# ANCIENT MYTHS

CAMBODIA cultural origin: **Nāga—**a legend, when the Naga were a reptilian race of beings who possessed a large empire or kingdom in the Pacific Ocean region. The Naga King’s daughter married the King of Kambuja (NW India), and gave rise to the Cambodian people. Today, the Cambodians say that they are “Born from the Naga”.

ODIN’S RUIN SONG poetic Edda, 12th century: “The giant has stolen it (Thor’s hammer), and as ransom he demands as a wife Freyja, the most beautiful of the goddesses. A trick is devised in which Thor shall travel to the homeland of the giants dressed as the bride Freyja, and will then pretend to marry the giant.”

HOPI creation myth: So Spider Woman gathered earth, this time of four colours, yellow, red, white, and black; mixed with *tuchvala*, the liquid of her mouth; moulded them; and covered them with her white-substance cape which was the creative wisdom itself. As before, she sang over them the Creation Song, and when she uncovered them these forms were human beings in the image of Sotuknang. Then she created four other beings after her own form. They were *wuti*, female partners, for the first four male beings.

INDONESIA origin myth: ‘At first, they made him of clay, but when he was dried he could neither speak nor move, which provoked them, and they ran at him angrily; so frightened was he that he fell backward and broke all to pieces. The next man they made was of wood, but he, also, was utterly stupid, and good for nothing. Then the two birds searched carefully for a good material, and eventually selected the wood of the Kumpong tree, which has a strong fiber and exudes a quantity of deep red sap. Out of this tree they fashioned a man and a woman, and were so pleased with this achievement that they rested for a long while. Then they decided to continue creating more men from the Kumpong tree, but had forgotten how. They made inferior creatures, which became the ancestors of the Maias [Orang Utan] and monkeys.’

SUMERIA man’s origin: Enki made his voice heard and spoke to the great gods. ‘On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month I shall make a purification by washing. Then one god should be slaughtered. And the gods can be purified by immersion. Nintu shall mix clay with his flesh and his blood. Then a god and a man will be mixed together in clay. Let us hear the drumbeat forever after. Let a ghost come into existence from the god’s flesh. Let her proclaim it as his living sign. And let the ghost exist so as not to forget. They answered ‘Yes!’ in the assembly, the great Anunnaki who assign the fates.

MESOPOTAMIA flood origin: “A long time ago, when I was angry and arranged for the Flood, I rose up from my dwelling, and the control of heaven and earth was undone. The very heavens I made to tremble, the positions of the stars of heaven change, and I did not return them to their places.” [as told by the god Enlil]

MESOPOTAMIA origin of knowledge: Ea made broad understanding perfect in him, to disclose the design of the land. To him he gave wisdom, but did not give eternal life. At that time, in those years, he was a sage, son of Eridu. Ea created him as a protecting spirit among humankind. A sage—nobody rejects his word—clever, extra-wise, he was one of the Anunnaki…

BABYLONIA the ‘Underworld”: There was a time in which there was nothing but darkness and an abyss of waters, wherein resided most hideous beings, which were produced of a two-fold principle. Men appeared with two winds, some with four and with two faces. They had one body but two heads; the one of a man, the other of a woman. They were likewise in their several organs both male and female. Other human figures were to be seen with the legs and horns of goats. Some had horses’ feet; others had the resembling hippocentaurs. Bulls likewise bred there with the heads of men; and dogs with fourfold bodies, and the tails of fishes. Also horses with the heads of dogs: men too and other animals, with the heads and bodies of horses and the tails of fishes. Of all these were preserved delineations in the temple of Belus at Babylon.

MAYAN origin myth [from the *Popol Vuh*]: There is not yet one person, one animal, bird, fish, crab, tree, rock, hollow, canyon, meadow, forest. Only the sky alone is there; the face of the earth is not clear. Only the sea alone is pooled under all the sky; there is nothing whatever gathered together. It is at rest; not a thing stirs. It is held back, kept at rest under the sky.

Whatever there is that might be is simply not there: only the pooled water, only the calm sea, only it alone is pooled.

Whatever might be is simply not there: only murmurs, ripples, in the dark, in the night. Only the Maker, Modeller alone, Sovereign Plumed Serpent, the Bearers. Begetters are in the water, a glittering light. They are there; they are enclosed in quetzal feather, in blue-green.

Thus the name, ‘Plumed Serpent’. They are great knowers, great thinkers in their very being.

AFRICA origin myth of the Bambara: In the beginning emptiness, *fu*, brought forth knowing. *Gla gla zo*. This knowing, full of its emptiness and its emptiness full of itself, was the prime creative force of the universe, setting in train a mystical process of releasing and retracting energy…

POLYNESIA creation myth: In the beginning there was nothing but Po, a void or chaos, without light, heat, or sound, without form or motion. Gradually vague stirrings began within the darkness, moanings and whisperings arose, and then a t first, faint as early dawn, the light appeared and grew until full day had come. Heat and moisture next developed, and from the interaction of these elements came substance and form, ever becoming more and more concrete, until the solid earth and overarching sky took shape and were personified as Heaven Father [Rangi] and Earth Mother [Papa].

CHINA lightning myth: Once there was only a great chaos, Hundun. There were two emperors: Hu, the Emperor of the Northern Sea, and Shu, the Emperor of the Southern Sea. When they found Hundun, he was an incomplete being, lacking the seven orifices necessary for sight, hearing, eating and speech, breathing, smell, reproduction, and elimination. So, zapping him with thunderbolts, they bored one of these orifices every day for seven days. Finally, Hundun died in the process. The names Hu and Shu combine to form the word *Hu-shu*, or “lightning.” Thus the work of creation began when lightning pierced chaos.

PERSIAN Zoroastrian myth [in part] The Wise Lord created the beautiful worshipful ones, the Yazatas or angels. They serve Ormazd as messengers and warriors who defend all that is good. In times of danger and difficulty, the Yazatas are willing to help humankind when called upon. Ormazd is a spirit without a body. However, he has a male and female aspect. In creating out physical bodies, he is out Father. In creating our spiritual being, he is out Mother. Ormazd created all living things and, since he is light, all creatures need light to survive.

EGYPT creation myth Before the existence of Great RA, the sun-god, was his father, the Watery Abyss. Ra emerged from the Watery Abyss and then all things came into being out of the words of his mouth. First, he blew out the first air (Shu), then he spat out the first moisture (Tefnut). These became the god of the air, Shu, who is the life force, and his wife, Tefnut, the organizing world order. Also out of the air and moisture, Ra created the Eye of Ra, the goddess Hathor, in order to see what he was making. When he had his eye, Ra began to weep. Human beings were created from his tears. Hathor, the Eye of Ra, was angered that she was not attached to his body. So Ra found a spot for her on his forehead. Then Ra created the serpents, and other creatures came from them.

CHEROKEE flood myth: The earth floats like a great island on the waters and is held up by rawhide at the four points of the compass. This rawhide is attached to a ceiling of rock crystal in the heavens. Sooner or later, the rawhide will grow old and crack, and when it breaks, the earth will plunge back under the waters and all life will end. Then, as happened the last time, the Creator will pull the earth back out of the water and re-create the world.

PERSIAN Zoroastrian death myth: At death the soul hovers over the body for three nights. On the first night, the soul contemplates the words of its past life; on the second, it contemplates its thoughts; and on the third, it contemplates its deeds. [After judgment} the souls are met by a guide. For the good, this guide is a beautiful young woman; for the bad it is an ugly hag. Then the guide identifies herself—“I am your own conscience.” All souls, good or bad, are conducted by their guides to the Chinvat Bridge. At this bridge the path into heaven widens for the good; for the evil it becomes razor thin and they plunge into hell. However, hell is not permanent; once the sins are expiated the soul may return to the seat of judgment for a review of their case. If sufficiently purged, the soul may proceed into heaven. At the end of time, at the last judgment, all will be resurrected, and the body and soul reunited and judged as a whole.

TIBET, KOREA, MONGOLIA Maitreya End myth [in part]: In a future time there will be great changes in the world. There will be one ruler over all the world. Named Shankha, he will spread the Dharma of the Buddha as law throughout th4 world. During his reign, the future Buddha, Maitreya, will be born. His mother will be pregnant with him for ten months and he will emerge from the womb completely clean. At his birth he will announce that this is his last birth—only Nirvana (the supreme enlightenment) awaits him. This period will witness the end of all selfishness and illusion. Possessions will mean nothing at all. No one will be concerned about anything but achieving enlightenment. People will no longer live according to their passions. All persons will be freed of every suffering and pain; all obstacles to human understanding of the Dharma will be removed.

ARIKARA INDIANS Coyote story [condensed]: After complaining about his mocking by the Weather Spirits, Coyote began jumping around and singing. Lucky Man, feeling sorry, began giving Coyote things—giving him dried meat and different things. That is the way Coyote was, always dancing and telling stories, whenever he was looking for something to eat.