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# Myths and Traditional Beliefs about the Wolf and the Crow in Central Asia

## Examples from the Turkic Wu-Sun and the Mongols

### **Abstract**

In the Chinese chronicles *Shi ji* and *Han shu* there is a story about Kun-mo, the ruler of the Wu-sun, who was abandoned as a child but survived by being fed by a wolf and a crow. This story can be found among peoples of the Altaic language group, but it also clearly resembles the story of Romulus and Remus in ancient Rome who were said to have been taken care of by a wolf and a woodpecker. There is a possibility that the motif of a child fed by a wolf and a bird may have traveled from the Near East via Rome to Central Asia to the Wu-sun, although this may not be the case for modern versions of the story among the Mongols. However, the special aspect of the Central Asian tradition is that it always features the wolf and the crow as one set. It is, therefore, suggested that this may be due not only to cooperation between the two animals as is observable in nature, but also to religious beliefs related to these animals.

**Keywords:** Wolf—crow—Mongols—Turkic peoples—Romulus and Remus—animal beliefs—migration of motifs

**A**CCORDING to the material at hand, it seems that among the peoples of the Altaic language group traditional beliefs about the wolf and the crow had been extant from ancient to recent times, and that there were mythical traditions backing up these beliefs.\* In the present paper I propose to analyze tales about the founder Kun-mo 昆莫 of Wu-sun 烏孫, a country of speakers of a Turkic language belonging to the Altaic language group of Central Asia, and related tales of the Mongols, and discuss myths about the wolf as they occur in the tales. In doing this I will investigate the origin and the present state of beliefs concerning the wolf and the crow among peoples of the Altaic language group, such as the Wu-sun and the Mongols. And finally, by applying the method of motif analysis, I will compare the myths about the wolf and the crow of Wu-sun with similar myths of ancient Rome and discuss where they resemble each other and where they differ.

#### THE TALE OF KUN-MO, THE FOUNDER OF THE COUNTRY WU-SUN

Wu-sun is a population within the Altaic language group who speaks a Turkic language. They lived in China's western areas from the Han period to the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (from about the third century BCE to about the fourth century CE). At the height of their reign they ruled an area from the north of the Tianshan range, that is, from the banks of the Issyk Kul Lake to the basin of the Ili 伊犁 River.

Yan Shi-gu 顏師古 of the T'ang period makes the following comment in the *Han shu Wu-sun zhuan* (漢書 烏孫傳): "The Wu-sun or the barbarians of the western regions differ very clearly by their appearance. The present Hu 胡 people<sup>1</sup> have blue eyes and red beards, they resemble rhesus monkeys, but they are the types closest to them." The description of the Wu-sun in this text makes one believe that their appearance was of an Indo-European type. Chinese scholars studied the skull bones of a Wu-sun unearthed at a Wu-sun tomb in Zhao-su, Sinkiang, and concluded that the Wu-sun showed Indo-European as well as Mongol physical characteristics (WANG and WANG 1983, 43). However, other scholars stated that the Wu-sun belong to the Turkic language group. For

example, the Russian scholar Aristov says that the Wu-sun were a Tu-jue 突厥 (Turkic) group of the T'ang period, the Nu-shi-bi 努失畢, and the modern Kara Kirghiz. Shiratori Kokichi, based on his research about the wolf belief, the language, and the area inhabited by the group, concludes that the Wu-sun must be seen as a Kirghiz group among the Turkic ethnic groups, and that the Kara Kirghiz probably are their descendants (SHIRATORI 1941, 64). Mishina Shōei believes that the Wu-sun might be a population that developed from the interaction between Indo-German and Turkic groups, and that it is not an overstatement to say that their language belongs to Turkic languages (MISHINA 1971, 410). Today, claims that the Wu-sun are the ancestors of the Kazakh are becoming stronger (BIAN-XIE ZU 1987, 40).

According to the Chinese histories, *Shi ji* 史記 and *Han shu* 漢書, the Wu-sun have a belief in the wolf like other populations of the Turkic or Mongol language groups, which both belong to the Altaic language group. Unlike these groups, however, they also have myths about the wolf. Among the populations of the Altaic language group in Central Asia, these myths about the wolf have first been put into writing among the Wu-sun. The characteristic of these myths of the Wu-sun is that the wolf and the crow appear in them together. Wu-sun myths are recorded in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 *Shi ji* as well as in Ban-gu's 班固 *Han shu*. Here I introduce their texts:

The Wu-sun live about two thousand miles northeast from Da-yuan [大宛]. The country moves and lives from cattle. Their customs are the same as those of the Xiong-nu [匈奴, Huns].... Later, I heard many times about the emperor Da-xia [大夏] from Zhang-qian [張騫]. After Qian had lost his rank as *hou* [侯]<sup>2</sup> he said the following: "At the time he lived among the Xiong-nu he had heard that the Wu-sun call their king Kun-mo.<sup>3</sup> Kun-mo's father had been the king of a small country to the west of the Xiong-nu. The Xiong-nu attacked Kun-mo's father and intended to kill him by exposing him in the desert while he was still alive. A crow appeared and flew over him with meat in its beak. A wolf also arrived and gave him its milk to drink. Chan-yu [單于] found this to be strange and wondered whether Kun-mo might not be a god. He took him in and raised him. After he had grown up and was entrusted with leading the troops, he distinguished himself repeatedly in war. Upon this Chan-yu entrusted him with his father's people. For a long time he protected the western lands. Kun-mo invited these populations to accept his rule and had them settle. He attacked the neighboring small countries and eventually he became the ruler over several tens of thousands of people, whom he accustomed to warfare. When Chan-yu died, Kun-mo led the people to a far place, and made them independent. In this way he stopped paying homage to the Xiong-nu. The

Xiong-nu dispatched cavalry to attack him, but they could not overcome him. So they thought that he might be a god and moved far away from him (SIMA 1972, 3168).

For the purposes of this paper I call this story “The Legend of Kun-mo, The Ancestor of the Country of the Wu-sun.” In the *Han shu* story of Zhang-qian we find the most detailed account of the above story, with some variations.

The name of the king of the Wu-sun is Kun-mo. Kun-mo’s father, Nan Dou Mi [難兜靡] was originally allied with the Da rou-zhi [大月氏],<sup>4</sup> who ruled a small country between Mount Qi Lian [祁連] and Dunhuang. The Da rou-zhi attacked Nan Dou Mi and killed him, taking his country, but the population took asylum with the Xiong-nu. Meanwhile, Nan Dou Mi’s son, Kun-mo, had just been born. Bu Jiu Ling [布就翁], his surrogate father [傅父], embraced Kun-mo and fled with him. On his flight he put the baby into the grass and departed to search for food. When he returned he noticed a wolf giving its milk to the baby, and a crow with meat in its beak flying in the vicinity. Bu Jiu Ling, thinking that the baby might be a divine being, picked him up and surrendered to the Xiong-nu. Zhang-qian raised Kun-mo with much care. And when the child had grown up he entrusted him with his father’s people. He also entrusted him with the leading of troops, and Kun-mo distinguished himself repeatedly in warfare. At this time the Rou-zhi had already been defeated by the Xiong-nu. Further to the west they attacked King Sai [塞王]. King Sai moved to the south, and the Rou-zhi occupied his land. When Kun-mo’s power became stronger he personally begged Chan-yu to take revenge for his father’s death. He then attacked the Rou-zhi to the west and defeated them. As a result, the Rou-zhi moved further west and entered the country of Da-xia. Kun-mo took the population by force, remained in the country and settled there. After this his military power became increasingly stronger. When Chan-yu finally died, he took this as an opportunity to cease his allegiance to the Xiong-nu. The Xiong-nu dispatched soldiers to attack him, but they could not defeat him. They thought that he might be a divine being and so they moved far away (BAN-GU 1962, 2691–92).

*Shi ji* and *Han shu* both contain the same legend. These versions were transmitted by the envoy Zhang-qian (a person from Han-zhong 漢中 in Shan-xi 陝西 with the surname Zi-wen 子文<sup>5</sup> who died in 114 BCE). When the Han emperor Wu (who reigned from 141 to 87 BCE) ascended the throne, he intended to conclude a military alliance with the Rou-zhi in the west of the Xiong-nu and launch a pincer attack against them. For that purpose he dispatched Zhang-

TABLE 1: Comparison of the main motifs in the legends about Kun-mo, the ancestor of the Wu-sun, as they are found in *Shi ji* and *Han shu*.

Motif	<i>Shi ji</i>	<i>Han shu</i>
1	The father of Kun-mo, king of the Wu-sun, is attacked and killed by the Xiong-nu.	The father of Kun-mo, king of the Wu-sun, is attacked and defeated by the Da rou-zhi. His people take refuge with the Xiong-nu.
2	Kun-mo is abandoned alive.	During his flight Bu Jiu Ling hid Kun-mo in the grass.
3	A crow with meat in its beak flies over him; a wolf appears and lets him drink its milk. In this way they assist Kun-mo.	A wolf lets Kun-mo drink its milk, a crow brings meat, while flying next to him. They assist Kun-mo.
4	Chan-yu thinks that Kun-mo might be a divine being, takes him, and raises him.	Bu Jiu Ling thinks that Kun-mo might be a god, embraces him, and submits to the Xiong-nu. Chan-yu raises Kun-mo.
5	Kun-mo leads troops and is repeatedly successful in war. Chan-yu entrusts his father's people to Kun-mo and let him protect the western countries. Kun-mo becomes ruler of several ten thousands of people. He moves further away and cuts his allegiance with the Xiong-nu.	Kun-mo attacks and defeats the Da rou-zhi, and takes hold of the people. He remains there but does not submit to the Xiong-nu. He built the empire of the Wu-sun.
6	The Xiong-nu dispatch cavalry and attack Kun-mo but cannot win. They think that he might be a god and move far away.	The Xiong-nu dispatch troops to attack Kun-mo, but cannot win. They believe that he might be a god and move far away.

qian as ambassador to the Rou-zhi in 139 BCE. However, on his way Zhang-qian was captured by the Xiong-nu. After ten years he escaped and finally reached the Rou-zhi via Da-yuan and Kang-ju 康居<sup>6</sup> in the year 126 BCE. After thirteen years he finally returned. According to *Shi ji* and *Han shu*, Zhang-qian had collected the legends about Kun-mo, the ancestor of the country of the Wu-sun, while he was a captive of the Xiong-nu. However, the content of the legends in the *Shi ji* are simple, while those in the *Han shu* are detailed. In terms of motifs, too, there are differences between the two collections (TABLE 1). According to the first, quite different from the latter, it was the Xiong-nu who killed Kun-mo's father. However, regarding the central motif of Kun-mo being cared for by a wolf and a crow, they coincide. They also coincide in relating that Kun-mo, after having grown up, separated himself from Xiong-nu domination, created alliances with several peoples by his own power, and then established the powerful country of the Wu-sun.

It should be clear from the above description that the texts about Kun-mo, the ancestor of Wu-sun country, as they appear in the *Shi ji* and *Han shu* show the character of legends. This is to say that apart from the mythological motif of a child being first abandoned and then raised by animals, the so-called historical

facts included in the legends differ from text to text: no dates are given for the Wu-sun Nan Dou Mi and his son Kun-mo; “Kun-mo” is a title for the Wu-sun king, but his real name does not appear in the legends; from the legends alone it cannot be determined what generation of Xiong-nu lords Chan-yu represents. The ambiguous content of these legends seems to underline their character as oral tradition. However, since I do not intend to discuss the historicity of the Wu-sun and the king Kun-mo, I do not pursue this question any further.

Legends similar to that of the Wu-sun have also been discovered among the Mongols. In *Jangar*, the heroic epic of the Oirat Mongols, for example, we find the following story. The hero of the epic, Jangar, has been thrown away in the steppe when he was two years old, but a female wolf appeared and let him suck its milk, and a crow came and brought him something to eat. A person with the name Buhe möngön šigeširge discovered him, took him home and raised him (N HURČA 1991). It is still not clear whether there was a person by the name Jangar in Mongol history or not, but the person who appears in the following story is a high ranking monk of early modern Mongol Buddhism. The story translated here into English has been collected in Mongol.

Around the end of the nineteenth century, a poor young woman of Bayan Gobi *sumu* in the Bayan Honggur *aimag* of Mongolia, was hired by a rich man. Although she had no husband, she became pregnant and gave birth to a child. The rich man abused the woman saying “Do not insult my house” and chased her out. When the young woman reached a cave in the mountains she gave birth to a child. She left the baby there and went out to look for something to eat. Having just given birth to a child she was in great pain. In addition to this she encountered a spring sandstorm and was about to die. At this moment she met a herder who was looking for cattle that had gone astray. He brought her home. After having drunk some warm tea the woman gradually regained her strength and began to call “Baby! Baby!” After having learned that she had just given birth to a baby, the herder’s family followed the woman and climbed the mountain. When they were about to enter the cave, a crow flew out of the opening and a wolf came running out. “Surely the crow has pecked out the child’s eyes and the wolf has eaten it,” they said, and went to the bottom of the cave. There they discovered the baby with a drop of milk on his lips as if he had just drunk its mother’s milk. His eyes were wide open and it seemed as if he had a full stomach. This child who had been cared for by a wolf and a crow was the Lama Jiambel Jöngdui, who was famous in the area” (HADAGIN GOTOB-UN AGIM 2002, 92–93).

It is remarkable that this story of the modern Mongol closely resembles that of the ancient Wu-sun. According to information related to the Mongol legend, Jiambel Jöngdui has been a highly popular Buddhist personality who was active in the midst of the twentieth century. It has been a tradition among Mongols until recent times to create marvelous legends about the origin of famous high ranking monks. Therefore, this legend is nothing to be surprised about. However, the mythological motif of a wolf and a crow caring for an abandoned child is nothing new. From very early times this mythological motif has been transmitted among the Mongols and peoples of the Altaic language group. At times, it became associated with a real person, so that it appears to be justified to conclude that this constitutes proof of the creation of a new legend.

THE WOLF AND THE CROW IN LEGENDS OF THE ALTAIC WU-SUN  
AND THE MONGOLS

A story about a human child having been raised by an animal should probably be relegated to the world of myths and legends.<sup>7</sup> The animals that appear in these myths and legends are therefore supernatural beings of a divine nature. As such they can be thought of as being the object of beliefs in a particular social group. To mention concrete examples, the Wu-sun and Mongols, who considered their ancestors to be the wolf and the crow, venerated these animals as they were spirits, and possibly considered them to be symbols of their groups. If that is the case, these myths and legends probably hint at these belief customs under the guise of narratives. According to the *Han shu Xi-yu zhuan* 漢書西城伝 the Wu-sun had a king named Fu-li 拊離 (BAN-GU 1962, 1295). Fu-li is, of course, the transliteration of Bōri, the ancient Turkic term for “wolf.” It can be assumed that adding “wolf” to a name indicates that the wolf was venerated as an object of belief. The reason for such an assumption is that there was a belief concerning the acceptance of an animal as the spirit of one’s group or one’s totem, and that, therefore, the animal’s name was used in the naming customs of the peoples of the ancient Altaic language group.

On the other hand, we can also consider that the Wu-sun had belief customs related to the crow. In the story mentioned above the crow was a supernatural being that helped the abandoned Kun-mo. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the crow was an object of belief among the Wu-sun. There is no other material at hand for a belief in crows by the Wu-sun. However, the Kereyt, the descendants of the Wu-sun and a strong group active for some time from the eleventh to the thirteenth century on the Mongolian plateau, had a belief in crows, which they considered as the spirit of their group. I believe that this fact can be seen as indirect proof for a belief in crows among the Wu-sun (NAMU

JILA 2003). Therefore it can be said that there was a belief in the wolf and the crow among the populations of the Altaic language group.

However, what I want to state here is that peoples of the Altaic language group such as the Wu-sun had belief customs where the wolf and the crow constituted a set. While the legends of the Wu-sun and the Mongols quoted earlier are one kind of data that back up this statement, I believe other data also exists. It is then possible to consider that the fact that these two animals appear as a set in the beliefs of people has its grounding in a phenomenon observable in nature.

In the severe fight for survival within nature, the wolf and the crow are two inseparable “comrades” who skillfully cooperate with consideration for one another. The crow always crows “caw, caw, caw” when it flies, thus providing the wolf, who runs on the ground, with the information necessary for knowing the whereabouts of potential prey. In return, the wolf, after having eaten its fill, leaves the rest to the crow. According to Mongol hunters<sup>8</sup> the wolf attacks its prey and then eats the meat with its eyes tightly closed. He does so supposedly to prevent the blood from spattering in his eyes. The wolf raises his head at times in order to look at the crow that sits waiting on the branch of a tree. If the crow sits there quietly the wolf continues feasting (HADAGIN GOTOB-UN AGIM 2002, 6). The Mongols have a saying: “boohai-iyn terigun-dü heriye; borugan-u terigun-dü salhi,” which means, “before the wolf is always the crow, before the rain is always the wind.” There is also the Mongol proverb “činwa dagagsan heriye šig; jobalga goridagsan nohoi šig.” It means “Like a crow following the wolf, like a dog waiting for the leftover bones.” These proverbs, which have been transmitted among the nomadic herders for a long time, express vividly the relationship of mutual dependence between wolf and crow. When nomadic herders hear the voice of the crow they conclude that the wolf is approaching and take the necessary precautions to protect the herd of their cattle in time. Experienced hunters learn the call of the crow and shout it in the valley, they toss a black hat into the air in order to attract the wolf for a killing.

The examples introduced above come from the Mongols, but it is likely that this relationship of dependence on one another between wolf and crow exists everywhere, where wolf and crow live together. Therefore, in an area where wolf and crow live in such a relationship favored by nature as in the area of the people of the Altaic language group myths, legends, and folktales whose topic is the relationship between wolf and crow have been transmitted for a long time among these peoples. However, rather than discussing these narratives I will briefly comment on related beliefs.

In the *Compendium of Turkic Dialects* written by Mahmud al-Kashgari in the eleventh century we find the following proverb. “When the wolf brings food, it is distributed and eaten by all; if the raven brings food, he eats it alone on a treetop” (MA-HE-MOU-DE KA-SHI-GA-LI 2001, 464). Here, the author speaks of



how the ancient Uygur thought about the wolf and the crow. This is to say that in those times a group among the peoples of the Turkic language group worshipped the wolf while they seemed to harbor antipathy rather than belief in the crow. In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, written in the mid-thirteenth century, Chinggis Khan praised the meritorious retainer Konan. Chinggis Khan said to Bogurču, Muholi, and others:

This Konan is truly

A male wolf who in a dark night “sneaks into the enemy’s place”

A black crow who in bright noon “goes around searching for the enemy.”

When our camp is preparing to move he does not hold his ground, and when our camp holds its ground he does not move but when it comes to us, he defends our life steadfastly (MURAKAMI 1970, 7).

This pronouncement of Chinggis Khan is also found in the *Altan tobči*, the “Golden History” written in Mongol (LIU JIN SHUO 1980, 222). In the words of Chinggis Khan, the wolf and the crow clearly appear as symbols of quick-wittedness and courage. These words also reveal to us the fact of a twofold belief, namely towards the wolf and the crow among the Mongols of the thirteenth century.

The set of beliefs concerning the wolf and the crow among peoples of the Altaic language group, such as the Wu-sun and Mongols, has also a close relationship, I believe, with shamanism, which has a long tradition among these peoples. For that reason, these animals appear usually in myths, legends, and folk tales as the envoys of Tengri, the sky god. In a folk tale widely known among the Mongols, the *Boldag ugei boru ebugen* (The impossible old man, Boru), the wolf and the crow are described as the faithful agents of Hormusta tengri, the sky god who is the highest deity of Mongol shamanism (ŠA GADAMBA 1984, 798). In songs of Mongol shamans both the wolf and the crow appear as the horse, *hölög*, the vehicle that Luus-un hagan, the Emperor of the Dragon Palace, rides, or as his herald, Helmurči. At other times, the crow is Luus-un hagan’s herald, while the wolf executes his will (HADAGIN GOTOB-UN AGIM 2002, 158–59).

On the whole, the wolf and the crow appear to be mysterious beings in the myths and legends of peoples of the Altaic language group. Therefore, it is possible to think of them as being objects of belief, and that these beliefs as well as the myths and legends are ultimately based on the relationship between wolf and crow favored in nature. The legends of the Wu-sun and the Mongols are only one example of this. It is therefore likely that the people who have been observing the relationship since ancient times have thought of it as something remarkable. Thus they made the combination of these animals an object of their beliefs and a symbol of their social group.

## THE LEGEND OF KUN-MO AND THE LEGEND OF ROMULUS IN ANCIENT ROME

Nevertheless, narratives telling the story of an abandoned child raised by a team of a wolf and a bird are found not only among the Wu-sun and the Mongols. Myths and legends of ancient Rome offer another example. The story goes that Romulus<sup>9</sup> and his younger brother Remus, the mythical founders of Rome in 753 BCE, were raised by a female wolf and a woodpecker. This legend of Romulus shows parallels with legends of Kun-mo, the founder of the country of Wu-sun, and legends of the Mongols. For the sake of convenience I briefly summarize the legend of Romulus.

Romulus and Remus were the twin sons of Rhea Silvia, the only daughter of Numitor, a descendant of Aeneas.<sup>10</sup> Numitor had been deposed as king of Alba Longa by his younger brother Amulius. In order to prevent Numitor from having a grandchild who could eventually become his successor, Amulius forced Rhea Silvia to be a lifelong shamanic servant of the goddess Vesta.<sup>11</sup> However, the god Mars<sup>12</sup> raped her in the sacred grove. On noticing that she was pregnant, Amulius put her in confinement, had her drowned, and ordered one of his servants to kill the twin sons by drowning them in the river Tiber.

However, instead of killing the two boys, the servant, who was more tenderhearted than his master, put them into a basket that he set on a board. When the waters of the river rose as a result of a flood he set the basket down on the water to allow it to float away. When the waters receded the board became stranded next to a fig tree. At this moment, a female wolf and a woodpecker, the envoys of Mars, came forth and assisted the twin boys. After some time, Faustulus, one of the king's pastors, discovered the two and took them home without telling the king. His wife, Acca, raised the two boys. The two grew up to be strong and intelligent youngsters who led the sons of the pastor to attack brigands and steal the herds of Numitor. One day, on the feast of the Lupercalia for the god Pan<sup>13</sup> they fell into an ambush and Remus was captured. He was brought before the king Amulius. When the king learned that the youngster was accused of stealing the herd of Numitor, his elder brother, he turned the young man over to his brother for punishment. Numitor questioned Remus and concluded from his answers that he was one of the twin brothers, Numitor's grandchildren, who had disappeared. When he investigated the basket of the twin brothers, Numitor's conclusion proved correct. Without delay the two brothers organized an army, attacked the palace of their great uncle Amulius and killed the king. After that Numitor was reinstalled as king.

Romulus and Remus, however, were not satisfied with life at Alba Longa, which was ruled by their grandfather, and decided to found their own capital city although they were merely eighteen years old. For this they chose a location next to the river Tiber, where they were abandoned and had been helped

by the wolf and the woodpecker. But they broke into a fight over who would be responsible for the city's construction and who would be recognized as its official builder. At the end of this fight Romulus killed his younger brother Remus.

After that Romulus built the new city, Rome, and invited people to live there. A number of events happened related to the new city, yet Romulus protected it. When the people of Rome established a federation with the Sabinians, he made Rome the capital. Forty years later, at the end of a peaceful and prosperous rule, Romulus disappeared from this world. While he was inspecting his troops on the Campus Martius a heavy thunderstorm broke loose, he was concealed by a cloud and his figure vanished from people's sight. The people rejoiced and applauded believing that he had become a god. Some time later he reappeared in a non-human shape and assured the people that for Rome everything will develop orderly. The people of Rome then began to worship him as the god Quirinus (GRANT, HAZEL 1988, 594–97).

In the related historical sources the narratives about Romulus take various forms, but they all are based on Greek myths, and in all the versions we find the motif of a wolf and a woodpecker looking after Romulus and his younger brother Remus. Myths and legends express the belief and thought of ancient people in the form of narratives. In other words, it is possible to get to know the belief and thought of people by the means of their myths and legends. It can therefore be assumed that this legend of Romulus is a hint at the ancient Romans' belief about the wolf. The wolf, being an animal sacred to Mars who was sent as this god's messenger, seems to have been venerated by the ancient Romans. Furthermore, after the legend of Romulus, the wolf became one of Rome's symbols. When Rome began to use coins, the image of a female wolf nursing the brothers was used as a design. This again is an expression of the belief the Romans had into the wolf. However, since an animal does not give its milk to a human child in reality, it can probably be stated that this episode underpins a belief in the wolf that goes back to the times of ancient Rome. It may therefore be said that a belief in the wolf had existed in ancient Europe, yet it is not quite clear what kind of being the woodpecker might have been in its myths and legends. In spite of this it can be said that the woodpecker, who appears in its legends is an animal, clearly cherished by humans and seems to have been the object of veneration. According to the legend of Romulus, the Latin people, too, have been established as a consequence of Romulus' construction of Rome. Therefore, they probably also had a belief in the woodpecker (GRANT, HAZEL 1988, 597).

Narratives about an abandoned child being helped by an animal of divine character can be found in the myths and legends of many places all over the world. The animal is often a female wolf, but it can also be another animal. For example, among the myths of Greece and Rome there is a story about the abandoned

child Terephus who is given milk and is raised by a female deer. Stories of this kind are also passed on among the Kirghiz and other peoples of the Altaic language group.<sup>14</sup> In India we find stories of female lions or tigers that raised abandoned children. However, in these stories only one single animal is mentioned, while in the legends of Kun-mo and Romulus a set of two animals, a wolf and a bird, appear. On this point the two legends parallel one another. In addition, in both cases those raised by a wolf and a bird are real human beings, and they developed into outstanding people who built states, became the founding ancestors of countries, and left their names in history. Of course, these stories resemble one another in many other details (see TABLE 2). I feel, therefore, that these stories possibly originate in a common original story, although I do not have any hard data to prove this assumption.

As mentioned above, the legend of Romulus can be traced back to Greek mythology. Greek myths were refined and systematized in the ninth century BCE by the bard Homer in the epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and later in the eighth century BCE by Hesiod in *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. Historically speaking, the Roman legends have therefore been collected relatively earlier. The legend of Kun-mo appeared later than that of Romulus, but it would be too bold of me to declare that the former was composed based on the latter.

However, for quite some time there were scholars who compared the narratives of the Wu-sun and Rome, paying attention to their similarities. Shiratori Kokichi, for example, in discussing the human origin of the Wu-sun in his long article "Thoughts about the Wu-sun" points out that myths and legends about the wolf from among populations of the Turkic language family, such as the Wu-sun, the Gao-che 高車, and the Tu jue often coincide and adds that "it is well known among people that the ancestors of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were raised by a wolf" (SHIRATORI 1941, 57).

There are also scholars who compared and analyzed the myths and legends about the wolf as an ancestor not only of the Wu-sun but also of other populations of the Turkic language group and the Roman legends of Romulus. One of them is Negmatov, a scholar of the former Soviet Union. She writes that at excavations at the site of the Royal Palace in Bunjikat, the capital of the oasis city state Usturushana (located in modern Tajikistan), wall paintings of great interest have been discovered. They are interesting because the scene of a wolf raising Romulus and Remus is depicted on them. Since copper coins cast with the same design from the time of Justinianus I of the Byzantine empire (527–565) have also been discovered, and golden pendants with the design impressed on them have been found in Uzbekistan, she concludes that this "Roman pattern," as she calls it, was transmitted to Central Asia via the Byzantine empire (MORI 1992, 340–44).

TABLE 2: Comparison of motifs in the legends of Kun-mo, the ancestor of the Wu-sun, and Romulus.

Motif	Legend of Kun-mo ( <i>Han shu</i> )	Legend of Romulus
1	The father of Kun-mo, king of the Wu-sun, is attacked by the Da Rou-zhi. The people take refuge with the Xiong-nu.	Numitor, the grandfather of Romulus, is deposed by his younger brother Amulius.
2	Ling embraces Kun-mo while he flees. On the way he puts him into the grass to look for food.	Instead of killing Romulus and Remus, the servant lowers them onto the river to float away.
3	A female wolf and a crow (divine messengers) come and assist Kun-mo.	A female wolf and a woodpecker (messengers of the god Mars) come and assist Romulus and Remus.
4	Ling thinks that Kun-mo might be a god. He takes him up and submits to the Xiong-nu. Chan-yu raises him.	The king's pastor finds Romulus and Remus. Without telling the king he takes them home and raises them. <sup>15</sup>
5	Kun-mo takes revenge, attacks and overcomes the Da Rou-zhi, and takes their people away.	Romulus takes revenge and kills king Amulius.
6	Kun-mo remains there but does not submit to the Xiong-nu. Establishing a tribal alliance he builds the strong empire of the Wu-sun.	Romulus and Remus are not satisfied with living at Alba Longa. They build a new city on the banks of the river Tiber. Later they establish a federation of states with Rome as capital.
7	The Xiong-nu dispatch troops to attack Kun-mo, but cannot win. They also believe that he might be a god and mover far away.	Romulus becomes a god. The Romans begin to worship him as Quirinus.

Kato Kyūzō introduces Negmatov's theory and adds the following: "On one side, traditions about the wolf being the ancestor of a group remain in the Turk-Mongol world. Following Negmatov, these myths originate in Iran. In the west they enter Rome via Erutoria—according to Mori Masao, this should be "Etruria"—in the east they spread among the Turk-Mongol populations. The Roman pattern that can be seen on these wall paintings traveled from Rome by the way of Byzanz to enter Central Asia, where the ground for its acceptance had already been prepared. This is to say that this motif passed all the way from Iran via Rome to Central Asia, and it is possible that it needed about fifteen hundred years for this to occur" (KATŌ 1992, 340).

As opposed to this, Mori Masao points out that it is not clear what Negmatov means by saying "these myths." Yet, if they transmitted the story of a boy being raised by the milk of a wolf as the myth of Romulus and Remus has it, it would be along the same lines as the tradition of a Wu-sun prince being raised on the milk of a wolf. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the traditions of Mongol and

Turkic populations being discussed here are different from those of the Wu-sun. The myth of Romulus and Remus only says that they were raised by a wolf; it is not a myth about either an animal ancestor or the marriage between a human and an animal (MORI 1992, 340–41).

According to Mori Masao's statement it seems that the Wu-sun story is even closer to the legend of Romulus, more so than stories of the Turkic and Mongol populations. It can therefore be said in conclusion that among the narratives discovered so far among populations of the Altaic language group, the only one which resembles the Roman narrative most closely is that of the Wu-sun. However, the problem posited here is why this common pattern was established.

It is a fact that from ancient times cultural exchanges between east and west have taken place via the Silk Road. In his article "Complementary thoughts about the Silk Road" Suzuki Osamu writes that the use of silk cloth in Greece can be traced to the fifth century BCE. Therefore, he points out that the development of the east-west Silk Road antedates greatly the westward move of Zhang qian in the second century BCE, and that the problem of the Silk Road is essentially a question of "negotiating culture between east and west" (SUZUKI 1974, 292). Populations like the Wu-sun and Xiong-nu lived along the Silk Road which crossed Central Asia, and cultural exchanges between east and west must invariably have taken place by movements through this area. Furthermore, as mentioned above, discussions among scholars over whether the Wu-sun were an Indo-European population or not have been gaining momentum. If such a thesis could be established, it would follow that elements of Indo-European culture must have been present among the Wu-sun. As a consequence it can be assumed that there had been a belief in the wolf and its peculiar relationship with a bird and that related myths and legends were transmitted from ancient Central Asia to Europe.

#### CONCLUSION

From ancient to modern times there has been a twofold belief in Central Asia about the wolf and a particular bird. Related myths and legends have been passed on and are known today by the data we have at hand. The case of the Wu-sun and Mongols can be mentioned as an example. However, in the myths and legends of populations of the Turkic language group such as the Tu jue, who appeared in the footsteps of the Wu-sun, the motif of an abandoned child that was nourished and brought up by a female wolf, and who later copulated with the wolf and gave birth to the population's founding ancestor can often be found.<sup>16</sup> Given this, among the Turkic and Mongol populations of the Altaic language group, a type of myths and legends existed from ancient times. These

might be labeled “mammal type” because they are about a wolf raising an abandoned child; another might be labeled “marriage type” because in them the animal which nourishes and raises the abandoned child later marries it and gives birth to the ancestor of the group. In the “mammal type” myths and legends, the wolf and the crow appear as a set of divine beings only in the examples from the Wu-sun and the Mongols. These stories confirm that among the Wu-sun and the Mongols there had been a belief in the wolf and the crow as a set.

Furthermore, among the “mammal type” myths and legends, only the versions of the Wu-sun and the Mongols bear a resemblance with myths and legends of ancient Rome. Based on the evidence at hand, it does not seem possible to state that they appeared simultaneously. The explanation could lie, however, in the history of cultural exchanges between certain ethnic groups on the ancient Eurasian continent.

#### NOTES

\*Translated by Peter Knecht.

1. The ancient Chinese (Han) called populations to the north and west by the general term “Hu.” Yan shi-gu seems to refer to a Tu-jue people of the T’ang period.

2. *Hou* is a title indicating a rank in ancient China.

3. In the commentary of the *Han shu*, the name Kun-mo is written alternatively as 昆彌 but it is only a transliteration different from the language of the Wu-sun.

4. The Da Rou-zhi are a Turkic people of Central Asia of the Han period (according to some, Iranian populations were also included). In the early Han period they were driven out of the area of Dunhuang in Gansu by the Xiong-nu and settled in the Ili region. Driven further by the Wu-sun in the second century BCE they moved to the banks of the river Amu, conquered the Da-xia, and founded a state. Those who were driven out by the Xiong-nu and fled to the west are called Da Rou-zhi, those who remained in their former homeland are called Xiao Rou-zhi 小月氏.

5. A “surname” 字 is a name used by the ancient Chinese in addition to their ordinary name.

6. The Kang-ju are Turkic nomadic herders in Central Asia mentioned in the annals of the Han and Wei periods. They lived in the area from the Syr river to the Kirghiz plain.

7. There are rumors about two young girls who were raised by a wolf in India. If these rumors are true, I believe this would be a most rare case.

8. The wolf is a great enemy of cattle. In order to reduce its numbers the Mongol herders have conducted yearly raids in modern times to kill it. There are also professional wolf hunters.

9. The name “Romulus” means “person of Rome.”

10. Aeneas is a hero in Homer’s epic *Iliad*. The narrative of the fall of Troy was created after Homer. In this narrative Aeneas is related to Romulus.

11. In Roman mythology, Vesta is the goddess of the hearth. She does not have a figure depicting her, but fire was the object of worship. In her temple in Rome chaste maidens guarded the “eternal fire.”

12. Mars is the god of war in Roman mythology. Together with Jupiter Quirinus he forms the triad of gods of the Roman state. He is said to be the father of Romulus.

13. Pan is the god of pastors in Greek mythology. He is an ugly god with feet of a goat, horns, and a beard. He likes music and dance. He is the god of sheep herding.
14. For a Kirghiz example see MANDUHU 1997.
15. When the king's pastor Faustulus found the twin brothers he is said to have decided that they must be the missing grandchildren of Numitor (GRANT, HAZEL 1998, 595).
16. About myths and legends of the wolf as ancestor of the Tu-jue see such texts as *Zhou shu Tu-jue zhuan* 周書·突厥傳, *Bei shi Tu-jue zhuan* 北史·突厥傳, *Sui shu Tu-jue zhuan* 隋書·突厥傳, *Tong dian Tu-jue zhuan* 通典·突厥傳.

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