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## **Tree and serpent worship**

**Fergusson, James**

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Appendix B. - Abstract Of The Níla-Mata, By Professor Cowell

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Streckt sich jemand erhitzt auf den feuchten Erdboden, oder setzt er sich oder ein Glied seines Leibes im heissen Dampfbaide dem kalten Luftzuge aus, so entsteht nicht selten ein feiner, brennend juckender Hautausschlag, der ausschwitzt und später eine Kruste bildet. Mit dem Abfallen dieser ist die Krankheit beendet und ohne weiteres Genesung eingetreten (vgl. *Hupel*, nord. Miscel. III. 227). Diese Krankheit schreibt aber der Ehste dem Anhauche der Unterirdischen zu, die er gestört zu haben vermeint, und soll sie nach ihnen *maa, alused* oder *maa hingamine* (Erdhauch; das norweg. *alvgust*, Elbbauch, s. *Grimm* a. a. O. S. 430) benennen (s. *Rosenpl.* a. a. O. I. 33 f.). Um den Zorn der Unterirdischen zu besänftigen und von ihnen Heilung zu erlangen, schabt er nun als Opfer auf die Stätte etwas von seinem Silberschmuck oder einer Silbermünze, nachdem er sie dreimal mit der Sonne um den erkrankten Theil bewegt (vgl. unten die Anmerkung zu No. 31, welches letztere jedoch auch scheint unterlassen zu werden (s. *Hupel*, topogr. Nachricht, II. 141). Dazu spricht er dann die Formel. Dieses Opfer geschabten Silbers ist bei ähnlichen Anlässen auch in Schweden üblich; der Opfergebrauch indess umständlicher, s. E. M. *Arndt*, Reise durch Schweden III. 15 f.

Dass aber zu diesem Opfer das edle Silber genommen wird, scheint sich aus der Vorstellung zu erklären, welche Ehsten und Schweden von den Unterirdischen haben. *Lagus* erhielt von den felliner Ehsten folgendes Bruchstück:

Sie, die kleinen Unterird'schen,  
Die geheimen Schmid' Allvaters,  
Schafften ihr Geschäft in Nächten,  
In den Nächten Mühgeschäfte;  
Tags, da war der Ruhe Weile.

Nach anderer Angabe hört man in schweigsamer Mitternacht, hält man das Ohr an die Erde, das Schneiden der Unterirdischen in den sieben Nächten von Weihnachten bis zum Neujahr und kann selbst unterscheiden, ob unter den Hämmern Eisen, Silber oder Gold erklingt. Nach einer dritten Angabe, die auch als Lied vorhanden war, waren es wieder die Unterirdischen, welche dem Schlangenkönige seine Krone geschmiedet hatten. Der blendende Glanz dieser Krone lockte sämtliche Schlangen heran, dass sie in dem Sirtosoo westlich vom Peipussee um den König einen Haufen von der Höhe eines grossen Heuschobers bildeten, aus welchem das Haupt des Königs gleich der Sonne hervorleuchtete."

## APPENDIX B.

## ABSTRACT OF THE NÍLA-MATA, BY PROFESSOR E. B. COWELL.

It is mentioned in the *Rájatarangíní* that "the Bauddhas, in their hatred of the *Sástras*, abolished the ceremonial laid down by the *Níla-purána*;" but the work entitled the *Níla-Mata* can hardly be the *purána* there alluded to.\* It is written in a very modern style, but, like other similar recent compilations, it may be founded on old materials. Much of it is occupied with the instructions of the Snake-king *Níla* to the people of Kashmir; but it is singular that Snake Worship is hardly alluded to in the copious list of offerings there enjoined throughout the Hindu year. The earlier portion of the work wears a partially Vaishnava character, but some *Saiva* legends occur in the latter portion.

\* Similarly the *Nandi-purána* mentioned in the *Rajat.* I. 123., can hardly be the work described by Professor Aufrecht, in his Catalogue of the Bodleian MSS. p. 81.

The two manuscripts used for the present analysis contain respectively 81 pages and 312 pages; each manuscript has 15 lines in a page, but in the latter manuscript the pages are much smaller and the letters much larger. Both are very inaccurately written, and there are many variations in their respective texts. The poem seems to contain about 1,450 ślokas. It is written in the ordinary Anuṣṭubh metre, and is supposed to be a continuation of the Mahābhārata, and consequently to be recited by Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya, the great-grandson of Arjuna.

The poem opens with Janamejaya's asking Vaiśampāyana why the king of Kashmir is not represented as joining in the Mahābhārata war, although the maṇḍala of Kashmir was the principal one in the world. Vaiśampāyana replies by relating that the king of Kashmir, Gonanda, had been slain by Kṛiṣṇa among the Gāndhāras on the Indus. Kṛiṣṇa appoints his rival's widow as regent, and her son (Gonanda according to one manuscript, Govinda according to the other,\*) did not join either Pāṇḍavas or Kauravas on account of his youth. This leads to some questions on the mythological history of Kashmir, and Vaiśampāyana then repeats a dialogue which had taken place between King Gonanda II. and the sage Bṛihadaśwa. This dialogue is properly the Nīla-Mata.

Bṛihadaśwa commences with an account of the destruction of the world by water at the end of the previous Manwantara, the preservation of Manu and his seeds in a ship which is fastened to the mountain now called Nau-bandhana, in the west of Kashmir; and when the world of living creatures is created again, Devī, as Kaśmīrā, becomes the land of Kashmir. The snakes, persecuted by Garuḍa, take refuge in the lake Satīdeśa, and anoint Nīla as their king. Kashmir is subsequently ravaged by a demon named Jalodbhava, who is at length killed by Viṣṇu. Kaśyapa then asks Viṣṇu that the country may be inhabited by gods and men, but the Snake-king demurs. Kaśyapa threatens him with Piśāchas as his neighbours, and tells him that there is an island in "the sea of sand" inhabited by Piśāchas, Daityas, and Yakshas. Their king, Nikumbha, always sets out on the full moon of the month Chaitra, for an annual expedition of six months against his rebellious subjects; he passes the remaining six months in peace on the Himālaya. In future, he threatens, these six months will be passed with the snakes. Nīla is in great distress, until at last Viṣṇu, pitying him, promises that the arrangement shall only last one set of four ages, and after that time the snakes shall be allowed to have only men as their neighbours. "In whatever place belonging to any snake men shall dwell, men shall honour him with flowers, incense, and unguents, with various offerings of food and dances. And whatever people shall keep the good customs declared by thee, they shall dwell in this country, blessed with cattle, corn, and wealth." The country is thenceforward inhabited for six months in every year by men who come in on the full moon of Chaitra, and sow and reap their corn, but clear off in Āśwayuja, when the country is again given over to the Piśāchas. The various deities become the different rivers; thus Umā becomes the Vitastā, Lakṣmī the Viśokī, &c.

This predicted occupation of Kashmir by the Piśāchas continues for four ages. At the end of that time the human inhabitants had, as usual, reaped their grain and cleared off from the country before the full moon of Āśwayuja; but a certain Brahmin named Chandradeva remained with the Piśāchas. One day he wanders disconsolate, till he comes to the place in the mountains where Nīla holds his court. He propitiates the Snake-king by a hymn of praise, and Nīla grants him a boon. He asks that Kashmir may thenceforth be inhabited by men without fear of perpetual emigrations. Nīla grants it: "Thus be it, O best of Brahmins; let men always dwell here, but observing my words, revealed to me by Keśava." The Brahmin dwells at his court until the month Chaitra comes round, and the human inhabitants flock in from all sides with their king, Vīryodaya. Chandradeva goes to him and declares what he has seen and heard, and the king and his people agree to observe the words of Nīla, and thenceforth they dwell undisturbed in Kashmir (cf. Rājat. I. 182), which gives a somewhat different legend.

\* This is the Gonarda II. of the Rājat. I. 62-82.

Gonanda then asks Bṛihadaśwa what "the words of Nīla" were. The sage then repeats the lesson as it was uttered by Nīla himself to the Brahmin. Here follows a long list of the principal rites and ceremonies throughout the year, beginning with the full moon of Āśwayuja; it contains some curious matter, but the Nāgas are hardly ever mentioned.

At the close, Vaiśampāyana interrupts the original dialogue by the remark that Gonanda did not obey these laws, and consequently fell at Mathurá, being slain by Balabhadra (cf. Rájat. I. 59-63).

Gonanda then asks for some account of the principal Nāgas who dwell in Kashmir. A long list of names follows, and some legends; and also a list of the principal deities worshipped there, and the benefits derived from visiting their shrines. Bṛihadaśwa then relates some legends connected with several holy places in Kashmir.

The poem winds up with a return to the original interlocutors. Janamejaya asks Vaiśampāyana to eulogize the glory of the river Vitastá, which closes the work.

## APPENDIX C.

THE following translations of the rock-cut edicts of Aśoka are reproduced here without note or comment, but literally, as they have already appeared several times in print. None of those yet given to the public can be considered as either perfect or complete, but the sense can in all cases be gathered from them, and they are sufficient for our present purposes. Two other copies of these edicts have been discovered since these translations were made,—one at the foot of the Himalayas, north of Meerut, and another in Cuttack. When these are published a more perfect translation may be possible. Those who desire further information are referred to Prinsep's translation, J. A. S. B., VII. p. 219. et seqq.; to Professor Wilson's J. R. A. S., XII. 153, et seq.; to Burnouf, "Lotus de la Bonne Loi," Appendix, p. 659, et seqq.; and to Mrs. Speir's Life in Ancient India, p. 230, et seqq. The object for which they are introduced here, is neither to explain their text nor to comment on their doctrines, but to afford the reader of the previous pages a picture of Buddhism as it existed B.C. 250, in the words of its most ardent devotee and its principal promoter. This is done in order that he may compare it with Buddhism as presented 300 years afterwards in the sculptures at Sanchi; or as it appears 300 years after that time, in A.D. 350 at Amravati. This completes the means of comparison in so far as this work is concerned; but, as already mentioned, the frescoes at Ajanta afford a fourth picture 200 years more modern than Amravati; and again, 300 after that we have the Thibetan Lalita-Vistara. Unfortunately we still want, and it is feared are little likely to obtain, any contemporary record at the beginning of our series, 300 years before Aśoka, but it is satisfactory to know that materials now exist for illustrating the other five epochs of Buddhism.

## TABLET I.

This is the Edict of the beloved of the Gods, the Raja Piyadasi. The putting to death of animals is to be entirely discontinued, and no convivial meeting is to be held, for the beloved of the Gods, Raja Piyadasi, remarks many faults in such assemblies. There is but one assembly, indeed, which is approved of by the Raja, \* \* \* which is that of the great kitchen of Raja Piyadasi; every day hundreds of thousands of animals have been slaughtered for virtuous purposes, but now, although this pious Edict is proclaimed that animals may be killed for good purposes, and such is the practice, yet as the practice is not determined, these presents are proclaimed, that hereafter they shall not be killed.