originate from blue dragons born from blue gold eight hundred years old ; red, white and black springs and clouds from red, white and black dragons born from gold of the same colours, a thousand years old.

¹ Written by Jen Fang, in the sixth century A. D. (another work of the same name dates from 1701.

² "Hairy calf".

³ Fine dust.

The dragon in China

The *Poh ya* ¹ gives the following definition of the principal p.₀₇₃ dragons :

"If a dragon has scales, he is called *kiao-lung* ; if wings, *ying-lung* (應龍) ; if a horn, *k'iu-lung* (虬龍) ; and if he has no horn, he is called *ch'i-lung* (螭龍).

In the Japanese Buddhist dictionary entitled *Bukkyō iroha jiten* ² we find the same enumeration with the addition of a fifth class, the *p'an-lung* (蟠龍), "coiled dragon", which does not yet ascend to heaven. This dragon is also mentioned in the *Fang yen* ³, where we read :

"Dragons which do not yet ascend to heaven are called *p'an-lung*".

In the same passage of the aforesaid Japanese dictionary another division into five classes is given, namely : crow-dragons, snake-dragons, toad-dragons, horse-dragons and fish-dragons ⁴ . This enumeration is to be found in a Buddhist work, the *Sū-men ts'ang king* ⁵, where we read that from these five classes that of the snake-dragons is the principal one ; they are the "right kind of dragon".

According to the *Wen-tszě tsih-lioh* ⁶ the *ch'i-lung* (螭龍) ⁷ is red, white and green, and the *k'iu-lung* (虬龍) is blue. The *k'iu* is mentioned several times in the *Pao P'oh-tszě* ⁸ :

¹ Although the *Pen ts'ao kang-muh*, Ch. 43, p. 66, s. v. *kiao-lung*, quotes the text in this form (without saying that it is borrowed from the *Poh ya*), the original text of the *Poh ya* gives different characters for the names of the two last dragons. These characters are not to be found in the dictionaries, being the 205th radical under the 140th, and 多 combined with 虬 ; but the pronunciation added to them is *kiu* and *ch'i*.

² See above, Introd., p. 22, note 1 ; Vol. II, p. 56.

³ "Local Terms", according to [De Groot \(Rel. Syst., Vol. III, p. 1073\)](#) "a small vocabulary composed by Yang Hiung, an ethical philosopher and statesman who died in A. D. 18." Ch. XII, p. 7a.

⁴ 烏龍、蛇龍、蝦蟆龍、馬龍、魚龍 *wu-lung shé-lung, hia-ma-lung, ma-lung, and yū-lung*.

⁵ Quoted in the *Ts'ien-k'ioh kū léi shu*, a cyclopaedia compiled in 1632 by Ch'en Jen-sih. Cf. [Wylie, Notes on Chinese literature \(2nd ed.\), p. 187](#).

⁶ A vocabulary quoted in the *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. XLV, p. 675.

⁷ Cf. below, Ch. V (Ornaments).

⁸ Written by Koh Hung, in the 4th century A. D.

The dragon in China

"If a pond inhabited by fishes and gavials is drained off, the divine *k'iu* go away".

"As to the flying to the sky of the *k'iu* of the pools, ^{p.074} this is his union with the clouds".

"The *ts'ui k'iu* ('kingfisher-*k'iu*') has no wings and yet flies upwards to the sky".

"Place the shape (*i. e.* an image of this dragon) in a tray, and the kingfisher-*k'iu*' (shall) descend in a dark vapoury haze".

The last sentence points to sympathetic magic which we shall mention below (this Book, Ch. VI).

The *Shui ying t'u* ¹ says that the *yellow dragon* is the head of the four dragons, the essence of divine manifesting power*5, and that he can become big and small, appear and disappear in a moment ; the *blue dragon* is the vital spirit of water. The azure, blue, yellow, black, white and red dragons as good or bad omens and givers of light or rain are mentioned above.

The legend about the *ying-lung*, the winged dragon, which after having killed the rebel Ch'i Yiu (the first to raise rebellion in B. C. 2637) could not return to the Southern peak where he used to live, for which reason afterwards often drought prevailed, will be given below (Ch. VI).

A nine-headed, eighteen-tailed dragon is mentioned in a passage of the *Lang hūen ki* ², referred to by De Groot ³. There a Taoist doctor is said to have recited this spell :

"I came from the East and found a pond on the road ; in its water lived a venerable dragon with nine heads and eighteen tails. I asked what it fed on ; it ate nothing but fever-demons".

¹ See above p. 64, note 2 ; quoted in the *T'ien chung ki*, Ch. LV.

² "A collection of tales and legends, in three chapters, ascribed to one I Shi-chen, who lived under the Yuen dynasty (*Lang hūen* is the Land of Bliss)" ([De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 105](#)).

³ [Rel. Syst., Vol. VI, p. 1053](#).

The dragon in China

Further, we read about the "little stone-dragon", or "little mountain-dragon", also called "spring-dragon" ¹, the Japanese p.075 *tokage* or *imori* (lizard), which is born between stones in the mountains and has got the name of "little dragon" because it was (and is) believed to cause hail by its breath and to give rain to those who prayed to it ².

The connection between the snake and the dragon is evident from the description of the so-called *t'eng-shé*, 騰蛇, a wingless serpent,

"which can cause the clouds to rise, and, riding upon them, can fly a thousand miles. It can change into a dragon. Although they are males and females, they do not copulate. Their cry forbodes pregnancy ³.

And Koh Hung ⁴ states that

"tortoises turn into tigers and snakes into dragons".

In the *Yiu-yang tsah tsu* ⁵ we read :

"Dragons and snakes are considered by the learned class to be related".

The gavial ⁶ also belongs to the dragons. The *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* ⁷ describes it as follows :

¹ ...Cf. Wells Williams, *Chin.-Eng. Dict.*, pp. 803 and 1095 : "The insect that changes, a small eft or chameleon common in Hukwang, also called 草龍 or grass-dragon".

² *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, Sect. 鱗魚, nr 1, Ch. 43, p. 12a.

³ *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, quoted in the *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. XLV, p. 682. In Ch. 43, p. 40 of the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* the text is a little different : "The *t'eng-shé* changes into a dragon. This divine snake can ride upon the clouds and fly about over a thousand miles. If it is heard, (this means) pregnancy. This is borrowed from the *Pien-kwa lun* (*i. e.* the *Yin-Yang pien-kwa lun*, mentioned above, p. 67). Further, the *Pao P'oh-tszě* says : 'The *t'eng-shé* do not copulate'."

⁴ *Pao P'oh-tszě*, Ch. I.

⁵ Written in the ninth century by Twan Ch'ing-shih.

⁶ Cf. Wells Williams, p. 912, s. v. : "A large triton, gavial, or water lizard, found to the South of China, ten feet long, of whose hard skin drumheads are made ; its gruff voice is heard at night and indicates rain". About gavials acting as demons, cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst. of China, Vol. V, pp. 625 sq.](#)

⁷ Ch. 43, p. 8a : cf. *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. XLV, p. 675.

The dragon in China

"There are numerous gavials in rivers and lakes. They resemble the class of the *ling-li* ¹, and their length is one or two chang. Both their backs and tails are covered with scales. By exhaling they can *make clouds* and *cause rain*. It is a kind of dragon. They live in deep holes and can fly only horizontally, not vertically. Their cries are like the _{p.076} sound of a drum, and when they cry at night, this is called 'the gavial-drum'. When the countryfolk hear it, they predict rain.

About the shen (蜃), a huge clam, the same work ² says the following :

"It is a kind of *kiao* (蛟). Its shape also resembles that of a snake, but it is larger. It has a horn like a dragon, a red mane, and the scales under its loins are all lying in a reversed direction. It eats young swallows. When exhaling its breath assumes the form of towers and castles, which are seen when it is about to rain, and are called 'clam-towers' ³, or 'sea-markets'. Of its fat, mixed with wax, candles are made, which one may smell at a distance of about a hundred steps. Also in the flames of these candles the shapes of towers and steeples are to be seen. Luh Tien [the author of the *P'i ya*, who lived during the reign of the Emperor Hwui Tsung (1101-1126)] says : 'If a *kiao* copulates with a tortoise, they produce a tortoise, and when with a pheasant, a clam (*shen*) is produced'".

§ 7. Kiao lung (蛟龍)

The *Shan hai king* describes the *kiao* as follows :

"(Out of the Tao Kwo mountains) water comes forth in waves and flows to the South, where it flows into the sea. In this water there are 'tiger-kiao'. Their shapes consist of the body of

¹ Pangolins.

² Ch. 43, p. 7a. Cf. *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. XLV, p. 675.

³ Shen leu, *i. e.* mirages.

The dragon in China

a fish and the tail of a snake. Their voices are like those of mandarin ducks. Those who eat them, have no boils, and they (*i. e.* their flesh) may be used to cure piles".

In three other passages of the same ancient work many *kiao* are said to live in special mountain rivulets.

According to the *Yang yü king*, "Classic on the rearing of fishes",

"if there are fully 360 fishes, the *kiao lung* is made their chief, and leading the fishes flies away".

p.077 From the ancient Taoist treatise designated by the name of *Wen tszě* we learn the following.

"As to him who accumulates the virtue of the Tao, phoenixes fly in his court-yard, *k'i-lin* roam about in his suburbs, and *kiao-lung* house in his pond".

Further, we read there :

"On the highest tops of the mountains clouds and rain arise, and in the deepest depths of the water *kiao-lung* are born".

Kwan tszě says :

"The *kiao-lung* is the god of the water animals. If he rides on the water, his soul is in full vigour, but when he loses water (if he is deprived of it), his soul declines. Therefore I (or they) say : 'If a *kiao-lung* gets water, his soul can be in full vigour'".

The same philosopher states that

"when people drain marshes and catch fish, the *kiao-lung* do not dwell in those pools".

Also *Hwai nan tszě* mentions the *kiao-lung* with the following words :

"The *kiao-lung* lie hidden and sleep in pools, and yet their eggs break up (*i. e.* the young ones come out of them) on the hills".

The commentator remarks :

The dragon in China

"The *kiao-lung* lay their eggs on hills and hide in pools. Their eggs get life spontaneously".

K'üh Yuen ¹, the famous nobleman and poet of Ts'u, who was banished by king Hwai towards the end of the fourth Century B. C. and about 299 B. C. composed his celebrated poem entitled *Li Sao* ², in the ninth section of this poem describes his journey to the mysterious K'wan-lun mountains in the West, in a car _{p.078} in the form of a phoenix, drawn by a team of four *k'iu* (虬) ³. In the thirteenth section, when proceeding along the Red river, he says :

"I motioned with my hand to the *kiao-lung* to bridge over the ford".⁴

At that time his car was drawn by "flying dragons". ⁵

The *Ta tai li ki* ⁶ instructs us that the *kiao-lung* is considered to be the head of the 360 scaly animals, and that

"if water accumulates and becomes a river, the *kiao-lung* is born".⁷

The *Poh wuh chi* ⁸ says :

"If a man has eaten swallows [comp. this chapter, § 3, p. 68], he must not enter the water ; (for if he does so), he will be swallowed by a *kiao-lung*".

In the above texts, except in those of the *Shan hai king*, the words *kiao* and *lung* are combined to one term. The *Shan hai king*, however, speaks of the *kiao* only, and so do a large number of other works, which

¹ Who drowned himself in the Poh-lo river in Hu-nan province, and whose death is commemorated every year on the fifth day of the fifth month (the Festival of the Dragon Boats, cf. above, p. 68, note 4, and below, this Chapter, § 10).

² "Dissipation of Sorrows" ; *Ch'u ts'ze*, Ch. I. Cf. Legge, *The Li Sao poem and its author*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, January, July and October 1895.

³ Legge, pp. 844, 855, stanza 47.

⁴ Legge, pp. 846, 863, stanza 89.

⁵ Legge, *ibidem*, stanza 86.

⁶ (Ist cent. B. C.), Ch. XIII, nr 81, p. 7b.

⁷ Ch. VII, nr 64, p. 7a.

⁸ A little work written by Chang Hwa, a Minister of State, who lived in the fourth century (cf. above, p. 71, note 3)

The dragon in China

distinguish the *kiao* from the *lung*. Neither in the *Shan hai king*, nor in the *Li ki* ¹, which says :

"(In the last month of summer) the inspector of fishing is ordered to kill the *kiao*,

these water animals are mentioned as divine creatures. The commentator of the former work, Kwoh P'oh ², however, states the following :

"The *kiao* resembles a snake. It has four legs, and is akin to the *lung*". As we have seen above, the *Shuh i ki* remarks that a water snake (*shui-yuen*), when five hundred years old, changes into a *kiao*, and a *kiao* after a thousand years becomes a *lung*.

p.079 The *Shih i ki* ³ (4th century) tells us that the Emperor Chao of the Han dynasty (B. C. 86-74), when angling in the Wei river,

"caught a white *kiao*, three chang long, which resembled a big snake, but had no scaly armour. The Emperor said : 'This is not a lucky omen', and ordered the Ta kwan to make a condiment of it. Its flesh was purple, its bones were blue, and its taste was very savoury and pleasant.

The ancient Chinese apparently considered the *kiao* — some four-legged water animal — to be a common, dangerous creature, but afterwards it was believed to be akin to the dragon and called a dragon itself. Thus it became the principal god of rivers and brooks.

According to the *Shuh i ki* ⁴ "old tiger-fishes become *kiao*", and the author of the *Yiu-yang tsah-tsu* instructs us that

"when fishes weigh two thousand kin (catty) they become *kiao*."

¹ [Couvreur, Li ki, Vol. I, p. 367.](#)

² (A. D. 276-324), the famous Taoistic author and poet, who edited the *Rh ya* and the *Shan hai king*.

³ Ch. VI, p. 3b.

⁴ (sixth century), Ch. 上, p. 19b.

The dragon in China

Another work, however, the *Yuh hu ts'ing hwa*, states that eggs left by snakes or pheasants, when having been a thousand years in the ground, become *kiao*.

The *P'i ya* describes this animal as follows :

"The *kiao* belongs to the same kind as the *lung*. Its shape resembles that of a snake and yet it has four legs and a thin neck. Around its neck it has a white necklace. The big *kiao* are several spans thick. They are born from eggs. Their eyebrows are united (交), reason why they are called *kiao* (蛟)".

The *Mih k'oh hwui si* ¹ says :

"The *kiao*'s shape is like that of a snake, and its head is like that of a tiger. Its length reaches several chang. Many of them live in rivulets and pools and under rock caves. Their voices are like the bellowing of a cow. When people walk on the shore or in the valleys of brooks, they are p.080 troubled by the *kiao*. When they see a man, they first surround him with stinking saliva, and after having made him tumble into the water they suck his blood under his armpits. When he has no blood left, they stop sucking.

In the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* ² Li Shi-chen quotes the following passage from the *P'ei yuen kwang cheu ki* :

"The *kiao* is over a chang long. It resembles a snake but has four feet and its shape is broader, resembling the beam of a railing. It has a small head and a thin neck. At its neck it has white tassels (a white necklace). The upper part of its breast is reddish brown, the upper part of its back is spotted with blue, the sides of its ribs (flanks) are like brocade. Its tail has a

¹ According to [De Groot \(Rel. Syst., Vol. V, p. 864](#), note 2) "a work in ten chapters by P'eng Shing, of the eleventh century".

² Ch. 43, p. 7a.

The dragon in China

fleshy ring. Big *kiao* are several span thick, and their eggs are also larger (than those of other *kiao*). They can lead fishes and fly. If people catch turtles, the *kiao* can escape.

As messengers from the River Lord (河伯), the god of the Yellow River, the *kiao* are mentioned in a story to be found in the *Poh wuh chi* (3rd century) ¹. This god wished to deprive an official, who crossed the river with a jade badge of office, of this precious object, and sent two *kiao* to seize the vessel. But both were killed by the audacious man, who after having thrice crossed the river threw the badge into the water as a present to the River Lord, who danced with joy and took it home.

Transformations of *kiao* into human shapes are the subjects of several tales. The *Wu ki* tells the following :

"Under the Emperor Ta Ti of the Wu dynasty (A. D. 228-251), in the seventh month of the third year of the Ch'ih-wu era (A. D. 240), there was a certain Wang Shuh who gathered medicinal herbs on T'ien Tai mountain. At the hottest time of the day he took a rest under a bridge, when suddenly he saw a little blue boy, over a foot long, in the brook. The boy held a blue rush in his hand and rode on a red carp. The fish straightly entered a cloud and disappeared little by little. After a good while Shuh climbed upon a high mountain top and looked to all four sides. He saw wind and clouds arising above the sea, and in a moment a thunderstorm broke forth. Suddenly it was about to reach Shuh, who terrified hid himself in a hollow tree. When the sky cleared up, he again saw the red carp on which the boy rode and the p.081 little boy returning and entering the brook. It was a black *kiao* !

In the *Sheu shen heu ki* ² we read about a *kiao*, who in the shape of a man, about twenty years old, came to a farmer's cottage. He rode on a

¹ Ch. VII, p. 3a.

² Written by Ts'ao Ts'ien, in the fifth century. Ch. X, p. 1. The *Sheu shen ki* was written by Yü Pao (or Kan Pao) in the first decades of the fourth century.

The dragon in China

white horse, under a state umbrella, and was escorted by four followers, all dressed in yellow robes.

"They came from the East and arriving at the gate they called :

— Child of Yin (the little son of the farmer, thirteen years old, who was alone at home), we come to sit down for a little while and rest.

Thus they entered the house and sat down on a couch in the lower part of the court-yard. One of them grasped the umbrella and turned it upside down. Yin's child looked at their clothes and saw that they were entirely without a seam. The horse was spotted with five colours and looked as if it had a scaly armour and no hair. In a moment a rainy vapour came, whereupon the man mounted the horse and rode away. Turning and looking back he said to the child :

— Tomorrow I must come again.

Yin's child looked where they went and saw them treading the air, turning westwards and gradually ascending. In a moment cloudy vapours assembled from all sides and the daylight was darkened by them. The next day a heavy rain came violently down ; the water gushed over mountains and valleys, hills and ravines were overflowed. When it was about to overflow the cottage of Yin's child he suddenly saw a big *kiao*, over three chang long, which with its windings protectingly covered the cottage".

The revenge of a *kiao*, transformed into a girl, is told in the *I yuen* ¹. A man who had hit a *kiao* with an arrow met a crying girl with the same arrow in her hand. When he asked her what this meant, she said that she came to return to him the burning pain it had caused her, after which she gave him the arrow and disappeared. Before he reached his house he got a hot fever and died on the road.

¹ Written by Liu King-shuh, in the first half of the fifth century.

The dragon in China

The passages mentioned above clearly show that the *kiao*, just as the lung, were believed to assume human shapes and to cause rain and thunderstorm. This is not astonishing, for we have seen that the *kiao* were called *lung* themselves.

§ 8. Rearing and taming dragons

p.082 In Chapter II (pp. 50 sqq.) we have referred to the *Historical Records* with regard to the Emperor K'ung Kiah of the Hia dynasty, in whose service Liu Léi tamed two dragons, sent down by Heaven. This Liu Léi had learned the art from the Dragon-rearer family, and he himself obtained the family name of *Yü lung*, "Dragon-ruler".

The *Tso chw'en*¹ gives the same legend in the following passage :

"In autumn (of the 29th year of Chao kung, *i. e.* Chao, duke of Lu, who reigned B.C. 541-509) a dragon appeared in the suburbs of Kiang. Wéi Hien tszě asked Ts'ai Mih saying :

— I have heard that none of the animals is the dragon's equal in knowledge, and that for this reason the dragon cannot be caught alive. Can we believe that it is right to ascribe this (his not being caught alive) to his knowledge ?

Mih replied :

— Men really do not know ; it is not that the dragon is really knowing. The ancients kept dragons ; therefore the State had a Dragon-rearer family (*Hwan-lung shi*) and a Dragon-ruler family (*Yü-lung shi*).

Hien tszě said :

— I too have heard about those two families, but I do not know their origin ; what is it said to be ?

¹ Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. V, pp. 729 sqq. ; Book X, year XXIX, par. 4. [c. a. : [trad. Couvreur](#)]

The dragon in China

The answer was :

— In olden times there was Shuh Ngan of Liu, who had a distant descendant called Tung Fu, very fond of dragons and able to find out their tastes and likings, so as to supply them with drink and meat. Many dragons sought refuge with him and he reared the dragons according to their nature in order to serve the Emperor Shun, who gave him the surname of Tung, and the family name of *Hwan-lung* (Dragon-rearer). He was [also] invested with [the principality of] Tsung-chw'en, and the family of Tsung I is of his posterity. Thus in the time of the Emperor Shun, and for generations after, dragons were reared. We come [then] to K'ung Kiah of the Hia dynasty, who was so obedient and acceptable to the Emperor of Heaven, that the latter gave him riding dragons, two, a male and a female, from the Hwang-ho, and two from the Han river. K'ung Kiah could not feed them, and had not yet found [members of the] Hwan lung family. T'ao T'ang (Yao)'s family having declined, one of his descendants was Liu Léi, who learned the art of rearing dragons from the 'Dragon-rearer' family. With this he undertook to serve K'ung ^{p.083} Kiah and could give the dragons drink and food. The Emperor praised him and gave him the family name of Dragon-ruler (Yü-lung).

§ 9. Dragons ridden by *sien*, or drawing the cars of gods and holy men

The "Traditions on the Files of Immortals", *Lieh sien chw'en* ¹, repeatedly mention *sien* who rode away on dragons through the air. We often read also of flying dragons or *ying-lung* drawing the cars of gods or holy men. As we shall see below (Ch. VII), Hwang Ti rode on a dragon, and Yü's carriage was drawn by two of these divine animals. In the *Li Sao*, quoted above ², K'üh Yuen's car was drawn by four *k'iu* or by flying

¹ Written in the first century before our era by the famous philosopher Liu Hang. Cf. the *Shen sien ch'wen*, "Traditions on the divine *sien*".

² This chapter, § 7, p. 77, note 8.

The dragon in China

dragons. The Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (B. C. 140-86) once ascended the Yen ling tower and after the second night watch saw Si wang mu, the "Royal Mother of the West", arriving in a carriage of purple clouds, drawn by nine-coloured, spotted dragons ¹. These ideas are, of course, closely connected with those about dragon-horses, winged and scaly horses of extraordinary size, treated above in Ch. II, § 3, pp. 56 sqq.

§ 10. Dragon-boats

Dragon-boats are mentioned in the *Hwai nan tszě* ², where these ships are called "dragon-boats (and) yih-heads" (龍舟鷁首). This is explained as follows by the commentator :

"Dragon-boats are big ships adorned with carved dragon-ornaments ; the *yih* is a big bird, the painted shape of which is attached to the prows of ships

Wells Williams ³ describes the *yih* as

"a kind of seabird that flies high, whose figure is gaily painted on the sterns of junks, to denote their swift sailing ; the descriptions are contradictory, but its picture rudely resembles a heron".

On these boats, which were used by the Emperors for pleasure ^{p.084} trips, on which occasions music was made on board, the bird was painted, not to denote their swift sailing, but to suppress the water-gods, if we may believe the commentary to a passage of the *Wen süen* ⁴. It seems that the ships represented dragons with yih-heads, and that the "dragon-ornaments" were the dragon's scales, carved on the sides of the vessels.

¹ *Han Wu-ti nei ch'wen* (attributed to Pan Ku, but probably written in the 3rd century), quoted *ibidem*, p. 3a.

² About 140 B.C. ; Ch. VIII.

³ *Chin. Engl. Dict.*, p. 1092, s. v. *yih*.

⁴ Compiled in the first half of the sixth century of our era by Siao T'ung ; quoted in the *Kokushi daijiten* p. 2338, *Ryūzu* (mistake instead of *ryōtō*) *gekisu no fune*.

The dragon in China

The Japanese courtiers of the eleventh century, however, who wanted to imitate all the customs prevailing at the Chinese court, did not understand the words of the *Hwai nan tszě* and had two kinds of ships made which they called in one term : "*Dragon-heads (and) Yih-heads*", "*Ryōtō-gekisu*". The combination of these two words reminds us of the term "*shishi-komainu*" used at the Japanese Court in the same age to denote the images of the lion and the unicorn, not separately but as one name for both together ¹. Therefore I would be inclined to think that the term *Ryōtō-gekisu* originally denoted one kind of ships, adorned with a dragon-head in front and a yih-head behind, if a passage of the *Jikkishō* ² did not state that on the occasion of a pleasure trip in the Emperor Shirakawa's time (1072-1086),

"Koresue played the flute on board of the 'dragon-head', but there was no flute playing on board of the 'yih-head'.

As to Murasaki Shikibu's Diary ³, where we read that the new ships were very beautiful, and the *Hamamatsu Chūnagon Monogatari* ⁴, these works of the beginning and the middle of the eleventh century, as well as the *Eigwa Monogatari* ⁵ (about 1100), which states that the Emperor made a pleasure trip with "*ryōtō-gekisu*", seem to speak of one kind of ships. The *Kagakushū* ⁶, however, which dates p.085 from 1444, says : "'Dragon-head' and 'Yih-head' are two different names of ships", which agrees with the words of the *Jikkishō* ⁷.

These Chinese ships are different from the "dragon-boats" used in China on the fifth day of the fifth month at the water festival. The latter

¹ Cf. my treatise on "*The Dog and the Cat in Japanese Superstition*", Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, pp. 54-62.

² Written shortly after 1252 ; Ch. X, K. T. K. Vol. XV, p. 823.

³ Written from 1008 to 1010 ; *Gunsho ruijū*, nr 321, Vol. XI, p. 591.

⁴ Written by Sugawara Kōhyō's daughter (born in 1008), consort of Fujiwara no Toshimitso (who died in 1058) ; Ch. I.

⁵ Ch. XX K. T. K. Vol. XV, p. 1344 ; Ch. VIII, p. 1078.

⁶ Written in 1444 by the Buddhist priest Shaku no Hattotsu.

⁷ Cf. the *Nambakō*, written by Okamoto Yasutaka, who lived 1798-1878.

The dragon in China

are real boats used in regatta's, or fancy dragon-boats, carried through the streets and burned at the sea-shore as substitutes which take away all evil influences. No doubt De Groot's ¹ explanation of this festival, as being based on sympathetic magic, is right. As we shall see below ², the Chinese used to make clay dragons to cause rain. In the same way their dragon-boat-races are certainly intended to represent fighting dragons, in order to cause a real dragon fight, which is always accompanied by heavy rains. The dragon-boats carried through the streets may also serve to cause rain, although they are at the same time considered to be substitutes.

As to the enormous dragon, made of linen, bamboo and paper, and carried in procession through the streets on the 15th of the first month, a red ball being carried in front of him, this was formerly explained by De Groot ³ as an imitation of the Azure Dragon, the head of which (a star) in remotest ages in the beginning of spring rose and set at the same time as the sun (the fiery ball), as if it persecuted this celestial globe and finally succeeded in swallowing it ⁴. As to his later explanation concerning the thunder, belched out by the dragon, we may refer to this Book, Ch. IV (Ornaments), § 4.

§ 11. "Dragon-tail-road" and other words connected with the dragon

The "*Dragon-tail-road*", 龍尾道, *Lung-wéi-tao*, was the road ascending straight southward to the *Shé yuen tien*, a building belonging to the Chinese Emperor's palace. Along this road the visitors came to be received in audience by His Majesty, who always faced the South. In imitation the road before the Taikyokuden, a building belonging to the p.086 Japanese Palace, was also called *Ryūbidō*, "Dragon-tail-road" ⁵.

¹ [Fêtes annuelles à Emoui, Vol. I, pp. 372 sqq.](#)

² This Book, Ch. VI (causing rain).

³ [Fêtes annuelles, Vol. I, p. 369.](#)

⁴ Cf. Schlegel, *Uranographie Chinoise*, pp. 55 sqq.

⁵ *Ryūan zuihitsu*, written in 1819 by Kurihara Shinjū (Nobumitsu) ; Ch. IX ; *Hyakka setsurin*.

The dragon in China

Other words borrowed from China are the following : *Ryūteki*, "dragon-flute" ; *ryūbin*, "dragon's whiskers", a mat woven from rush ¹ ; according to the *Pao P'oh-tszě*, it is the name of a kind of grass produced by the whiskers of the dragon ridden by Hwang Ti. The officials who could not ascend the dragon got hold of its whiskers, but by their weight pulled them out. Where the whiskers fell down, the "Dragon's whiskers herb" shot up (cf. below, Book I, Ch. VI, § 1) ; *ryūtan*, pronounced *rindō*, "Dragon's liver", a species of gentian ; three of these flowers, together with five *sasa* (a kind of small bamboo), formed the badge of the Minamoto Family (*sasa-rindō*). ²

§ 12. Dragon-gate

The *Sin shi San Ts'in ki* ³ says :

"Lung men (龍門, "Dragon-gate") is another name for Ho tsin (河津, "Ford of the Hwang Ho "). Several thousands of big-fishes assemble under the Dragon gate without being able to ascend it (*i. e.* to swim against the current). Those which succeed in ascending it become dragons ; those which fail remain fishes".

A fish changing into a dragon is represented on the altar table of the Yuh-Fuh-tien in the Fah-yü temple on *P'u t'o shan* (Boerschmann, *Die Baukunst und religiöse Kultur der Chinesen*, Vol. I, p. 65), and dragons trying to grasp the mysterious fiery "pearl", which is hanging in the Dragon-gate, are seen in the same temple (pp. 46, 87, cf. below, Book I, Ch. IV, § 4).

As we shall see below (Book II, Ch. XI, § 2, B), there are in Japan several Dragon-gate waterfalls, and also, in the province of Kii, a

¹ Lin ; *Kokushi daijiten*, p. 2338, s. v. *ryūbin*.

² *Ryūan zuihitsu*, pp. 485 sq.

³ Written by a certain Sin.

The dragon in China

Dragon-gate mountain. The latter reminds us of the *Lung-men* mountain between the rivers I and Lo, not far from the confluence of these rivers.

§ 13. Dragon's dens

p.087 We read in the *Sheu shen heu ki* :

"On mount K'iu in Wu-ch'ang (in Hu-kwang province) there was a dragon's den. Whenever the inhabitants saw a divine *k'iu* fly out of and into the den, the year was dry, but when they prayed to this dragon it rained.

Another dragon's den is mentioned in the *Cheh-kiang t'ung-chi*, "General Memoirs concerning Cheh-kiang" ¹, where we read :

"On mount Pien in Hu-cheu there is a Yellow Dragon's Cavern. At the top there is a spring which dashes forth from the cave, called the 'Golden Well spring' ; the cave is also called the 'Golden Well cave'. The cavern is so deep that one cannot see its end. At the time of the Liang dynasty a yellow dragon appeared in it. For this reason King Yueh of Wu erected a shrine in order to sacrifice to the dragon".

Another dragon's den, mentioned in the *Kwah i chi*, will be treated below in connection with the Indian Nāga-kings (Ch. IX).

§ 14. Dragon herds

According to the *Shih cheu ki* ² herds of dragons assemble at Fang chang island in the centre of the Eastern sea. The *Luh i ki* ³ relates about a so-called "Blue smoke temple" situated on an island. During several days a cloud of smoke hung above the sanctuary. Suddenly one morning the waves leapt up violently, a herd of dragons appeared at the surface

¹ Cf. [Wylie, I. I., p. 45](#) : 16th century, revised 1684 and 1736.

² Written in the Han dynasty ; p. 9a.

³ "Writings on Recorded Wonders", written by Tu Kwang-t'ing, a Taoist priest who lived in the latter part of the ninth century (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. V, p. 630](#), note 2).

The dragon in China

and entered the Han river. The big ones were several chang long, the small ones over a chang. Some were yellow, others black, red, white or blue, and ^{p.088} they resembled cows, horses, donkeys or sheep. Forming a row of fifty they followed one another into the mouth of the Han river ; then they returned to the temple. So they went to and back several miles, sometimes hidden sometimes visible. This lasted for three days and then stopped.

§ 15. Dragon's pearls

According to *Chwang tszě* a "pearl of a thousand pieces of gold (*ts'ien kin*) is certainly to be found in a pool of nine layers, (*i. e.* very deep) under the throat of a *li-lung* or "horse-dragon". The *Shuh i ki* (sixth century) states that so-called dragon-pearls are spit out by dragons, like snake-pearls by snakes. In the *Lung ch'ing luh* ¹ we read about a dragon which in the shape of a little child was playing with three pearls before the entrance of his den. When a man approached he fled into the cavern and, reassuming his dragon form, put the pearls in his left ear. The man cut off the ear, in order to take possession of the pearls, but they vanished together with the dragon himself.

Another legend ² tells us about a man who was very fond of wine and from a female *sien* in the mountains obtained a pearl which she said to be kept by the dragons in their mouths in order to replace wine.

De Groot mentions "Thunder-pearls" (雷珠, *léi-chu*),

"which dragons have dropped from their mouths, and which may thoroughly illuminate a whole house during the night".

"Perhaps, says De Groot, these objects may be the relics of an age of stone.

¹ Written in the T'ang dynasty by Liu Tsung-yuen.

² *Lang hūen ki*, (see above p. 74, note 6), Ch. 中.

§ 16. Dragon's eggs

Dragon's eggs are beautiful stones picked up in the mountains or at the river side, and preserved till they split amidst thunder, p.089 rain and darkness and the young dragon ascends to the sky. Much water, comes out of the stones beforehand, and the dragon appears in the form of a very small snake, or water-lizard, which grows larger and larger in a few moments. ¹ An old woman, who had found five such eggs in the grass, took the little snakes to the river and let them go, whereupon the dragons gave her the faculty of foretelling the future. This "Dragon-mother", as the people called her, because, when she was washing clothes in the river, fishes (the subjects of the dragons) used to dance before her, became so famous on account of her true prophecies, that even the Emperor wished to consult her. She died, however, on her way to the capital, and was buried on the eastern bank of the river ; but the dragons made a violent storm arise and transferred the grave to the opposite side of the stream. ²

The same story is told in the *Nan yueh chi*, but there the dragons are said to have several times drawn back the ship by which the old woman against her will was transported to the capital. At last the plan was given up for fear of the dragons. According to the *Kwah i chi* there is always much wind and rain near the Dragon-mother's grave ; then people say : "The dragons wash the grave".

In the *Shan-si t'ung-chi* we read about a dragon-woman who jumped out of a big egg, found at the side of a pool. She gave wealth to the house where she lived, but at last she ran away and in the form of a snake disappeared into the crack of a rock in the mountains.

¹ *T'ai-p'ing kwang ki*, Ch. 424 ; *Lang huen ki*, Ch. 下 ; *Kwéi-sin tsah-shih suh-tsih*, written by Cheu Mih, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth and in the beginning of the fourteenth century ; Ch. 下, p. 23.

² *T'ai-p'ing kwang ki*, *ibidem*.

The dragon in China

The author of the *Mung k'i pih t'an* ¹ says that he often saw a dragon's egg, preserved in a case in the Kin shan monastery in Jun cheu (an old name for Chin-kiang-fu in Kiang-su). It resembled a hen's egg, but it was much larger. Its weight was _{p.090} very small, and it gave a hollow sound. This egg had been found in the T'ien shing era (1023-1032) in the midst of the Great River, and by Imperial order had been presented to the monastery. That very year, however, a great flood washed away a large number of houses near by, and the people ascribed this to the dragon's egg.

According to a work of the sixteenth century ² of our era the dragon's eggs are found in times of heavy rains. Further, we read there that in 1469 a fisherman picked up a big egg, as large as a human head, five-coloured, the lower end pointed and the upper round. If one shook it, there was a sound as of water inside the egg, which was very heavy and luke-warm. The people worshipped it, looking upon it as a supernatural thing. A diviner declared it to be a dragon's egg.

§ 17. Dragon's bones, skins, teeth, horns, brains, livers, placentae and foetus, used as medicines

Among the nine ingredients of spectre-killing pills, mentioned by De Groot ³, we find "Dragon's bones",

"certain fossil bones to be found in the shops of leading apothecaries".

There is, indeed, an extensive medical literature on the curative power of these bones, which are probably remains of prehistoric animals.

¹ Written about the middle of the eleventh century by Ch'en Kwoh, (cf. Bretschneider, *Botanicon Sinicum*, Journal of the North-China branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1881, New series, Nr XVI, Part I, pp. 137, 173, [nr 510](#)).

² *Suh wen hien t'ung k'ao*, written by Wang K'i, who obtained official rank in 1561 ; Ch. 224.

³ [Rel. Syst., Vol. VI, p. 1087.](#)

The dragon in China

The *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* is, as in all medical matters, the best source of our knowledge about these bones and the use made of them by the Chinese physicians. According to some of the authors referred to by Li Shi-chen, the learned author of this medical standard work, dragon's bones are cast off skins of living dragons for these animals are said to cast off not only their skins but also their bones ; according to others they are the remains of dead dragons. Li Shi-chen, on comparing all the different views and tales, arrives at the conclusion that the dragon, although a divine being, certainly dies like other animals, and that the *Pen king* ¹, one of his principal sources, is right in declaring the dragon's bones to belong to dead dragons. p.091

As to the places where they are found, the *Ming i pieh luh* ² says :

"They come from (litt. are produced in) the valleys of Tsin land (Shansi province) and from spots where dead dragons are lying in caverns on the steep water banks in T'ai Shan. They are gathered at indefinite times".

"Nowadays, says the same author, many bones are exported from the centre of Liang, Yih and Pa (Sz'-ch'wen province)". ³

Lei Hiao ⁴ remarks :

"Those from Yen cheu, Ts'ang cheu and T'ai yuen are the best. Among these bones, those which are thin and have broad veins are of female dragons, those which are coarse and have narrow veins belong to male ones. Those which have five colours are the best, the white and the yellow ones belong to the middle

¹ Under this abbreviated title the *Shen Nung Pen ts'ao king*, "Classical work on Medicines of (the Emperor) Shen Nung", the oldest medical work, is quoted in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*. The work itself is lost. Cf. Bretschneider, *Botanicon Sinicum*.

² Written by T'ao Hung-king (451-536). Cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. I, p. 274](#) ; Bretschneider, p. 42 ; [Giles, Bibliogr. Dict., p. 718](#) : "one of the most celebrated adepts in the mysteries of Taoism". Quoted in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, p. 1b.

³ *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh, ibidem*.

⁴ The author of the *P'ao chi lun*, who lived A. D. 420-477. Cf. Bretschneider, p. 41, nr 6 : "A treatise in 3 books, explaining the medical virtues of 300 drugs and giving directions for the preparation of medicines". Quoted in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*.

The dragon in China

kind, and the black ones are of the most inferior quality. As a rule those with veins lengthwise running are not pure, and those which have been gathered by women are useless.

In *Wu P'u's* ¹ opinion the blue and white ones are good, and Su Kung ² says :

"At the present day all (the bones) come from Tsin land. The fresh and hard ones are not good ; those bearing five colours are good. The blue, yellow, red, white and black ones also according to their colours correspond with the viscera, as the five *chih* (felicitous plants), the five crystals (*shih ying*) and the five kinds of mineral bole (*shih chi*)".

The meaning of the last sentence is the following. The five colours (blue, white, red, black and yellow) correspond to the five viscera (liver, lungs, p.092 heart, kidneys and spleen) and to the so-called mansions (gall, small and great intestines, bladder and stomach), as we learn from the list given by [De Groot, Rel. Syst. Vol. IV, p. 26](#). For this reason probably the use of the dragon's bones as medicines was different according to their colours, with regard to the colour of the organ to be cured.

The preparation of the bones is described as follows by Lei Hiao.

"For using dragon's bones first cook odorous plants ; bathe the bones twice in hot water, pound them to powder and put this in bags of gaze. Take a couple of young swallows and, after having taken out their intestines and stomach, put the bags in the swallows and hang them over a well. After one night take the bags out of the swallows, rub the powder and mix it into

¹ The author of the *Wu shi Pen-ts'ao*, written in the first half of the third century. Quoted *ibidem*. Cf. Bretschneider, p. 40, nr 5.

² Who with 23 other scholars in the middle of the seventh century A. D. revised and completed the *T'ang Pen-ts'ao*, thence called the *T'ang Sin Pen-ts'ao*, "New Pen-ts'ao of the T'ang". Cf. Bretschneider, p. 44, nr 11. Quoted in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, *ibidem*.

The dragon in China

medicines for strengthening the kidneys. The efficacy of such a medicine is as it were divine !" ¹

In Li Shi-chen's ² time, however, they were only roasted on the fire till they were red and then rubbed to powder, or fresh bones were used. In the same passage he refers to an author of the Sung dynasty ³, who says that the bones are to be soaked in spirits for one night, then dried on the fire and rubbed to powder. Further, according to Chen K'uen ⁴, some are a little poisonous, and (in preparing and using them) fishes and iron utensils are to be avoided (dragons dislike iron, cf. above, this chapter, § 3, pp. 67 sqq.).

As to the illnesses cured by means of dragons bones, their number is large. Dysentery, biliary calculi, fever and convulsions of babies, boils in the bowels and internal ulcers, paralysis of the legs, illnesses of pregnant women, remittent fever and abscesses are all driven away by this powerful medicine. Bleeding of the nose or ears is stopped by blowing powder of dragon's bones into _{p.093} them, and, when dried on the fire and ground, they are also used against navel abscesses of babies. In short, the strong *Yang* power of these bones makes, of course, the *Yin* demons which have comfortably established themselves in the human body take to their heels as soon as medicine, prepared from the bones, arrives ⁵.

Apart from the medical works we may mention the following passages. The *Shuh i ki* ⁶ (6th century) says :

"According to tradition a dragon, when a thousand years old, casts off his bones in the mountains. Now there are dragon mounds, out of which dragon brains are taken".

¹ *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, p. 2a.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Ch'en Yuen-ting, author of the *Shi lin kwang ki*, (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. II, p. 713](#) ; Bretschneider, p. 186, nr 719). Quoted in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, *ibidem*.

⁴ Author of the *Yoh sing pen-ts'ao*, in the first half of the seventh century A. D. (cf. Bretschneider, p. 44, nr 10). Quoted *ibidem*.

⁵ *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, p. 2 sq.

⁶ Ch. II, p. 5a.

The dragon in China

We read in the same work :

"In P'u-ning district (Kwantung province) there is a 'Dragon-burial islet'. The elders say : 'The dragons have cast off their bones on this islet. There are at the present day still many dragon's bones'. Thus on mountains and hills, on hillocks and cavernous cliffs, on all places where the dragons raise clouds and rain, dragon's bones are found. There are many of them in the ground, sometimes deep, sometimes near to the surface ; teeth, bones, spines and feet, all are there. The big ones are some tens of *chang* or fully ten *chang* long, the small ones only one or two *ch'ih* or three or four *ts'un*. The bodies are all complete. As they had been gathered, I saw them". ¹

At the time of the T'ang dynasty the tribute of the land of Ho-tung principality, Ho-chung department, in Ho-tung province, partly consisted of dragon's bones. ²

p.094 Li Chao says in his *Kwoh shi pu* ("Commentary to the Dynastic Histories") ³ :

"When the spring water comes and the fishes ascend the Dragon-gate (comp. above, this chapter, § 12, p. 86), there are a great many of cast-off bones, which are gathered by the people to make medicines from them. Some of them are five-coloured. The Dragon-gate is Tsin land, which agrees with the statement of the *Pen king* (comp. above). Are the dragon's bones perhaps the bones of these fishes ?"

Su Sung ¹, who quotes this passage, instructs us that in his time these bones were found in many districts of Ho tung province.

¹ We read the same in the *Mao t'ing k'oh hwa*, written by Hwang Hiu-fuh, in the Sung dynasty ; Ch. IX, where it is said by a man who sold dragon's bones, teeth, horns, heads and spines on the market. "Some of them", said he, "are five-coloured, others white like floss silk ; some have withered or rotten in the long course of the years".

² *New Books of the T'ang dynasty*, Ch. XXXIX, nr 29, p. 1a (anno 760 A. D.)

³ Written in the beginning of the ninth century.

The dragon in China

Another work of the eleventh century ² tells us about a man who in a dark night saw a branch of a tree which spread a brilliant light. He broke it off and used it as a torch. The next morning he discovered that the light was due to a cast-off skin of a dragon, in size resembling a new shell of a cicada, and consisting of head, horns, claws, and tail. Inside it was hollow, yet it was solid, and when he knocked against it, it produced a sound like precious stones. The brightness of its light blinded the eye, and-in the dark it was a shining torch. He preserved it as a treasure in his house.

The strong light spread by the cast-off dragon's skins is, of course, due to the strong Yang power of the dragons.

In 1553, when, the water being very low, a dragon's skeleton was discovered on a small island in a river, the people were all very anxious to get one of the bones. ³

Also dragon's teeth were considered to be a good medicine. The *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* quotes Sü Chi-ts'ai, ⁴ who said :

"As a rule p.095 they are good when getting (*i. e.* being mixed with) *jen-ts'an* (ginseng) and cow-yellow (cow-bezoar), but they fear (*i. e.* it is not good to mix or prepare them with) gypsum and iron utensils".

The illnesses which are cured by means of dragon's teeth are enumerated as follows in the *Shen Nung Pen-ts'ao king* :

"Beings that kill the vital spirit ; when adults have spasms or epileptic fits, convulsions or madness, when they run as madmen and their breath is tied under their heart, so that they

¹ Author of the *Sin i siang fah yao*, an astronomic work written at the close of the eleventh century (cf. [Wylie, p. 107](#)).

² The *Ch'un chu ki wen*, ten chapters of miscellanies written by Ho Wei, who lived in the eleventh century (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 110](#)) ; Ch. II, p. 11.

³ *Shang han lun t'ao pien*, written in 1589 by Fang Yiu-chih.

⁴ A famous physician who lived in the second half of the sixth century, author of the *Lei kung yoh tui* (cf. Bretschneider).

The dragon in China

cannot breathe (*i. e.* when they are asthmatic) ; further, the five (kinds of) fits and the twelve (kinds of) convulsions of babies.

According to Chen K'uen ¹ they

"quiet the heart and calm down the souls (the *hwun* and the *p'oh*)".

Chen Jeh-hwa ² declares them to cure head-ache, melancholy, hot fever, madness, and (possession of) *kwei* and *mei* (demons). They also cure liver diseases, for

"as the *hwun* which is stored away in the liver can change itself, those whose *hwun* is erring about and is not fixed are cured by means of dragon's teeth". ³

Li Shi-chen gives the following explanation :

"Because the dragon is the god of the Eastern quarter, his bones, horns and teeth all conquer liver diseases".

Dragon's *horns* are used for curing about the same illnesses as those mentioned with regard to the dragon's teeth. ⁴

Dragon's *brains* were believed to stop dysentery ⁵, and the *liver* of this divine animal, sometimes of a *living* one, was prescribed by some physicians in difficult cases. Sometimes a royal patient for this reason even ordered to kill the dragon of a pond, which used to hear the people's prayers for rain in times of drought ^{p.096} and guarded the castle of the prince. That very day a terrible thunderstorm broke forth and the

¹ About the *hwun* and the *p'oh* see [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, Part. I, Ch. I, pp. 4 sqq.](#), p. 23.

² Who lived in the Sung dynasty and wrote the *King yen fang* (Bretschneider, p. 161 nr 338).

³ Hū Shuh-wei, who lived in the time of the Sung dynasty and wrote the *Pen shi fang* (Bretschneider, p. 179, nr 588).

⁴ *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, p. 4b.

⁵ T'ao Hung-king. The "brain of a dragon a thousand years old" is mentioned among a hundred medicines in the *Shuh i ki*, Ch. II, p. 5a.

The dragon in China

dragon flew away ; the castle, no longer guarded by its tutelary god, soon fell a prey to the enemy who stormed and destroyed it like in former days ¹. Another time we read about a dragon which by the mighty charm of a Taoist doctor was forced to descend into a jar of water. After having cut out the liver of the living animal he gave it a patient, the wife of a prefect, to eat, and she recovered ².

Placentae and foetus of dragons, found in Pa and Shuh (Sz'-ch'wen province), were said to cure disease of the blood and those of women after delivery. ³

§ 18. Dragon's blood, fat and saliva

The *Yiu-yang tsah tsu* ⁴ says :

"When dragon's *blood* enters the earth it becomes *hu-poh*, amber.

As to dragon's *fat*, we learn from the *Shih i ki* ⁵ that a tower, lighted by means of it, spread such a brilliant light that it was seen at a distance of a hundred miles. This light was said by some people to be a lucky omen and was worshipped by them from far. The wick was made of "fire-washed cloth" (asbestos cloth which can be cleaned by fire), twined into a rope.

With regard to the dragon's *saliva* we read the following in the *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh* :

"Wang Ki ¹ says :

"From the saliva spit out by dragons perfume is made".

Li Shi-chen (the author himself) says :

¹ *Mih k'oh hwui si*, written in the eleventh century by P'eng Shing (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 864](#), note 2).

² *Chao yé ts'en tsai*, "Record of all matters relating to the Court and abroad", ascribed to Chang Shoh, who probably lived in the first half of the 8th century ; quoted by [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. VI, p. 1031](#), note 1.

³ *Pen-ts'ao kang-muh*, p. 5a.

⁴ Ninth century.

⁵ Fourth century.

The dragon in China

"Dragon's saliva is seldom used as a medicine ; it is only mixed into perfumes. It is said that it can bind camphor ^{p.097} and musk for several tens of years without evaporating. Further, it is said that, when it is burned, a blue smoke floats through the air... Last spring the saliva spit out by a herd of dragons appeared floating (on the sea). The aborigines gathered, obtained and sold it, each time for two thousand copper coins".

The *Yiu hwan ki wen* ² instructs us that the most precious of all perfumes is dragon's spittle, and that the inhabitants of Ta-shih land used to watch the vapours arising for half a year or even two or three years from the same spot of the sea. When they vanished, this was a token that the dragons which had been sleeping there all the time had gone away. Then the people went to the spot in order to gather the saliva of those dragons. According to another explanation, found in the same passage, the dragons lived in whirlpools in the open sea. The spittle which they emitted was hardened by the sun, and these hard pieces were blown ashore by the wind. When fresh it was white, gradually it became purple, and finally black (amber, generally considered to be the excrements of cachalots, *i. e.* sperm whales, is yellowish).

This perfume reminds us of the "Dragon-fight perfume", mentioned in the *Tsu t'ing shi yuen* ³, which is said to be produced by fighting dragons. One pill of it makes a large cloud of perfume arise.

According to the *Lang huen ki* ⁴ the Emperor Shun used the saliva of a purple dragon as ink in writing the names of holy ministers on tablets of jade, those of sages, on tablets of gold and those of talented ministers on tablets of quartz-crystal ; those of ordinary ministers were written

¹ A celebrated physician of the 16th century, author of the *Pen-ts'ao hui*...[c.a. illisible.]

² Written by Chang Shi-nan, in the Sung dynasty ; Ch. VII.

³ Quoted in the Japanese Buddhist dictionary entitled *Bukkyō iroha jiten*, Vol. II, p. 63, s. v. Ryū-tō.

⁴ Written by I Shi-chen, in the Yuen dynasty.

The dragon in China

with ordinary ink on tablets of wood. In order to obtain the saliva he ordered Yü Hu to rear a purple dragon. The latter daily made the animal drop saliva by holding a swallow, which he had cooked (the favourite food of the dragons, cf. above, p. 68) before it without immediately giving it to eat. This made the dragon's mouth water, and a large quantity of saliva dripped down. Then Yü Hu filled a vessel with it, whereupon he gave the swallow to the ^{p.098} dragon. In this way he daily got one *koh* (a gill) of saliva, which was mixed with *hwui shih* (繪實, the "Herb of the *Sien*, 仙草). In the time of Yao this herb grew before the audience hall. It wore flowers in all four seasons. If one rubbed its fruit and mixed it with a purple dragon's saliva, a liquid of a genuine red colour was produced, which penetrated into gold and jade and thus could be used in writing names on the tablets mentioned above.

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CHAPTER IV

Ornaments

§ 1. Symbols of Imperial dignity and fertilizing rain, represented on garments, honorary gates, coffins etc.

p.099 As we have seen above (Ch. I, § 2, p. 39), the *Shu king* states that the dragon belonged to the emblematic figures depicted on the upper sacrificial garment of the Emperor.

It is not to be wondered at that this divine giver of rain, at the same time symbol of a good sovereign and his blissful government, should be represented among the Imperial ornaments

The so-called *shah* are described by De Groot ¹ as square boards of wood covered with white linen, with handles five feet long, which in ancient times were carried behind the funeral cars of grandees, and were planted inside the pit when the coffin had been lowered into the grave. These *shah* displayed the rank of the grandees by emblematical figures.

"The Kien-lung edition of the Three Rituals suggests that the two *shah* which the Son of Heaven had in addition to the six of a feudal prince, were painted with a *dragon*, the characteristic symbol of the imperial dignity" ².

Four pedestals of the quinquupartite decorative gate at the Imperial Ming tombs

"display, on every face, an Imperial Dragon, soaring in the midst of the usual emblems accompanying this divine distributor of fructifying rains, namely clouds and stars" ³.

¹ [Rel. Syst., Vol. I, pp. 185 sqq.](#)

² [Rel. Syst., Vol. I, p. 187](#), fig. 20, a picture of a *shah* adorned with a dragon.

³ [Rel. Syst., Vol. III, p. 1193](#), plate XL.

The dragon in China

"The shaft of each (of the four columns in the prolongation of the diagonals of the tablet-house in the avenue leading to the Ming Tombs) is sculptured with a gigantic dragon, coiling itself around it as if climbing the skies" ¹.

With regard to honorary gates De Groot remarks that the tablet placed perpendicularly underneath their highest roof, p.100 displaying the characters 御旨, "By Imperial Decree", or 聖旨, "By decree of the Holy One", is supported by a couple of dragons, "the symbols of the blessed reign of the Son of Heaven" ².

The azure dragon, symbol of the eastern quarter in ancient China, was to be seen on the left side of the coffins of grandees in the Han dynasty, while on the right side a white tiger represented the West. We learn this from a passage of the Book of the Early Han dynasty ³, quoted by De Groot ⁴, who also refers to the Books of the Later Han Dynasty ⁵, which state that, the imperial coffins

"used to be decorated and painted with a sun, a moon, a bird, a tortoise, a dragon and a tiger".

This was also the case in T'ang dynasty ⁶. At the present day the use of ornamental dragons is not limited to the funerals of Emperors or grandees, but also common people are allowed to enjoy their blessing power.

"On the front curtain ⁷ (of the catafalque) are a couple of dragons rising out of the waves, surrounded by clouds and with a sun between them ; the back displays a tiger or unicorn, the

¹ [Rel. Syst., Vol. III, p. 1194.](#)

² [Rel. Syst., Vol. III, p. 1201.](#)

³ Ch. 93.

⁴ [Rel. Syst., Vol. I, pp. 315 sq.](#) — cf. [Vol. II, p. 699.](#)

⁵ Ch. 16, p. 2.

⁶ [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. I, p. 317.](#)

⁷ According to the *Li ki* (Ch. 58, p. 39, quoted by [De Groot, Vol. I, p. 182](#)) in ancient times on the side curtains of the catafalque of a Ruler dragons were depicted. Cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. I, p. 183](#), Fig. 18.

The dragon in China

top exhibits dragons, sundry ornamental flowers, and figures representing clouds. Thanks to these clouds and to the dragons which produce the same in their quality of water gods, the greatest blessings which the Universe can bestow, viz. fertilizing rains causing crops to grow and so giving food, raiment and wealth, surround the dead" ¹.

The grave-clothes for women in Amoy, called "dragon-petticoat", "dragon-mantle" and "clouds-mantilla", are adorned with embroidered dragons amidst clouds, bats, phoenixes, stags, tortoises and cranes, emblems of fertilizing rains, old age, joy, pecuniary profits and happiness ².

The *Li ki* ³ says that at the great sacrifice to the Duke of Chao in the last month of summer

"the ruler (of Lu), in his *dragon-figured robe* and cap with pendants, stood at the eastern _{p.101} steps".

A little further ⁴ we read :

"For ladles they (the rulers of Lu) had that of Hia, with the handle ending in a dragon's head" and "they had the music-stand of Hia, with its face-board and posts, on which *dragons* were carved" ⁵ ; "they had knee-covers of Cheu, with dragons" ⁶.

§ 2. Nine different kinds of dragons, used as ornaments

A well-known work of the end of the sixteenth century, the *Wuh tsah tsu* ⁷, informs us about the nine different young of the dragon, whose shapes are used as ornaments according to their nature. The *p'u-lao*, dragons which like to cry, are represented on the tops of bells, serving

¹ [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. I, p. 181.](#)

² [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol I, p. 53](#), Fig. III, IV and V.

³ [Couvreur, Li ki, Vol. I, p. 732](#), Chap. XII, *Ming T'ang wei*.

⁴ [Couvreur, p. 736, § 20](#) — Legge, p. 35.

⁵ [Couvreur, p. 739, § 26](#) — Legge, p. 37.

⁶ [Couvreur, p. 740, § 29](#) — Legge, p. 38.

⁷ Written about 1592 by Sié Chao-chi.

The dragon in China

as handles. The *szě-niu*, which like music, are used to adorn musical instruments. The *ch'i-wen*, which like swallowing, are placed on both ends of the ridgepoles of roofs (to swallow all evil influences). The *chao-fung*, lion-like beasts which like precipices, are placed on the four corners of roofs. The *ai-hwa*, which like to kill, serve as ornaments of sword grips. The *hi-pi*, which have the shape of the *ch'i-lung* ¹, and are fond of literature, are represented on the sides of grave monuments. The *p'i-han*, which like litigation, are placed over prison gates (in order to keep guard). The *swan-i*, which like to sit down, are represented upon the bases of Buddhist idols (under the Buddhas' or Bodhisattvas' feet). The *pa-hia*, finally, big tortoises which like to carry heavy objects, are placed under grave-monuments ².

p.102 Further, the same author enumerates nine other kinds of dragons — there are so many, says he, because the dragon's nature is very lewd, so that he copulates with all animals ³ —, which are represented as ornaments of different objects or buildings according to their liking prisons, water, the rank smell of newly caught fish or newly killed meat, wind and rain, ornaments, smoke, shutting the mouth (used for adorning key-holes), standing on steep places (placed on roofs), and fire.

§ 3. Ornaments used by Wu-ist priests and mediums

De Groot's description of the religious dress of the Wu-ist priests (the *sai kong* of Amoy) contains the following passage.

¹ Cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. III, p. 1142](#), Fig. 37, a *ch'i* (or *li*), carved in the border crowning a sepulchral tablet of stone. It is mentioned already in the third century before our era (in the *Lū-shi ch'un-ts'iu*), and described in the *Shwoh wen* as a yellow animal, resembling a dragon, or as a hornless dragon.

² The same facts are to be found in the *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. XLV, p. 674, and are further explained in the dictionary entitled *Ching tszě t'ung*, p. 60 ; written in the T'sing dynasty by Yao Wen-ying. In many respects the Japanese have followed these Chinese rules of ornamentation.

³ According to the same work (Ch. IX), a cross-breed of a dragon and a cow is a *lin* (a female unicorn) ; that of a dragon and a pig is an elephant ; and if a dragon copulates with a horse, a dragon-horse (cf. above, pp. 56 sqq.) is born.

The dragon in China

"On the left and right (of the pile of mountains, representing the continent of the world, embroidered on the back of the principal vestment of the *sai kong*), a large dragon rises high above the billows, in an attitude denoting a soaring motion towards the continent ; these animals symbolize the *fertilizing rains*, and are therefore surrounded by gold-thread figures which represent *clouds*, and some which resemble *spirals* and denote *rolling thunder*... There is also a broad border of blue silk around the neck, stitched with *two ascending dragons which are belching out a ball, probably representing thunder*" ¹.

A similar, secondary vestment of a *sai kong* is adorned with

"an oblong piece of blue silk, embroidered with two dragons which belch out a ball, as also with a continent and waves over which they soar".

"It is then obvious, that the sacerdotal dress of the *sai kong* is a *magical dress*. The priest, who wears it, is invested by it with the power of the Order of the World itself, and thus enabled to restore that Order whenever, by means of sacrifices and magical ceremonies, he is averting unseasonable and calamitous events, such as *drought*, untimely and superabundant rainfall, or eclipses. Besides, since the Tao is the mightiest power against the demon p.103 world, the vestment endows the wearer with irresistible exorcising power" ².

On the so-called "embroidered belly", a piece of red cloth or silk, suspended on the stomach of the *ki tông*, the "divining youths" used as mediums, possessed by gods, "two dragons are stitched with gold thread ; for dragons are emblems of imperial dignity, and consequently

¹ [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1265](#), plate XVIII.

² [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1266](#).

The dragon in China

also those of the Emperor of Heaven, in whose employ the indwelling spirit of the *ki tông* is, as well as all other *shen*" ¹.

"The *ki* (𪛗, an instrument for spirit-writing) of a fashionable club is as a rule clad in red silk or broadcloth, on which dragons are stitched with gold thread ; for it is clear that, having to harbour so often the spirit of a god, the instrument deserves, just as well as his image, to wear the dress of divinity, which is a mantle embroidered with the said imperial animals. Of such a *ki* of higher order, the end below the vertex is also nicely carved and gilded, representing the head and scaly neck of a dragon or snake" ².

"If the litter (of a *ki tông* deity, whose image is carried about in it) is fitted out completely, there are inserted behind the back five thin staffs, to each of which a triangular flag is fastened, embroidered with the emblem of imperial dignity, viz. *an ascending dragon which vomits a ball*" ³.

§ 4. The dragons and the ball

As to the ball, "belched out by the two dragons", this reminds us at once of the Dragon festival on the 15th day of the first month ; the ball carried in front of the dragon on that day might be also explained in the same way, *i. e.* as thunder belched out by the dragon, and not as the sun, pursued by him. This fact was orally pointed out to me by Prof. De Groot himself ⁴. The ball between the two dragons is often delineated as a spiral, and in an ancient charm represented in Koh Hung's *Pao P'oh-tszě* (17th section) "a spiral denotes the rolling of thunder from which issues a flash of lightning" ⁵.

¹ [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1275.](#)

² [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1297.](#)

³ [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1316.](#)

⁴ See above, this Book, Ch. IV, § 10.

⁵ [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1036,](#) Fig. 3.

The dragon in China

"In the sign expressing lightning, the projecting stroke signifies the flash ; therefore its effect as a charm is indefinitely increased by lengthening that ^{p.104} stroke so that it looks like a spiral which at the same time represents the rolling of thunder". ¹

This theory agrees with Hirth's explanation of the "Triquetrum" in connection with the dragon in Chinese and Japanese ornaments ². Hirth identifies the "Triquetrum", *i. e.* the well-known three-comma-shaped figure, the Japanese *mitsu-timoe*, with the ancient spiral, representing thunder, and gives a Japanese picture of the thundergod with his drums, all emitting flames and adorned with the *mitsu-timoe*. But this ornament is not at all limited to the drums of the thundergod ³ ; it is, on the contrary, very frequently seen even on the drums beaten by children at the Nichiren festival in October. At many Japanese temple festivals which have no connection whatever with the thundergod or the dragon, the same ornament is seen on lanterns and flags. Hirth explains its frequent appearance on tiles as a means of warding off lightning, based on the rule "similia similibus". This is contrary to the use of "sympathetic magic", very common in the Far East ⁴, according to which the symbol of thunder would not avert thunder but attract it, thus destroying and driving away evil influences. Apparently both ideas are found side by side, for images of dragons were used to attract them, thus causing rain and thunder, but at the same time the thundergod of Mount Atago (with whom Shōgun Jizō was identified as Atago Gongen) was worshipped as the principal protector against fire. But the symbol of thunder on the tiles may also serve to drive away all evil influences from the buildings, like

¹ [Rel. Syst., VI, p. 1040.](#)

² *Chinesische Studien*, Vol. I, pp. 231 sqq. (Verhandlungen der Berl. Anthr. Ges., Sitzung vom 22 Juni 1889), "Ueber den Mäander und das Triquetrum in der chinesischen und japanischen Ornamentik".

³ It is not represented on his drums in the picture of the *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. III, p. 41.

⁴ Cf. below, Book I, Ch. V, § 3.

The dragon in China

the dragons represented on both ends of the ridgepoles, mentioned above (p. 101).

Hirth gives a picture from a Japanese work on ornaments, entitled *Nairyu kira ga ōsa*, but the ancient Chinese "Triquetrums", nrs 23, 25, 26, 27, are different from the Japanese forms, as the former have a circle in the centre and five or eight comma's, all placed separately, and turned towards the centre (except in nr 23, where they issue from the centre), while the latter consist of two or three black comma's interlaced with white and often united in the centre. Yet the turning motion is evident in all, p.105 and the more I reflect upon it, the more I feel inclined to accept Hirth's explanation of the *mitsu-tomoe* and *futatsu-tomoe* (two comma's) as the rolling thunder. Its frequent appearance on lanterns, flags, tiles, and, in olden times, on the *tomo* or leather shield worn around the wrist by archers, and its frequent use as a badge of arms may be explained by its magic power, averting evil and, in some cases, bringing fertilizing rains. I formerly believed it to be the Yang and Yin symbol, the third comma being the *T'ai Kih* (太極, the primordium, from which Yang and Yin emanate). This primordium, which in China is represented by the whole figure, should by mistake have been represented by the Japanese by means of a third comma¹. Yang and Yin, Light and Darkness, however, are represented by one white and one black figure, somewhat resembling comma's and forming together a circle. It would be very strange if the ancient Japanese, who closely imitated the Chinese models, had altered this symbol in such a way that its fundamental meaning got lost ; for replacing the two white and black comma's with two or three black ones would have had this effect. Moreover, in Japanese divination, based on the Chinese diagrams, the original Chinese symbol of Yang and Yin is always used and placed in the midst of the eight diagrams. Thus the *futatsu-tomoe* and *mitsu-tomoe* are apparently quite different from this symbol, and Hirth rightly

¹ Cf. Florenz, *Jap. Mythologie*, p. 78, note 7.

The dragon in China

identifies them with the ancient Chinese spiral, representing thunder. Moreover, I found the same explanation of the *tomoe* in the Japanese work Shiojiri ¹, which gives a picture of two kinds of spirals, ancient symbols of thunder and clouds. Finally, on Japanese prints the dragon is often accompanied by a huge spiral, representing the thunderstorm caused by him.

Is the ball, so often seen in connection with the dragon, and often represented as a spiral emitting flames or as a ball upon which something like a spiral is delineated, identical with the spiral, denoting thunder? Hirth and De Groot suppose so. The latter, considering the dragon's nature of a thundergod, arrived at the conclusion that the dragon must *belch out* the ball instead of *swallowing* it, for why should he, who causes thunder, persecute it and try to swallow it? Hirth ² speaks about a dragon which with his claw is putting the thunder into rotation. This is, p.106 however, not the ordinary way of representing the dragon with the ball or spiral. *Two dragons* flying with open mouths towards a ball or spiral between them — this is the most frequent and apparently the most ancient representation. The artists, especially those of later times, often varied this subject, so that we sometimes see more than two dragons rushing upon one ball, or one dragon trying to swallow it or having caught it with his claw; sometimes there are even two balls and only one dragon. But nowhere they make the impression of belching out the ball; their whole attitude, on the contrary, indicates their eagerness in trying to catch and swallow it. Moreover, how can two dragons belch out one ball? And the dragon of the festival constantly follows the ball with his mouth, apparently in order to swallow it. Yet I was inclined to accept De Groot's theory, although it was very difficult to make it agree with the eager attitude of the dragons, when Mr. Kramp had the kindness of pointing out to me his own opinion on this subject.

¹ Written by Amano Nobukage, who lived 1660-1733; new edition (1907), Ch. XXXI, p. 497.

² L. I. p. 233.

The dragon in China

After having drawn my attention to Hirth's paper, mentioned above, he showed me a little Chinese picture, represented in Blacker's *Chats on Oriental China* (London, 1908), on p. 54, where we see two dragons, rushing upon a fiery, spiral-shaped ball, under which the following characters are to be read : 兩龍朝月, "A couple of dragons facing the moon". The moon ! These were the first written characters I ever saw with regard to this interesting subject, for the sea of texts concerning the dragon, ancient and modern, did not give a single word. Leaving aside the character 朝, which is apparently not well chosen to denote the aggressive attitude of the dragons, we have only to consider the character 月.

Would it be absurd to represent dragons trying to swallow the moon ? Not in the least, for the dragons are, as we have seen above, the clouds, and the ancient Chinese may easily have fancied that these dragons, quickly approaching and covering the moon, actually devoured it. When they did so, the fertilizing rain soon trickled down upon the thirsty earth, a great blessing to mankind. For this reason they might be represented so often trying to swallow the moon, namely as a symbol of fertilizing rains. Owing to the close connection between the moon and the water, the moon, having been swallowed by the dragon, might have been believed to strengthen the rain-giving power of the latter. The dragon of the festival, persecuting the moon, might be carried along the streets in order to cause rain by sympathetic magic.

p.107 The Chinese themselves, however, mostly call the ball a "precious pearl". We find it explained in this way in Boerschmann's highly interesting work on *Pzu t'o shan*¹, where a gilt ball of glass is said to hang from the centre of the roof of the Great Hall of the Buddhist temple Fa(h)-yü-szě ("Temple of the Rain of the Law"), while eight dragons, carved around the surrounding "hanging pillars", eagerly

¹ Ernst Boerschmann, *Die Baukunst und religiöse Kultur der Chinesen*. Band I : *P'u t'o shan*.

The dragon in China

stretch their claws towards the "pearl of perfection" ¹. This term sounds Buddhistic and is appropriate to the Buddhist surroundings, as well as the number eight of the dragons, which is, indeed, fixed by the form of the roof, but is also found on the staircase of the Yü(h)-fo(h)-tien (p. 57). Dragons trying to seize a fiery "pearl" which is hanging in a gate (the Dragon-gate, cf. above, p. 86) are represented twice in the same temple (pp. 46, 87). Leaving aside Boerschmann's fantastic ideas about the "dragons playing with the pearl" (p. 43), we may be sure that the Chinese Buddhists, identifying the dragon with the Nāga, also identified the ball with their cintāmaṇi or precious pearl which grants all desires. The question rises : "Was the ball originally also a pearl, not of Buddhism but of Taoism ?"

Mr. Kramp pointed out to me, that the character 玥, combined from *jewel* and *moon*, though not found in the dictionaries of Wells Williams, Giles or Couvreur, is given in the K'ang-hi dictionary. I found it also in the Japanese lexicon entitled *Kanwa daijiten* (p. 852), explained as a "divine pearl" (神珠), and with the Japanese-Chinese pronunciations *getsu*, *gwachi*. This is evidently based upon the K'ang-hi dictionary, where we read s. v. : 魚厥切、音月、神珠也. The same pronunciation and meaning are given in the lexicon entitled *Tszě-wei*. This sacred *yueh* pearl probably dues its holiness to its connection with the moon, for the second part of the character 玥 may not only form the phonetic element, but it may indicate that this is "the pearl of the moon", as there is also a "pearl of the bright moon" (明月之珠, Couvreur's Dictionary s. v. 月). It is possible that in the little sentence mentioned above : 兩龍朝月, the last character has taken the place of the fuller form 玥, in which case the two dragons would be said to "face the moon-pearl".

p.108 Difficult points in the moon theory are the *red* colour of the ball and its *spiral*-shaped form. If it is a *pearl*, however, representing the

¹ Dragons and pearl : pp. 18, 35, 57, 59, 77, 124. One dragon with the pearl in his claw, other dragons flying from both sides to the spot, p. 35.

The dragon in China

moon or at least closely connected with it, the red colour may mean the lustre of this brilliant, fiery gem, which in the temple on *P'u t'o shan*, mentioned above, is represented by a glass ball covered with gold. The red ball, carried by the Dragon girl in the Hall of the Law of the same temple (Boerschmann, p. 122, nr 1) is evidently also a pearl. The spiral is much used in delineating the sacred pearls of Buddhism, so that it might have served also to design those of Taoism ; although I must acknowledge that the spiral of the Buddhist pearl goes upwards, while the spiral of the dragon is flat.

We know the close connection of dragons and pearls in both religions. This connection is quite logical, for the masters of the sea are, of course, the possessors and guardians of its treasures. When the clouds approached and covered the moon, the ancient Chinese may have thought that the dragons had seized and swallowed this pearl, more brilliant than all their pearls of the sea.

These are, however, all mere suppositions. The only facts we know are : the eager attitude of the dragons, ready to grasp and swallow the ball ; the ideas of the Chinese themselves as to the ball being the moon or a pearl ; the existence of a kind of sacred "moon-pearl" ; the red colour of the ball, its emitting flames and its spiral-like form. As the three last facts are in favour of the thunder theory, I should be inclined to prefer the latter. Yet I am convinced that the dragons do not *belch out* the thunder. If their trying to *grasp* or *swallow* the thunder could be explained, I should immediately accept the theory concerning the thunder-spiral, especially on account of the flames it emits. But I do not see the reason why the god of thunder should persecute thunder itself. Therefore, after having given the above facts that the reader may take them into consideration, I feel obliged to say : "non liquet".

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CHAPTER V

Causing rain, thunder and storm

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§ 1. The gods of thunder, clouds and rain

p.109 The Classics have taught us that the dragon is thunder, and at the same time that he is a water animal, akin to the snake, sleeping in pools during winter and arising in spring. When autumn comes with its dry weather, the dragon descends and dives into the water to remain there till spring arrives again. When in the first month of the year now and then thunderclaps were heard and a little rain came down, the ancients were convinced that this was the work of the dragons, who in the form of dark clouds appeared in the sky. If our interpretation of the words of the *Yih king* is right, the "advantage" given by them when they were seen soaring over the rice fields, and the "blessing power then spread by them everywhere", was nothing but the fertilizing rain they poured down upon the earth. In later texts, at any rate, we have seen them clearly qualified as the gods of clouds and rain, whose breath turned into clouds ¹ and whose power manifested itself in heavy rains. Koh Hung ², e. g., in the *Pao P'oh tszě* states the following :

"If on a *yin* day there is in the mountains a being who calls himself a "*forester*", it is a tiger,... and if on a *ch'en* day a being calls himself "*Rain-master*", it is a dragon... If one only knows these their animal names, they cannot do him any harm".

The tiger, indeed, is the god of the mountains and woods, as the dragon is the divinity of water and rain.

¹ Cf. the *'Rh ya yih*, quoting Wang Fu, above, Book I, Ch. III, § 2, p. 66 ; Han Yü, (A. D. 768-824).

² Quoted by [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. V, p. 601](#).

The dragon in China

p.110 According to the *Kwoh yü* ¹, Confucius stated that

"apparitions (怪, "strange beings") in the water are called *lung* (龍) and *wang-siang* (罔象), while apparitions between trees and rocks are called *khwei* (夔) and *wang-liang* (螭螭)".

As to these *khwei*, we learn from De Groot ², who quotes the *Shwoh wen* ³ and the *Shan hai king* ⁴, that this is a class of one-legged beasts or *dragons* with human countenances, which were fancied in ancient China to be amphibious and to cause *wind and rain*. The *Shan hai king*, as quoted by De Groot, describes them as follows :

"In the Eastern seas is a Land of rolling Waves, extending seaward over seven thousand miles. There certain animals live, shaped as cows with *blue bodies*, but hornless and one-legged. Whenever they leave or enter the waters, winds are sure to blow, and rains to fall. Their glare is that of the sun and the moon, their voice is that of thunder. They are named *khwei*. Hwang the emperor caught some and made drums of their hides, which, when beaten with bones of the 'thunderbeat', resounded over a distance of five hundred miles, and thus struck the world under heaven with awe".

"In this description, says De Groot, we immediately recognize the *lung* or Dragon, China's god of Water and Rain".

Further, De Groot ⁵ quotes the *Tszě puh yu* ⁶, which states the following :

" There are three species of drought-causing pah (旱魃). Some are like quadrupeds ; an other kind are transformations of *kiang*

¹ Ascribed to Tso K'iu-ming, the alleged author of the *Tso chw'en*. De [Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. V, p. 495.](#)

² [Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. V, p. 496.](#)

³ A dictionary composed in the first century of our era by Hü Shen ; Ch. V, 2.

⁴ Ch. XIV, p. 6b.

⁵ [Rel. Syst., Vol. V, p. 761.](#)

⁶ Written in the second half of the 18th century by Sui Yuen... [c.a. : illisible.]

The dragon in China

shi (corpse-spectres), and both these species are able to produce drought and stop wind and rain. But the principal, superior drought-demons, called *koh* (or *koh-tszě*, 格. 格子), cause still more damage ; they resemble men but are taller, and have one eye on the top of the head. *They devour dragons*, and all the *Rain-masters* (雨師) fear them much, for when they p.111 (the *koh*) see clouds arise, they raise their heads and disperse them (the clouds) in all directions by blowing, the sun thus increasing in intensity. No man can conquer them. Some say, that when it is Heaven's will that there shall be a drought, the vapours of the becks condense and become these demons. When the latter suddenly vanish, it will rain.

The term "Rain-master" (*yü-shi*, 雨師) for dragon is also mentioned by Wu Shuh ¹. The Japanese applied it especially to one of their dragon-shaped river gods, most famous for his rain bestowing power.

Ascending dragons cause rain, but if they descend from the sky this is not always the case. According to the "Various divinations of farmers" ², when *black* dragons descend this means drought or at least not much rain, hence a proverb says : "Many dragons much drought". The descending of *white* dragons, however, was explained to be a sure sign of coming rain.

§ 2. Violent rains accompanied by heavy winds and thunderstorms

In a passage from the *History of the Sung* dynasty, mentioned above ³ with regard to the dragon omens, the appearance of a black dragon above the capital was said to be an omen of big floods which in the next year destroyed the fields and houses in 24 prefectures. We also read there that a dragon, which the fourth month of the sixth year of the

¹ (A.D. 947-1002), a famous scholar, placed upon the commissions which produced the *T'ai-p'ing yü lan* and the *Wen yuen ying hwa*, and author of the *Shi léi fu*, ([Giles, Biogr. Dict., nr 2345](#)) ; *Lung-fu*, T. S., same section, Ch. 127, p. 11a.

² *T'ien kia tsah chen*. T. S., same section, Ch. 130, p. 6b.

³ See above, p. 54.

The dragon in China

K'ai Pao era (973) rose from a well, caused violent rains to destroy a large number of houses and trees and sweep away the inhabitants. And in the sixth month of the next year, when the tower of a castle gate was struck by lightning, this accident is described as follows :

"In Ti cheu there fell a fire from the air upon the tower of the Northern gate of the castle. There was a creature which embraced the eastern pillar. It had the shape of a dragon and p.¹¹² a golden colour ; its legs were about three *ch'ih* long, and its breath smelled very bad. In the morning, when people looked for it, there were on the upper part of the wall thirty six smoky stains, the traces of claws".

Such traces were also seen, much to the astonishment of the people, after a heavy storm accompanied by thunder, which lifted up the tablet of a gate and threw it down at some distance, destroying one of the characters of the inscription. ¹

Another time a white dragon brought heavy wind and rain. The sky was black and it was pitchdark. More than five hundred houses were destroyed ; big trees were uprooted and lifted up into the air, from where they fell down quite broken. ²

According to the *Yiu-yang tsah tsu* ³, wind, rain and thunder were caused by a dragon, which in the shape of a white reptile had wound itself around one of the legs of a horse, when this was bathed in a river. The creature had coiled itself so tightly, that the horse lost much blood when the monster was loosened. The general who possessed the horse took the reptile and preserved it in a box. One day some guests advised him to examine its nature by means of water. It was laid in a hollow, dug

¹ *Lao hioh ngan pih ki*, according to [De Groot \(Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 220](#), note 1) "a collection of notices on miscellaneous subjects, in ten chapters, by Luh Yiu, also named Wu-kwan, a high officer who lived from 1125-1209". T. S, same section, Ch. 130, p. 7b.

² *Choh keng luh*, by T'ao Tsung-i, alias Kiu-ch'ing, published in 1366 (cf. [De Groot, IV, p. 346](#)). T. S, same section, Ch. 130, p. 10a.

³ *Yiu-yang tsah tsu*, Ch. XV, p. 2a.

The dragon in China

in the earth, and some water was sprinkled over it. After a little while the animal began to wriggle and seemed to grow. In the hollow a well bubbled up, and all of a sudden a black vapour like incense smoke rose and went straight out of the eaves. The crowd beyond was afraid and ran home, convinced that it was a dragon. But before they were some miles away suddenly the wind arose, the rain come down, and several heavy thunderclaps were heard.

Especially the whirlwinds, called in Japan "tatsu-maki" or "dragon-rolls", which form waterspouts and carry heavy objects into the air, were looked upon as dragons winding their way to the sky amidst thunder and rain. Holes in the ground, due to volcanic eruptions and emitting smoke, were thought to be the ^{p.113} spots from where dragons which had been lying in the earth had dashed forth and flown to heaven. ¹

Two boys, born from the marriage of a man with a dragon who first assumed the shape of a snake and then of a woman, suddenly caused a heavy thunderstorm to arise, changed into dragons and flew away. ²

When in the year 1156 a thunderstorm raged and darkness prevailed, suddenly a cry was heard over an extent of several miles, which repeated itself for more than a month. The people ascribed it to the dragon of a neighbouring pond. ³

Another time a little snake, which crept out of a small crack of the unplastered wall of a house, became bigger and bigger, changed into a dragon and flew away amidst storm and rain. ⁴

¹ Cf. the *I kien chi*, written in the twelfth century by Hung Mai, T. S., same section, Ch. 130, p. 96 ; *Lung ch'ing luh*, (Wilie, p. 197 : "A record of incidents during the earlier part of the T'ang, professing to be written by Liu Tsung-yuen, of that dynasty. It is generally understood, however, that it is a spurious production of Wang Chih, of the 12th century") ; Ch. II.

² *Hoh lin yuh lu*, written by Lo Ta-king, alias King-lun, who probably lived in the 12th century (cf. De [Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 251](#), note 1). T. S., same section, Ch. 131, p. 16a.

³ *Kiang-si t'ung-chi*, quoted T. S, same section, Ch. 130, p. 6b.

⁴ *Fei süeh luh*, quoted T. S, same section, Ch. 130, p. 12a.

The dragon in China

How a *kiao* brought heavy rains and inundations was seen above ¹, as well as the fact that tempests often were ascribed to dragons fighting in the air. ²

§ 3. Rain magic and prayers

The dragon being the god of rain, from remote ages his images were used in times of drought in order to cause him to ascend by sympathetic magic. The *Shan hai king* says :

"In the northeastern corner of the Great desert (Ta hwang) there is a mountain called Hiung-li earth mound ; a *ying lung* (according to the commentator a winged dragon ³) inhabited its southern extremity. p.114 After having killed Ch'i Yiu (the first rebel) and Kw'a Fu (?), he (the dragon) could not ascend again, and for this reason often drought prevails on earth. In time of drought an image of a *ying lung* is made and then a heavy rain is obtained".

The commentator Kwoh P'oh (A. D. 276-324) adds :

"The earthen dragons of the present day find their origin in this".

Wang Ch'ung ⁴ of the Later Han dynasty, who in his work entitled *Lun Heng* severely criticizes the superstitions of his time, refers to Tung Chung-shu's ⁵ following statement :

"At the rain sacrifices in spring and autumn earthen dragons are set up in order to call down the rain. The idea of this is that by this means clouds and dragons are caused to come. The *Yih king* says : 'Clouds follow the dragon, wind follows the tiger'. They are invited to come by means of their likenesses,

¹ Book I, Ch. III, § 7, p. 81.

² Book I, Ch. II, § 2, A, p. 48.

³ Cf. above, this Book, Ch. IV, § 6, p. 72 sqq.

⁴ (A. D. 27-97).

⁵ Who lived in the second century B. C., author of the *Ch'un-ts'iu fan lu*, T. S., same section, Ch. 127, p. 3b.

The dragon in China

therefore when earthen dragons are set up Yin and Yang follow their likenesses and clouds and rain arrive on their own account.

Also the *Lü shi ch'un-ts'iu* ¹ states that "by means of dragons rain is made", and Liu Ngan ² says : "Earthen dragons cause the rain to come". According to a commentary on this passage

"the Emperor T'ang (the founder of the Shang dynasty, B. C. 1766) in time of drought made an earthen dragon in order to symbolize the dragon being followed by the clouds".

"The duke of Cheh in the land of Chu, says Wang Ch'ung, liked dragons and had them painted on all his walls and trays, certainly considering p.115 their pictures to be like real dragons. Thus there was always rain (*i. e.* there never was a drought) in the country of this duke.

In the *Supplement of the Books of the Han Dynasty* ³ a description is given of the ceremonies performed when praying for rain ; an extensive commentary explains the words :

"The underlings raise the earthen dragons".

In the first place the passage from the *Shan hai king*, mentioned above, is quoted, and Kwoh P'oh's commentary with regard to the earthen dragons of his days. Then follows a long description of rain ceremonies found in the *Ch'un-ts'iu fan lu* ⁴ of Tung Chung-shu, the author of the second century B. C. quoted above.

In this passage the rain ceremonies of spring, summer, the last month of summer, autumn and winter are described. The details all agree with the Taoistic system, pointed out by De Groot in his *Religious*

¹ (last half of third century B. C.), Ch. XX.

² *Hwai nan tszě*, Ch. IV.

³ Ch. V, p. 1.

⁴ Ch. XVI, nr 74, pp. 3-6.

The dragon in China

System ¹, and *wu*-ist priests were the performers of the rites. In the ceremonies of spring, summer, the last month of summer, autumn and winter accordingly the eastern, southern (twice), western and northern gates of the towns and villages are mentioned, and the colours of the silken banner of the altars and the robes of the officiating priests were azure, red, yellow, white and black. Further, the numbers eight, seven, five, nine and six were used with regard to the square altars erected at the five different ceremonies and to the tanks in which shrimps or frogs were placed, as well as to the days during which the different preparations were made ².

As to the *earthen dragons*, mentioned in this description, the days on which they were made, their sizes, colours, numbers, the directions in which they were placed and the sides on which they stood, as well as the colours of the robes of those who brandished and erected them, and the numbers and ages of the former, all agreed with the same Taoistic system.

"On *kiah* and *yih* days (in spring) one big *blue* dragon, long ^{p.116} *eight* chang, is made and stands in the centre ; seven small one each four chang long, are made (and placed) on the *east* side. They are all directed towards the *East*, with a distance of *eighth* ch'ih between each other. *Eight little boys*, who all have observe religious abstinence for three days and are clad in *blue* robe brandish the dragons. The *T'ien seh fu* (Superintendent of harvesting), who also for three days has observed religious abstinence and is clad in *blue* robes, erects them".

In the same way in summer on *ping* and *ting* days one big *red* dragon was made, *seven* chang long, and placed in the centre while six small dragons, each three chang five ch'ih long, stood on the *south* side ; they

¹ Vol. I, p. 317 ; Vol. IV, p. 26.

² Prayers took place on a day of the Water ; it was forbidden to cut down famous trees or trees of the wood ; the sacrifices consisted of cocks and pigs, three years old ; further, the people roasted pig tails, buried human bones, opened mountain pools, burned firewood, etc., "in order to open Yin (the water) and close Yang (the sun)" (p. 4b) ; for the same reason men were forbidden to visit markets.

The dragon in China

were all directed to the *south*, with a distance of *seven* ch'ih between, each other. *Seven fullgrown men* who for three days had observed religious abstinence and were clad in *red* robes, brandished the dragons, and the *Szě k'ung se fu* (Superintendent of works), who likewise for three days had observed religious abstinence and was clad in *red* robe, erected them.

When the mountains and hills were prayed to in the *last month of summer*, on *wu* and *szě* days, one big *yellow* dragon *five* chang long, was placed in the centre, and four ¹ small ones long two chang five ch'ih, stood on the *south* side ; they were all directed to the South, with a distance of *five* ch'ih between each other. *Five elders*, after three days religious abstinence, and clad in *yellow* robes, brandished the dragons, and five men (or a senior ²) in *yellow* robes erected them.

In *autumn*, on *keng* and *sin* days, one big *white* dragon was made, *nine* chang long, and placed in the centre ; eight small ones, long four chang five ch'ih, were placed on the west side. They were all directed to the *West*, and the distance between them was *nine* ch'ih ; *nine old unmarried men* (or widowers) in *white* robes brandished them, and the *Szě ma* (Inspector of horses), also clad in *white* garments, erected them.

p.117 Finally, in *winter*, when prayers were made to famous mountains, one big *black* dragon, made on *jen* and *kwéi* days, and *six* chang long, was placed in the centre, and five small ones, each three chang long, stood on the *north* side ; they were all directed to the *North* and the distance between them was *six* ch'ih. *Six old men*, all clad in *black* robes, brandished the dragon, and a *wéi* (military officer), also wearing *black* garments, erected them ³.

¹ The main text wrongly says *five*, but the quotation gives the right number of *four*.

² The main text gives "five men", the quotation "a senior".

³ The *Shen-nung k'iu-yü shu*, quoted in the *Koh chi king yuen*, an extensive cyclopaedia compiled by Ch'en Yuen-lung, and published in 1735, Ch. IV, Sect. 祈雨, p. 5a, gives the same with less details.

The dragon in China

In the ceremonies, used for stopping rain, no dragons are mentioned. We learn from the *Sung-ch'ao shi shih* ¹ that in the Sung dynasty the same magic was performed ; the dragons were sprinkled with water, and, after the ceremony, thrown into the water.

De Groot ² treats of this custom in order to show that, this kind of rain magic being very common in ancient China, the dragon processions on the 15th day of the first month and the dragon boats on the fifth day of the fifth month may be easily explained in the same way. He also refers to a passage from the *Yiu-yang tsah tsu* ³, whereas Buddhist priest, who in the K'ai-yuen era (A. D. 713-742) was ordered by the Emperor to pray for rain, said that he wanted a utensil engraved with the figure of a dragon. Nothing of the kind could be found, till after two or three days an old mirror, the handle of which had the form of a dragon, was discovered in the Emperor's store-house. The priest took it into the chapel and prayed ; and behold, that very evening the rain poured down !

The same sympathetic magic is mentioned in the *Pih hi man chi* ⁴ where a mirror, adorned on the backside with a "coiled dragon", *p'an lung*, is said to have been worshipped (rather used in a magical way) in order to cause rain ⁵.

p.118 The aim of this magic was to force the dragons to follow their images and to ascend from their pools. It is no wonder that sometimes

¹ Quoted in the same chapter of the *Ch'un-tsiu fan lu*, nr 75 pp. 6 seq. ; cf. the same chapter, section and page of the *Koh chi king yuen*.

² [Fêtes annuelles à Emoui, Vol. I, pp. 375 sqq.](#)

³ Ch. III.

⁴ Written in the Sung dynasty by Wang Choh, T. S., same section, Ch. 131, p. 11b.

⁵ With regard to painted dragons being as powerful as real ones we may refer to the *Yun kih ts'ih ts'ien*, a Taoistic work of the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., IV, p. 74](#)), where we read about a dragon painted on a wall, with a well before it, which was prayed to for rain by people from far and near, and used to hear their prayings. Once in a time of drought a drunken fellow had the audacity to rail at the dragon. He cried over the balustrade of the well : "If Heaven sends a drought like this, what is the use of you ?", and with a big stone hit one of the painted dragon's feet. The mark was still visible in the author's time. When the man came home he suddenly got an unbearable pain in his foot. Although he sent a messenger to burn incense before the dragon and to apologize, it was all in vain, and he died within a few days : T. S., same section, Ch. 129, p. 11b.

The dragon in China

drastic measures were taken to cause them to obey this human command, when it failed to have success. Thus in the tenth century of our era the head of two districts did not hesitate to have an earthen dragon flogged in order to force the unwilling dragons to ascend ; and he was right, for that very day a sufficient rain came down ¹.

As we have seen above, also Buddhist priests used images of dragons in making rain. It is again a story from the K'ai-yuen era, to be found in the same work ², which teaches us how they sometimes employed them to stop rain. An Indian bonze was requested by the Emperor to put a stop to the incessant rains, caused by one of his Chinese colleagues, who by order of the sovereign had prayed for rain and had fulfilled his task with so much success that several people were drowned in consequence of the inundations. The Indian priest made five or six dragons of clay, placed them in water and scolded them in his mother-tongue. Then he took them out of the water and laid them somewhere else, laughing loudly. After a little while the rain stopped. The meaning of this magic was apparently different from the ancient Chinese ideas. By placing the dragons in their element, the water, he gave them life, just like a Buddhist priest of the fourth century did with a dead dragon which he had dug up. The latter, however, after having thus made the dragon revive, by means of incantations caused him to ascend to the sky and put a stop to a heavy drought. ³ His Indian colleague of the K'ai-yuen era, on the contrary, with a scornful laugh removed the dragons after having given them life, in order to cause their counterparts to go away also. We may compare this with several instances of a ^{p.119} similar magic, mentioned by Frazer in his *Golden Bough* ⁴. We read there of plagues,

¹ *History of the five Dynasties*, (907-960) ; *Koh chi king yuen*.

² *Yiu-yang tsah tsu*, Ch. III.

³ *T'ai-p'ing yü lan*, Ch. 930. The same priest by his prayers caused two white dragons to descend and to pour down rain over a district of a thousand miles.

⁴ Vol. II (sec. ed.), pp. 426 sq. Cf. Vol. I. pp. 9 sqq. ; making rain by magical means, I, pp. 82-114.

The dragon in China

caused by vermin, scorpions or serpents, which were stopped by burying or removing the images of these noxious creatures.

A curious prescription for making rain is given in the *Yiu-Yang tsah tsu* ¹, where we read the following :

"Take four water-lizards, and after having filled two earthen jugs with water, put two of the lizards in each. Then cover the jugs with wooden covers, place them on two different quiet spots, prepare seats before and behind them, and burn incense. If you then have more than ten boys, ten years old or younger, day and night incessantly strike the jars with small green bamboo sticks, it certainly will rain".

This advice was followed, and after one day and two nights the rain came down.

"Tradition says, adds the author, that dragons and water-lizards belong to the same species".

The idea of annoying the dragons by noise and thus stirring them up is also to be found in Japan, where, as we shall see below ², the Court officials made music and danced on a dragon boat on the pond of the Sacred-Spring-Park, in order to force the dragon to arise and give rain.

Another way of making rain is to arouse the dragons' anger by throwing poisonous plants ³, or ashes ⁴, or pieces of wood, or stones ⁵,

¹ Ch. XI (ninth century).

² Ch. V, pp. 160 sq. It reminds us of the enormous bronze drums, decorated with frogs, the demons of rain, which probably were beaten by the Man tribes in the South of China, when drought prevailed. Cf. De Groot, *Die antiken Bronzepauken im Ostindischen Archipel und auf dem Festlande von Südostasien*, Mitth. des Seminars f. Orient. Spr. zu Berlin, Jahrg. IV, Abth. I, pp. 76-113.

³ *T'ai-p'ng yu lan*, Ch. 930.

⁴ *Weng yuen hien chi*, quoted in the Japanese work *Shobutsu ruizan*.

⁵ *Mao t'ing k'oh hwa*, quoted T. S., same section, Ch. 130, p. 8a : "If one throws a piece of wood or a stone into the dragon pond, this at once causes black vapours to arise, followed by thunder and lightning, rain and hail". On clear days the surface of the water of this pond was five-coloured, a sign of a dragon's dwelling. In time of drought offerings were made and prayers said to him.

The dragon in China

or tiger bones ¹ — the tiger being the dragon's deadly enemy — into their pools, or by pulling a tiger's head by means _{p.120} of a rope through a river inhabited by a dragon ². As we shall see below, the Japanese, following the same methods, threw horse dung, old sandals and other dirty things into dragon-ponds, or stirred the dragons up by means of iron utensils or metal-shaving, for, as we saw above ³, these animals were believed to detest and fear iron.

The *Wu tsah tsu* ⁴ describes the remarkable way in which the people of Ling-nan caused rain. As dragons are very lewd and fond of women, a naked woman was placed on an elevated point in order to attract a dragon. As soon as there came one and flew around her, he was magically prevented from approaching her, so that his anger was aroused and heavy rains came down. The same work ⁵ says that in the beginning of summer the dragons are divided, so that each of them has his special territory, which he does not exceed. This is the reason why in summer time it rains very much at one place and not at all a little further on.

Apart from these means of stirring up the dragons we often read about *prayers* recited to them, that they might give fertilizing rains. This was done in shrines or at ponds inhabited by dragons, or at the entrances of their dens. The *Mao t'ing k'oh hwa*, e. g., mentions a

¹ *Chen chu chw'en*, written by *Ch'en Kiai-kung*, in the Ming dynasty ; Ch. I.

² *Shang shu ku shih*, written in the ninth century by Li Ch'oh : "In the South, when there is a long drought, a tiger's head bone is tied at a long rope and thrown into the water on a spot where a dragon is living. Then several men pull in an irregular way. Suddenly clouds arise from the middle of the pond, and thereupon also rain comes down. The dragon being the tiger's enemy, even the latter's dried bones still stir up the dragon like this". Cf. *Kwah i chi* (13th cent.) quoted T. S., same section, Ch. 130, p. 7a : In the Shun-hi era (1174-1190) a tiger bone, attached to a long rope, was let down in a "White dragon's pond", near a "White dragon's den" before a Buddhist temple. Soon it rained, and as they were slow in pulling the bone out of the pond, a severe thunderstorm menaced the government office, but stopped when the bone was removed.

The date shows that we have here a passage from the *Hien ch'wang kwah i chi*, written by Lu Ying-lung, who lived about the middle of the thirteenth century (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., Vol. IV, p. 347](#), note 1), and not with the *Kwah i chi*, written in the second half of the eleventh century by Chang Shi-ching, alias Puh-i. ([De Groot, IV, p. 210](#), note 1).

³ Book I, Ch. III, § 3, pp. 67 sqq.

⁴ (Ming-dynasty), Ch. IX.

⁵ Ch. IX.

The dragon in China

Dragon-woman's shrine, dedicated to a female dragon which in A. D. 740 appeared in a dream and promised to give ^{p.121} rain whenever prayers were made to her in time of drought ¹. And in the *Sheu shen ki* we read of a sick dragon, which in consequence of prayers recited before his den, gave a badly smelling rain, which would have spoiled the crops, if a diviner had not discovered it in time and cured the dragon at the latter's request. Thereupon a fertilizing rain fell and a very clear spring dashed forth from a rock ².

§ 4. Buddhist rain ceremonies

In the Introduction (§ 4, pp. 25 sqq.) we have dealt with the Buddhist rain ceremonies prescribed in the Mahāmegha sūtra and those described by De Groot in his *Code du Mahāyāna*. As we will see below, also in Japan the Buddhist priests gradually conquered this field, formerly the domain of the Shintoists. They used the same sūtras as the Chinese Buddhists. The latter had a good time in the T'ang dynasty, when sometimes, as we read in the *Tuh i chi* ³, eleven hundred Buddhist priests read sūtras in order to cause rain. As to these ceremonies we may refer the reader to the Introduction.

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¹ Ch. 130, p. 2a.

² Ch. VI ; cf. Ch. X.

³ Ascribed to Li Yiu, or Li K'ang, of the T'ang dynasty. T. S., same section, Ch. 131, p. 10b.

CHAPTER VI

Emperors connected with dragons

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§ 1. Hwang Ti rode on a dragon

p.122 The dragon being the symbol of the Emperor and his blissful reign, a large number of legends point to the close connection between this divine animal and the Son of Heaven. In the first place, of course, the holy Emperors of the oldest times are mentioned in this respect.

The *Historical Records* ¹ contain the following passage :

"The Emperor Hwang gathered copper of Mount Sheu and cast a tripod at the foot of Mount King. When the tripod was ready, there was a dragon which dropping its whiskers came down to meet Hwang Ti. The latter ascended the dragon and rode on it after which the ministers did the same, more then seventy men in all. Then the dragon ascended and flew away. The remaining lower ministers had no opportunity to climb upon the dragon, and all at a time got hold of its whiskers, which (by their weight) were pulled out and fell down.

According to the *Ku kin chu* ² Hwang Ti was melting cinnabar (in order to prepare the liquor of immortality) in the Tsoh ye mountains, when he became a *sien* and rode on a dragon to the sky. When the ministers clung to the animal's whiskers, the whiskers fell down. To the question whether they produced the so called "Dragon's whiskers herb" the answer is given that this is a false tradition caused by the other name of the same herb "Red clouds herb". The same monarch made a

¹ [Chavannes, Mémoires Historiques, Vol. III, p. 488.](#)

² Written about the middle of the 4th century by Ts'ui Pao, (cf. [Wylie, p. 159](#), [De Groot, Rel. Syst., IV, p. 244](#), note 1).

The dragon in China

winged dragon (*ying lung*) attack and ward off the troops of the rebel Ch'i Yiu. ¹

§ 2. Yao and Kao Tsu were sons of dragons

p.123 The Emperor Yao was said to be the son of a red dragon, who came to his mother, hearing on his back the inscription : "You also receive Heaven's protection". Darkness and wind arose on all sides, and the dragon touched her, whereupon she became pregnant and after 14 months gave birth to Yao in Tan ling ².

A similar story is told about Kao Tsu (B. C. 206-195), the founder of the Han dynasty. T'ai kong, his father, saw a *kiao lung* above his wife amidst thunder and lightning and black darkness, while she was asleep on the bank of a large pond : She dreamt that she had intercourse with a god, and afterwards gave birth to Kao Tsu. This Emperor, who was very fond of wine, was always protected by a dragon, when he was drunk ³.

§ 3. Shun was visited by a yellow dragon

The Emperor Shun, Yao's famous successor, was visited by a yellow dragon, which came out of the river Loh. On its scaly armour the inscription : "Shun shall ascend the Throne" was visible ⁴. As we have seen above, the same holy sovereign instituted the "Dragon-rearer family", whose members had the task of rearing dragons for the Emperor.

§ 4. Yü drove in a carriage drawn by dragons, and was assisted by a ying lung

Yü, the celebrated founder of the Hia dynasty, drove in a carriage drawn by two dragons, which had descended in his court-yard, because

¹ *Shan hai-king*, Sect. XVIII, nr 14, p. 6b ; *Bamboo Annals* (*Chuh shu ki nien*), Ch. I. Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. III...

² *Bamboo Annals*, Ch. II, Legge, l. l., p. 112.

³ [Historical Records, Chavannes, II, pp. 325 sq.](#)

⁴ *Yuh fu shui t'u*.

The dragon in China

with him the virtuous power of Hia was at its highest point ¹. When he had completed the regulation of the waters, blue dragons stopped in the suburbs of the capital ². According to a later tradition a *ying lung* assisted Yü at the work by making the ground with its tail ³.

§ 5. Ming Hwang's vessel was moved forward by a dragon.

p.124 Also in later times dragons were said to assist Emperors, as was the case in the T'ien pao era (742-755), when a small dragon arose from a pond the evening before the Emperor Ming Hwang, conquered by the rebel Ngan Luh-shan, left the capital and fled to the South. The dragon went in the same direction and, when the Emperor crossed a river, the animal appeared in the water and carried the ship forward on its back. His Majesty, deeply moved by the dragon's loyalty, thanked it and gave it wine ⁴.

§ 6. Two yellow dragons threatened to upset Yü's vessel

Sometimes, however, the dragons of rivers and seas caused trouble even to Emperors. Thus two yellow dragons threatened to upset Yü's vessel by taking it on its back, when His Majesty crossed the Yang-tszë-kiang ; but Yü, not in the least frightened, laughed and said :

— I received my appointment from Heaven and do my utmost to nourish men. To be born is the course of nature ; to die is by Heaven's decree. Why be troubled by the dragons ?"

¹ *Poh wuh chi*, Ch. II, p. 2a.

² *Bamboo Annals*, Ch. III, Legge, l. l., p. 117.

³ *San ts'ai t'u hwui*, in the *Wakan sansai zue*, Ch. XLV, p. 675. According to the *Bamboo Annals* (Ch. III, l. l.) the spirit of the Ho river, a man with a fish body, gave him a chart of the Ho.

⁴ *Ts'zë-liu shi kiu wen*, written in the T'ang dynasty by Li Teh-yü. In the same way the vessel of Wu Suh, king of Wu and Yueh (*i. e.* Ts'ien Liu, A.D. 851-932), which in 909 ran on a rock and could not advance, was carried forward by two dragons, amidst heavy rain, thunder and lightning (*Shih-kwoh Ch'un-ts'iu*, written in the latter half of the 17th century by Wu Jen-ch'en ; according to [De Groot, *Rel. Syst.*, IV, p. 327](#), "a rather apocryphical history" (of ten small states which existed between the T'ang and Sung dynasties) ([Wylie, p. 41](#)).

The dragon in China

The dragons, on hearing these words, fled, dragging their tails ¹.

§ 7. Shi Hwang died on account of having killed a dragon

Another Emperor was severely punished for having killed a dragon. This was Shi Hwang, the founder of the Ts'in dynasty (246-210 B. C.), who was so anxious to have a long life, that he was highly rejoiced when two *sien* came, pretending to know ^{p.125} how to seek the life-prolonging herb ². After having been favoured with high dignities and salaries, they set sail with a crowd of six thousand girls and boys, not older than fifteen years, to seek the island of the blessed ³, but although they sought for it a long time, it was all in vain. The *sien*, who were afraid of punishment on account of their lies, now invented a new scheme. On returning to the Court they advised the Emperor to go on board himself and set out with a large army. Again the foolish monarch believed them, and put to sea with not less than three millions of soldiers, who made a terrible noise by crying in chorus and beating drums (in order to frighten the sea-gods and thus be able to reach the island of the blessed). The dragon-god, aroused by the din, appeared at the surface of the sea in the shape of an enormous shark, five hundred *ch'ih* (feet) long, with a head like that of a lion. He was immediately surrounded by the fleet and killed with poisonous arrows, so that his blood coloured the sea over a distance of ten thousand miles. That night the Emperor dreamt that he had a battle with the dragon-god ; and the next day he fell ill and died within seven days ⁴.

¹ *Bamboo Annals*, Ch. III, Legge, l. l., p. 118 ; cf. *Hwai nan tszě*, Ch. VII.

² Cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst. of China, IV, pp. 307 sqq.](#) : the *chi*, a branched fungus, which was said to grow on the isle of Tsu in the Eastern Ocean. According to the *Shih cheu ki*, ("Description of the Ten Islands", "an account of fabulous countries which were believed to exist in several regions beyond the oceans, probably written in the earlier part of the Christian era" [[De Groot, l. l. I, p. 272](#)]) the Emperor heard about the existence of this herb on the Tsu island from a Taoist ascetic philosopher, and then sent an envoy to the island with five hundred young people of both sexes. They put to sea to seek the island, but never came back.

³ *P'eng Lai*, "fairy land, an elysium far from man's abode ; some regard it as denoting Kyūshū in Japan" (Wells Williams, *Chin.-Eng. Dict.*, p. 661 s. v.).

⁴ This version of the tale is to be found in the *Taiheiki*, Ch. XXVI, pp. 115 seq.

CHAPTER VII

Transformations

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§ 1. The dragon's transformations are unlimited

p.126 From *Kwan tzě* and the *P'i ya*, quoted above ¹, we have learned that the dragon's transformations are unlimited. Therefore it is no wonder that Chinese literature abounds with stories about dragons which had assumed the shape of men, animals or objects. When they transformed themselves into human beings, they mostly appeared as old men or beautiful women ; the latter remind us of the Nāga maidens of Indian tales. Sometimes fishes, which, when being cooked, spread a five-coloured light, or spoke with human voices, were recognized to be dragons ; but also quadrupeds, as dogs, rats or cows, sometimes proved to be the temporary shapes of these divine animals. Snakes, of course, closely akin to the dragons, often served them as metamorphoses to hide their real nature, and new-born dragons were said to creep out of the eggs in this form. Finally, trunks of trees or other objects floating in the water sometimes suddenly resumed their real dragon shapes. One passage ² says that dragons can always transform themselves except at the time of their birth, when they sleep, or when they are angry or lustful, but this stands alone among the innumerable other statements with regard to their nature and capacities.

§ 2. Appearing as old men or beautiful women

As to their appearing as old men we may refer to the *Süen shih chi* ³, where a yellow dragon is said to have come to a house p.127 in

¹ Pp. 63 and 65.

² *Chen chu chw'en*, (cf. above, pp. 119, note 7).

³ Written by Chang Tuh, in the ninth century.

The dragon in China

the mountains in the shape of an old man with a yellow robe. The *Kwang-sin-fu chi* ¹ contains a story about a *wu*-sorcerer, who in the beginning of the Sung dynasty was praying for rain above a well, when he fell into it in trying to catch the white cow horn on which he had blown and which suddenly dropped out of his hands. At the bottom of the well he saw a majestic old man, sitting in a tower in the water, with the horn in his hands. This was the dragon of the well, who for this time allowed him to return and gave him back the horn on condition that he never should make noise near the well again. But at the next drought the man forgot his promise and blew on the horn above the well like before. This was too much for the dragon, who made both horn and man tumble into the water, and this time the sorcerer was drowned. Afterwards he appeared to one of the villagers in a dream and at his advice a shrine was erected in honour of the dragon, who thenceforward heard their prayers for rain.

Also the *Yiu-yang tsah tsu* ² mentions dragons which assumed the shapes of old men, as well as of beautiful women ³. Liu Tsung-yuen ⁴ tells how a dragon which was punished by the Emperor of Heaven fell down upon the earth in the shape of a woman, spreading a brilliant light. She had to stay there for seven days, and then, after having drunk some water, her breath became a cloudy vapour, she changed into a white dragon, and flew up to Heaven.

¹ "Memoirs of the department of Kwang-sin (in Kiang-si province)", quoted T. S., I. I., p. 16a.

² Ch. II and VI.

³ Ch. VI.

⁴ (A. D. 773-819), one of the most celebrated poets and essayists of the T'ang dynasty. Another punishment of a dragon is mentioned in the *Yun sien tsah ki* about which work [De Groot \(Rel. Syst., IV, p. 289\)](#) says: "Ten chapters of miscellanies of doubtful authenticity, ascribed to one T'ung Chi, of whom nothing is known but the name. More likely, perhaps, the author was the learned Wang Chih, also named Sing-chi, who flourished in the middle part of the 12th century", where a disobedient dragon is said to have had his ears cut off by Heaven's punishment; the blood which dripped upon the earth produced a plum tree with fleshy fruits without kernels.

§ 3. Appearing as fishes

Transformations of dragons into fishes are to be found as well ^{p.128} in the *Dynastic Histories* ¹ as in books of tales and legends like the *Lang hūen hi* ² (Yuen dynasty) and even in a geographical work as the *Yih t'ung chi* ³, where we read about a white eel which was caught by some villagers. They were about to cook it when an old man said :

— This is a dragon from the Siang River. I am afraid of calamity.

But the others considered this to be foolish prattle and did not listen to his words. The next day the whole village collapsed.

In the *Shwoh yuen* ⁴ a white dragon is said to have assumed the shape of a fish and to have been hit with an arrow in its eye by a fisherman. The dragon accused the man before the Emperor of Heaven, but the latter remarked that it was his own fault because he had been foolish enough to change himself into a fish. The fisherman was not to be blamed for having treated him like other fishes. This story is often referred to in Japanese literature, e. g. in the *Zoku kojidan* ⁵, where the fish is said to have fallen into the fisherman's net, and to have lodged a complaint with the *Dragon king* (an Indian conception, cf. the Introduction and the next chapter), who gave him a similar answer and advised him not to do such a foolish thing again. In the *Taiheiki* ⁶ Nitta Yoshisada, who died in battle, is compared to the dragon of this legend, which, instead of hiding itself in the depths of a pool, came to a shallow place and was caught in the net.

¹ Books of the Tsin dynasty, Ch. VI, (the fish spread a five-coloured light when being cooked).

² Ch. I (the fish spoke with a human voice).

³ "Memoirs concerning the whole Empire" (1647).

⁴ Written by Liu Hiang, (who lived B. C. 80-9), the famous author of the *Lieh sien chw'en*.

⁵ Ch. II, *Gunsho ruijū*, Vol. XVII, p. 661.

⁶ Ch. XX, p. 9a. The same comparison is to be found in Ch. XXXI, p. 12, of the same work.

The dragon in China

As we have seen above ¹, fishes were believed to become dragons when they succeeded in ascending the Dragon-gate (apparently a waterfall), and that old tiger-fishes or fishes weighing two thousand *kin* became kiao ².

§ 4. Appearing as snakes, dogs, or rats

p.129 The *Poh mung so yen* ³ relates about a child which in the T'ong-kwang era (923-926) met a white snake on the road, tied it with a rope and swayed its head to and fro till it fell down. In a moment a thunderstorm arose and the child was carried into the air, where it was struck by lightning and dropped dead on the ground. On its back vermilion writing was to be read, announcing that Heaven had punished it for having killed a Celestial dragon.

Two dragons in the shape of *mao* dogs (茅狗), ridden through the air by *sien*, are mentioned in the *Lieh sien chw'en* ⁴. A *sien* brought them to a diviner, more than 100 years old, and invited him to ride on them together with an old woman. According to the *Lang h'üen ki* ⁵ two guardian gods of a cave palace were dragons. The *Kiang-si t'ung-chi* ⁶ speaks about a very deep "Dragon-rearing pond" near the castle of Kwang ch'ang district in Kien ch'ang fu, inhabited by a dragon. Over the pond there was a stone tray, in which remains of food were always laid for the animal, which used to change into a black dog and eat the food. This pond was still there in the author's time, and a "Dragon-well temple" had been built on the spot.

¹ Book I, Ch. III, § 12, p. 86.

² Book I, Ch. III, § 7, p. 79.

³ Ascribed to Sun Kwang-hien, also called Meng-wen, a high official under the founder of the Sung dynasty (T'ai tsu, 960-976) (cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst. V, p. 527](#), note 2). T. S., same section, Ch. 129, p. 14a.

⁴ T. S., same section, Ch. 131, p. 2b.

⁵ Quoted *ibidem*, p. 3b.

⁶ T. S., same section, Ch. 129, p. 12b.

The dragon in China

In the seventh year of the Kia-yiu era (1062) an enormous white rat was seen smelling the sacrificial dishes offered in the temple on the Great White Mountain in Fu fung district (Shen-si province), a mountain with much *ling*, *i. e.* where the divine power of its god as clearly manifested itself in hearing the prayers of the believers as was the case on the Japanese mountain of the same name (Hakusan). Old people declared the rat, which only smelled the dishes but did not eat them, to be a dragon ¹.

§ 5. A cow transformed into a dragon

The author of the *Hwai-ngan-fu chi* ² tells us how a cow _{p.130} became a dragon. A rich farmer who possessed a large herd of cattle one night dreamt that one of his cows said to him :

— I have become a dragon and have fought with the dragon of the Sang-k'u lake, but without conquering him. You must bind small knives upon my horns". The next day he discovered that an extremely big cow of the herd had scales under its belly. When he had attached knives to its horns, the cow conquered the other dragon, which was wounded at the eye and retired into its lake. The cow itself became the dragon of the Great Lake. Down to the author's time those who passed this lake avoided the character 牛 (cow), and those who passed the Sang-k'u lake avoided the character 瞶 (blind of one or both eyes) ; otherwise suddenly a storm burst forth and big waves arose.

§ 6. Appearing as objects

With regard to *objects* which proved to be dragons we may refer to the *I yuen* ¹, where we read how a man while fishing in a river found a

¹ *Tung-p'o chi-lin*, desultory notes by Su Tong-p'o, *i. e.* Su Shih, a famous poet who lived 1036-1101 ; T. S., same section, Ch. 130, p. 4a.

² "Memoirs concerning Hwai-ngan-fu (in the prov. of Kiang su) ; T.S., *ibidem*, p. 126.

The dragon in China

shuttle and took it home. After a short while the utensil, which he had hung on the wall, changed into a red dragon and ascended to the sky amidst thunder and rain. A dragon which had assumed the shape of a tree growing under water is mentioned in the *Shuh i hi* ². A woman who touched this tree when going into the water in order to catch some fish, became pregnant and gave birth to ten male children. Afterwards when the dragon appeared in his real form above the water, nine of the boys ran away in fright, but the tenth climbed upon his dragon-shaped father's neck and in later years became the king of the land ³. The same work tells us about a girl in the Palace, under the Hia dynasty, who changed into a fearful dragon and then, reassuming her human form, became a very beautiful woman, who devoured men.

In the *Books of the Tsin dynasty* an astrologer is said to have discovered the vital spirits of two precious swords among the stars, and pointed out the spot where they were buried. ^{p.131} There a stone box was dug up, from which a brilliant light shone ; but as soon as the swords were taken out of the box their spirits in the sky were extinguished. On one of the swords the characters 龍泉 *lung-ts'üen*, "Dragon-spring", on the other 太阿 *t'ai-o*, were written. According to the astrologer such supernatural swords could not remain for a long time in human hands. Actually one of them soon disappeared, and the other one afterwards jumped by itself out of its sheath into a river, which its owner was crossing. When it was sought, nothing was found except two dragons, two or three chang long, wound together and emitting a brilliant light which illuminated the water. Then they vanished, raising turbulent waves by their violent movements. Evidently the swords had changed into dragons and were united again.

¹ Ch. I, p. 2. The same work gives a tale about a big piece of drift wood, which broke the vessel of a man who seized it, turned into a dragon and swam off.

² See above, p. 72, note 1.

³ Cf. above, Book I, Ch. VI, p. 123.

CHAPTER VIII

The Indian Nāga in China

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§ 1. Reborn as a dragon

p.132 With regard to the Indian dragon (*Nāga*) in China we may refer to the Introduction and to the following legends.

Buddhist reincarnation into a dragon was said to have been the fate of the Emperor Wu's Consort K'ih (first half of the sixth century A. D.), who was so jealous that she was reborn as a dragon which lived in a well inside the enclosure of the Palace and frightened her husband in his dreams. When he was in love with some woman, the water of the well was violently disturbed. In order to appease the spirit, the Emperor had a palace built over the well and all kinds of clothes and utensils put there, as if she were still a human being ; and he never married again ¹.

§ 2. Ponds inhabited by Dragon-Kings

According to another Buddhist legend ² a Dragon-King, who lived in a palace at the bottom of a pond called *Kwun ming ch'i*, appeared as an old man to a hermit who lived in the neighbourhood, and besought this man to save his life, as a Buddhist priest, under pretext of praying for rain by order of the Emperor, made the water of his pond decrease more and more, in order to kill him (the dragon) and to use his brain in preparing some medicine. The hermit advised the dragon to go Sun Szě-moh, who was studying in the mountains in order to become a *sien*. When the dragon did so, this man promised to p.133 save him on condition that he should teach him the way of preparing the three

¹ *History of the South (Nan-shi)*.

² *Yiu-yang tsah tsu* (ninth century), Ch. V.

The dragon in China

thousand kinds of medicine to be found in the Dragon-Palace at the bottom of the pond. The dragon accepted the condition, whereupon the water of the pond rose more and more, and the bonze died with anger and shame. The dragon kept his promise, and thus Sun Szě-moh obtained the knowledge, preserved in his famous medical work, entitled *Ts'ien kin fang* ¹.

Other ponds inhabited by Dragon-Kings are mentioned in the *Loh-yang kia-lan ki* ² and in the *Po-chi kwoh chw'en* ³, but these were in foreign, western countries. Sacrifices were made to them ; to the latter by the passers-by (there were three ponds, in the biggest of which lived the Dragon-King himself, in the next his consort and in the smallest his child) because otherwise they were sure to be troubled by wind and snow. The former pond was near a Buddhist monastery in the West of Wu-yih land, and the king of the land prayed to the dragon and threw gold and jade into the pond. When these precious objects were washed out of the pond he ordered the monks to take them.

§ 3. Temples of Dragon-Kings

A "Dragon-rearing well" in a "Dragon-King's temple" was said to be inhabited by a dragon. Nobody dared draw water from this well, because if one did so strange things happened, and the person who had ventured to thus arouse the dragon's anger fell ill ⁴.

Another temple of a Dragon-King on a mountain, near a white dragon's pond and (on the top of the mountain) a dragon's den are

¹ Dragon's pearls were called 千金珠, cf. above, Ch. III, § 15. p. 88.

² According to [Wylie \(p. 55\)](#), "a descriptive detail of the various Buddhist establishments in Loh-yang, the metropolis during the N. Wéi ; written by Yang Hüen-chi, an officer of that dynasty" ; it was written in the sixth century ([De Groot, Rel. Syst., I, p. 344](#)). T. S., same section, Ch. 131, p. 5a.

³ Quoted T. S., same section, Ch. 129, p. 4b.

⁴ *Mih k'oh hwui si* (11th cent.), T. S., same section, Ch. 130, p. 3b.

The dragon in China

mentioned in the *Kwah i chi* ¹. In time of drought the peasants used to pray before the cavern, which always contained water in spring and summer, and when they took this water _{p.134} and worshipped it, abundant rains came down. Near to the same spot was the Dragon-mother's grave, mentioned above ².

§ 4. Palaces of Dragon-Kings

A Dragon-King's Palace is mentioned in the *Luh i ki* ³. According to a tradition among the sailors it was situated under a small island about five or six days navigating from Su-cheu (in Kiang-su province). Even when there was no wind, the waves were so high there that no vessel dared approach it directly. At every high tide, however, when the water overflowed the island and the high waves were not to be seen, the ships could pass there. At night a red light was seen from afar above the water on this spot, bright like sunlight, which extended over more than a hundred miles square and reached the sky.

The *Wuh tsah tsu* ⁴ describes the same island, but, without mentioning the light, says that it lies above the water, red like the sun. Although no human being dared approach it, a sound was heard on the island as if some thousands of men were busy there cutting and transporting trees. On clear nights one could see that all the trees on the mountains were felled. It was said that this was done for building the Dragon-King's abode. Evidently the Taoistic ideas concerning the island of the blessed, the land of the *sien*, are confounded here with the Indian conceptions with regard to the Nāga palaces.

¹ Cf. [De Groot, Rel. Syst., IV, p. 210](#), note 1. This must be the later work of this name, dating from the thirteenth century (cf. above, p. 120, note 1), as the Shun-hi era (1174-1190) is mentioned. T. S., I. I., Ch. 130, p. 7a.

² Book I, Ch. III, § 16, p. 89.

³ (Ninth century, see above, p. 87, note 4). T. S. same section, Ch. 129, p. 14a.

⁴ (about 1592), in a passage translated into Japanese in the *Heishoku wakumonchin*, written in 1710 by Kojima Fukyū, and printed in 1737, referred to by Inoue Enryō, *Yōkwaigaku kōgi*, Vol, II, Ch. XXVII, p. 123 sq.

The dragon in China

Finally, we may quote a passage from the *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*¹, where a magistrate is said to have often received in his house a beautiful dragon-woman, who each time arrived in a magnificent carriage, accompanied by female postilions. In his former existence he had promised to marry her, and now he kept his word and finally disappeared with her. The people said that he had gone to the Dragon-Palace and had become a "water-sien".

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¹ Ch. 424.

CHAPTER X

Conclusions

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p.231 The preceding chapters have shown once more how great China's influence was upon Japanese legend and superstition from the beginning of the spreading of Chinese civilisation in the Land of the Rising Sun until the present day. We have also seen how Buddha's powerful doctrine brought the Indian Nāgas to the Far-Eastern seas and rivers and ponds, as it peopled the Japanese mountains and woods with their deadly enemies, the Garuḍas. The idea of serpent-shaped semi-divine kings, living in great luxury in their magnificent palaces at the bottom of the water, was strange to the Chinese and Japanese minds ; but the faculty of these beings of assuming human shapes and bestowing rain upon the thirsty earth, as well as their nature of water-gods, formed the links between the Nāgas of India and the dragons of China and Japan. The Chinese Buddhists identified the Indian serpents with the four-legged dragons of China, and this blending of ideas was easily introduced into the minds of the Japanese people, which did not hesitate to associate their own, mostly serpent-shaped, gods of rivers and mountains with the Western deities of the same kind.

In the Introduction we have seen that the Nāgas were, as a rule, favourably disposed towards Buddhism, but that they were dangerous creatures on account of their quick temper, deadly poison and great magic power. They possessed numberless jewels and mighty charms, which they bestowed upon those to whom they were grateful and who often stayed for a while in the splendid Nāga palaces at the bottom of ponds, or rivers, or seas. The Mahāyāna school speaks of eight Great Dragon-kings, mightier than the others, one of whom, Sāgara, was well-known as a bestower of rain. The rain-giving faculty of the Nāgas, which is not mentioned in the Jātakas, was apparently more emphasized in Northern

The dragon in China

than in Southern Buddhism. According to the original conceptions these semi-divine serpents, who had their abode in Pātāla land, *beneath the earth*, could raise clouds and thunder or ^{p.232} appear as clouds themselves to terrify mankind. Northern Buddhism, however, made these frightful beings the rain-giving benefactors of men, to whom prayers for rain were sent up by means of special ceremonies. These rites were performed also in China and Japan. As to the division of the Nāgas into four castes : "Heavenly, Divine, Earthly and Hidden Nāgas", this is probably also a Northern feature, for I did not find it mentioned anywhere in the Jātakas. Indian Buddhist art represents the Nāgas as serpents, or as men or women with snakes coming out of their necks and rising over their heads, or as snake-tailed beings with human upper bodies and snakes appearing above their heads. Hot winds and hot sand, sudden violent storms and Garuḍa-kings are what the Nāgas fear most. When strictly observing Buddhist fasting, they may be reborn as men.

In Book I we have stated how the oldest Chinese books spoke of dragons in divination, as ornaments of clothes, and as river-gods who caused high floods by their fights. As they belonged to the four *ling* ("spiritual beings"), full of *Yang* (Light), they were omens of the birth of great men, especially of emperors, and of felicity in general, like the dragon-horses, but also of death and ruin, when they were seen fighting, or when their dead bodies were found, or when they appeared at wrong times or in wrong places. The Emperors were not only called dragons and compared to them, but were sometimes even considered to be their offspring, or to have them in their service. The dragons ascended to the sky, riding on winds and clouds, and were ridden by the *sien*, or they descended into the deepest wells. Their transformations were limitless. They could become small like silkworms or so big that they covered the world ¹. Their wisdom excelled that of all other animals, and their

¹ This must be the meaning of Kwan tszě's words (quoted on p. 63), instead of the obscure "lies hidden in the world".

The dragon in China

blessing power was great. Next to these ideas, which made them the favourite subjects of poets and artists, a great many lower conceptions are found, prevalent among the people from olden times.

The principal water-god is the *kiao-lung*, the scaly dragon ; other important dragons are the *ying-lung* (which has wings), the *k'iu-lung* (which has a horn) and the *ch'i-lung* (which is blue and has no horn). Then, there are several other kinds of dragons, but all of them are afraid of iron, the *wang* plant, centipedes, the leaves of the melia azederach, and five-coloured silk-thread, while their principal enemies are tigers and the demons of drought^{p.233} who devour them. They are fond of beautiful gems, hollow stones with water inside (or the vital spirit of copper) and swallow-flesh. Male and female dragons are different in shape. As the dragon is very lewd, he copulates with all kinds of animals and in this way produces nine different classes of young, which according to their nature are represented as ornaments.

Causing rain is the Chinese dragon's most important function, and he is compelled to do so by mankind by several magical means, especially by making clay images of dragons (and laying them in water), or by throwing poisonous plants or bones of the tiger (his deadly enemy) into his pools, or by annoying him by a terrible noise, or by using utensils adorned with dragons when praying for rain. The dragons are called the "Rain-Masters", and rain is prayed for in front of their holes.

They transform themselves into old men, beautiful women, and fishes, or sometimes assume the shapes of trees and objects, as e. g. swords. They have a pearl under their throats or in their mouths. As to their eggs, these are beautiful stones to be found in the mountains, or at the riverside ; water is constantly dripping from these stones till they split and a small snake appears, which in a very short time grows larger and larger and in the form of a dragon ascends to the sky amid thunder, rain and darkness. Hurricanes and whirlwinds are all ascribed to ascending dragons. Their bones are considered to be a very efficient

The dragon in China

medicine and their spittle is the most precious of perfumes ; their cast-off skins spread a brilliant light. Dragon-boats were pleasure-vessels of the Emperors, which had the shape of a dragon and the head of a *yih* bird ; quite different, however, are the dragon-boats of the water festival of the fifth day of the fifth month, which are probably intended as sympathetic magic to obtain rain. As to Buddhism, this introduced into China legends concerning transformation into dragons after death, Dragon-kings and palaces, a. s. o.

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INDEX

of the Chinese translations of sūtras, vinayas and abhidharmas, mentioned in the Introduction. The numbers placed within brackets are those of Nanjō's *Catalogue of the Buddhist Tripitaka* ; the other figures denote the pages of this treatise.

- Ching-fah nien-ch'u king (679), 23.
Chung king chwen tsah p'i-yü king (1366), 13.
Fuh-shwoh hai-lung-wang king (456), 28.
Fuh-shwoh ta-fang-teng ta-yun ts'ing-yü king (186), 25.
Fuh-shwoh ta-kwan-ting shen-cheu king (167), 33.
Fuh wéi hai-lung-wang shwoh fah-yin king (457), 28.
Kin-kang kwang-yen chi-fung-yü king, 33.
Kin-kang pan-joh-po-lo-mih king (10-12), 34.
Kiu tsah p'i-yü king (1359), 12.
Mo-ho-seng-chi luh (1119), 13.
Ta-chwang-yen king lun (1182), 14.
Ta-fang-kwang fuh-hwa-yen king (87 sq.), 23.
Ta-pan-joh-po-lo-mih-to king (1), 34.
Ta-yun-lun ts'ing-yü king (188), 25.
Ta-yun ts'ing-yü king (187), 25.
Tsah p'i-yü king (1368), 13.
Yoh-shi liu-li-kwang jü-lai pen-yuen kung-teh king (171), 33.

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