

Death and Transformation : The Presentation of Death in East and Southeast Asia

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I.

The following discussion is concerned with a conception of death significant to the peoples of East and Southeast Asia. Similar ideas can also be found throughout the entire Circum-Pacific area. These notions deal with the belief that death does not mark the end of one's existence—it is rather the necessary pre-requisite for a new life, which originates from death.¹

Let us begin with the portrayal of the world of the dead made by the Chinese philosopher Wang Ch'ung 王充 (27–97 A.D.). In his book *Lun-heng* 論衡 Wang Ch'ung cites in his chapter "The Spirits" the following passage, originally from the *Shan-hai-Ching* 山海經 ("Book of the mountains and oceans"), though now no longer extant in that work:

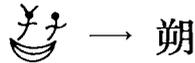
The *Shan-hai-ching* further states: The mountain Tu-shuo 度朔 arises from the center of the blue (eastern) ocean. On it stands a huge peach tree that twists itself over an area of 3,000 *li*. An opening of its branches in the northeast is called *kuei-men* 鬼門, "the gate of the spirits of the dead" (demons). There, the ten thousand spirits of the dead go in and out. Above them are two gods (*shen* 神, or spirits) named Shen-t'u 神荼 and Yü-lü 鬱壘. It is their responsibility to inspect the ten thousand spirits of the dead. They seize the evil and harmful, tie them with ropes and throw them for the tigers (tiger?) to eat.²

A good deal of information is hidden in this short portrayal. First, it is apparent that there are a great many different elements typical of Southeast Asian conceptions of the hereafter present: the Island of the Dead, the dangerous gateway, the divine guards and their perilous

escorts, and the particularly prominent tree. These facts place the Tu-shuo Mountain in the Eastern Ocean in the realm of the Islands of the Dead.

The special meaning of the Chinese version stems from something hidden at first sight, descending from the name of the mountain. *Shuo* 朔 is the new moon, and *tu* 度, according to Carl Hentze, signifies the astrological evolution (Hentze 1941: 23). Erwin Rousselle, on the other hand, in his short essay on this theme, gives the symbol *tu* 渡 the meaning of "bringing across," or "the passage," and hence translates the name as "Schwarzmond der Überfahrt," or "the new moon of the passage" (Rousselle 1942: 5).

This translation is correct, since *tu* 度 has also been given the further meaning of "passage." Rousselle explains this by saying that "all peoples of the Chinese coastline, and extending as well both far into India and to the islands" (Rousselle 1942: 5) spread picturesque ideas of the last crescent moon as a silver boat on which the spirits of their ancestors were traveling. Hentze's representations of the symbol *shuo* 朔 show how correct Rousselle is here: The symbol for the new moon is fashioned according to its paleographical form, as "an upright and an upside down figure of a person set (horizontally) above a crescent moon" (Hentze 1955: 34; cf. also Hentze 1937: 72):



The figure over the right side of the crescent moon conforms to the present character *tzu* 子 ("son," or "child"). The inverted figure on the left corresponds to the character *ta* 大 ("big"; cf. Hentze 1955: 34). The character therefore deals with two personifications of man—an upright child and an inverted "big one," or, hence, an elderly person. Both have been situated above the horizontal crescent moon.

According to Hentze's research, the symbolism of upright / inverted in ancient China was connected to life and death, being and dying, "the being devoured and spit out by a demon," and also with light and dark.

The Tu-shuo Mountain is, in fact, as the upside-down personification shows, an "island of death," but it is also, accordingly, as the erect child shows, the site for new life.

The island is, furthermore, a "boat" as well. It would require considerable imagination *not* to see the boat in the presentation of both human shapes above the horizontal crescent moon. Rousselle, however, fails to recognize the problem when he concludes, "On the

boat of the waning moon, the sailor's blissful dead were able to reach that island, 'the New Moon of the Passage,' in the Eastern Ocean" (Rousselle 1942: 5).

No differentiation between "passage" and "goal" can be found in the Wang Ch'ung passage quoted above. Further, everything seems to fall together: the passage, the goal and the return. The entire cycle of existence is encapsuled by the concept of the Black Moon Island. Therefore, the placing of the tiger—the ancient Chinese symbol for devouring and spitting out the devoured (cf. Hentze 1941)—on the island is correct, just as the peach tree—the "tree of life"—has a natural place in the world of the dead.

The fundamental idea is that the other world absorbs the dead but at the same time it also releases new life.

II.

It is a widespread notion that the tree of life emerges in the other world, or in the realm of the dead. The Semang of the Malaysian Peninsula have a particularly clear description of this idea. The center of their conception of the other world is the Island of Fruit Trees—man's destination after death. There is one prominent specimen often found among these fruit trees. The Kensui-Semang have thus named both the other world and this particular tree as well "Mapi." Two different kinds of blossoms and fruits grow on the Mapi tree. On one side are green leaves representing the dead, and on the other grow the yellow leaves of the living (cf. Schebesta 1928: 642). Although according to Paul Schebesta the precise meaning of this tree is not completely clear, a report from Walter W. Skeat throws some light on the problem. Skeat explains that the Semang believe that human souls grow on a tree of life in the other world, and that from there they are removed by a bird which will be killed and eaten by the soul's future mother. In this manner the soul of the newborn enters its mother's womb (cf. Skeat 1906 I: 194). The question of whether this tree is identical to the Mapi-tree remains unanswered, but in view of the fact that the Mapi-tree contains blossoms of the dead *and* the living, it is likely that the trees are identical.

There is also a strongly distinct conception of the ambivalent character of the other world found among the Ngaju-Dayak in Borneo. In their other world stands the Garingin-tree, which is also a tree of life. And the peculiar overlapping of the passage and the goal, a characteristic of the Chinese island of the dead, is also evident here.

According to the beliefs of the Ngaju, after death a person is transported, in two stages and on two different ships, by Tempon Telon,

the leader of souls, to the city of souls. His lance, which is the mast for one of the boats, is in the form of the Garingin tree. Thus the boat—the means of transportation—is here, too, furnished with the attributes of the goal to be reached, or the city of souls with its tree of life (cf. Schärer 1963 or Steinmann 1939–40).

The Ngaju religion permits the introduction of another essential aspect of this concept, the connection between an animal—especially a dangerous monster—and the other world.

The dead do not begin their journey on profane ships, but rather on animated creatures such as the horn-bill (*Nashornvogel*) or the sea serpent. This distribution reveals the cosmic dualism that is the basis for the entire Ngaju theory of life. It is represented by both divinities: the horn-bill, Mahatala, and the sea serpent, Jata. Tempon Telon, the leader of the souls, is united with Jata, God of the Underworld and the Waters. The crocodiles are servants to the sea serpent divinity. The ferryman of the souls, however, as his surname emphasizes, is also a crocodile. This is of great importance, because “the idea that the crocodile is the prototype for the ancestral beast and is at the same time the carrier of dead souls is widespread in Indonesia” (Laubscher 1977: 239–240).

Hence a further element—the beast, or in this case the sea serpent and crocodile—has entered the circle of the ambivalent other world. Pictures from Sumatra depicting ships of the dead on the famous ship-cloths from Kroe show, among other things, that the complexes mentioned above do indeed have organic links to one another. A. Steinmann has given proof of their close connection to the Ngaju view of life. The bestial ferry to the other world, with the tree of life as its mast, also appears in these pictures (cf. Steinmann 1939–40: 162–163). The dead one is placed in a cabin shaped like a small house and this cabin is displayed on another stylistically identical illustration, but in this case it is situated on the back of a crocodile (cf. Hentze 1955: 162, Abb. 121, 122).

The free alteration between the boat with the tree of life and the crocodiles as carriers of the dead one's cabin in the Kroe pictures show that both elements are thought of as being exchangeable and therefore congruent.

The same idea is embodied in Tempon Telon, the ferryman of the boat of the sea serpent, who is actually the “divine crocodile.” The crocodile as a “ship of the dead” is itself provided with the attributes of the other world, which is the goal for the dead as well as the source of new life.

The observation of cultic initiation rites can help us attain a deeper

understanding of the relationships of an animal—in this case the crocodile—to the ambivalent other world. During the ceremonies the initiated is devoured by a monster. After a certain time of “being dead,” he emerges from the monster’s stomach as a changed person.

Felix Speiser gives a clear description of the dramatization of this idea from the village of Kambrambo at the lower Sepik River in New Guinea. In November 1930 Speiser witnessed the last and most important phase of the initiation, where giant woven crocodiles were the central point of focus:

The crocodiles are brought in after a short pause: the people are overwhelmed with a ceremonious stillness, the initiates are standing in two rows at the side of the platform. The crocodiles carefully twist themselves through the narrow gates of the enclosure. Each of them is carried by ten men on their heads: the ceremonious carriers hop back and forth in tact with the ceremonious songs. This causes the huge lower jaw of the crocodile to move and make drastic mastications. The crocodiles are carried forwards and backwards: when they are at the front a boy is shoved down their throats. He disappears amongst the chewing movements. Afterwards he crawls through the framework to the animal’s back and appears again through an opening, straddled on the crocodile. He soon jumps off and makes room for the next boy (Speiser 1937: 153–154).

This type of initiation death is spread throughout New Guinea. It is also found among the Ngaju of Borneo, discussed above. There it is the sea serpent deity who, through her servant the crocodile, kills and then brings the initiates back to life (cf. Schärer 1963: 88–89). Furthermore, it also exists among the Wemale of Western Ceram, whose complex theory of life has been treated in Ad. E. Jensen’s cultural-historical works.

The Wemale novices in the Kakihan league had, for initiation, to “go through the mouth of a snake or a crocodile until they reached the dark, underground realm of the dead. They themselves were dead and remained for a time with the deceased” (Jensen 1948: 117).

Even though the different aspects of the conceptions of the other world described above are obviously internally united yet separated from one another through a temporal sequence—the outward journey, the goal, the return journey—the complex of the initiation death through a monster shows their unity as a whole externally as well. The novice’s journey to the other world, his stay in the realm of the dead and his return as a new person (I have consciously avoided the term “rebirth”),

all these successive temporal and spatial segments happen inside the crocodile—the devouring monster—during initiation. We thus have here an analogy to, for instance, Tu-shuo, the Mountain of the Dead. The crocodile is also the agent for the outward journey, the stay, and the return journey.

The crocodile in the initiation ceremonies represents—in the same way as the representations of the bestial other world boats which have the tree of life as their mast—the entire world of the hereafter, which has the ambivalent characteristic of being both the place of death as well as the source of new life.

Seen theoretically, the devouring by a monster during the initiation ceremony—or, more generally expressed, the killing and reviving of the initiates by a demon of any nature—represents a “transitional rite,” or a “*rite de passage*,” whose systematization we acknowledge to A. van Gennep.

According to van Gennep, all human conditions are accompanied by such rituals: “For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined” (van Gennep 1960: 3).

Structurally, he distinguishes between three phases:

1. The separation (*séparation*).
2. The transition (*marge*).
3. The adaption (*agrégation*).

The transitional situation has special meaning. In our case this situation is comparable to the novice’s being devoured. For this reason van Gennep’s opinion of the deeper meaning of the succession of scenes is of interest:

In short, there is a double series: rites of separation from the usual environment, rites of incorporation into the sacred environment; a transitional period; rites of separation from the local sacred environment, rites of incorporation into the usual environment (van Gennep 1960: 82).

Hence the state of transition represents for the initiated a stay in the sacred world. In our terms, this sacred level is clearly shown through the devouring beast, who causes both the novice’s death as well as his rebirth.

The initiator (*Initiationswesen*) can be personified in a number of different forms, depending on the cultural and geographical environment (cf. Zerries 1942: 176–195). The notion that the initiated must

die in order to awaken again to life after a while, however, always exists.

How can we comprehend this most difficult tangible state that the sojourn in the "sacred world" represents? Our understanding of death as an absolute end, a complete decomposition and as the unquestionable end of existence hinders our entrance to a way of thinking in which death obviously does not mark the end of existence, but is rather regarded as a transformation of the manner of being (existence). The initiate's death is a transformation, not an end. In this state he is transferred to a world that is also spatially different. Mircea Eliade sees the deeper meaning of the initiation in the "encounter with the sacred" (Eliade 1961: 13). The divine exists in this Other World, and by entering it the novice becomes part of its hemisphere. Eliade continues:

The death of the neophyte represents a return to the embryonic state. This return is not purely physiological; basically it is cosmical. It is not a repetition of the maternal pregnancy and the carnal birth. It is rather a transitory regression to the dark and gloomingly symbolized, virtual, pre-cosmic world; followed by a rebirth which can be equalled to a "creation of the world" The symbols of the initiation death and the rebirth complement each other (Eliade 1961: 69; cf. also Zerries 1942: 178).

Thus we can conclude that the sacred world expresses not only an existential and spatial distance. A temporal distance is also revealed here. The entrance to the sacred world is a return, a return to the beginning. In correlation to this Eliade speaks of a "possession of the beginning" (Eliade 1961: 15), meaning the absolute beginning, the cosmogony. But the time before the time is the mythical epoch in which the foundation for the existence of the world was laid.

III.

Here one is also reminded of Ad. E. Jensen's definition of the cult as a ritual repetition of a primeval occurrence (cf. Jensen 1960). Eliade understands cult and initiation in the same manner. Because the cosmological myth is intended to be an exemplary prototype for all "doings," the recapitulation in the cult leads to the reviving of the original events: "The return to the beginning reveals itself through a reactivation of the sacred forces, which had at that time first made themselves known" (Eliade 1961: 14).

If one is in search of a mythical prototype for ritual occurrences such can be found, in my opinion, in the world views held by the archaic cultivators. These constituted, according to Jensen, a cultural stratum

whose economic base was in early agriculture, especially in the cultivation of root crops (cf. Jensen 1960 and 1966). Jensen has clarified that their mythical event was the "Hainuwele-Mythologem," which takes its name from the most important mythical figure of the Wemale of Western Ceram, discussed above (cf. Jensen 1939, 1948 and 1966).

This story relates that during the mythical age the girl Hainuwele was murdered by the participants of a great dance feast. During the ninth night of the dance the men dug a pit in the innermost circle of the giant spiral created by the dancers, and during the dance they forced Hainuwele into the pit and stomped it full again. Her father, Ameta, dug out her corpse, dismembered it and buried its parts around the festival grounds. The useful plants, which serve as a basis for man's nutrition, originated from these parts of the dead girl's body. Hainuwele's mythical death brought an end to the paradisaical primeval world of the eternal, and therefore non-transformational, life. The primeval beings, now mortal men, had to go through a giant gate to Satene, the goddess of death, "in order to be given the mark of death from her and in this way to come to real human existence" (Jensen 1966: 134).

In conclusion the myth states that Hainuwele went to heaven as the moon, and "because of its vanishing and renewed arising, she appeared as the symbol for the permanently recurring life cycle" (Jensen 1960: 107).

The cult serves the repetition and preservation of this existential arrangement. The initiation ceremonies present the recurrence of the primeval mythical events. The first death determined humankind's essence and fate, and since there was no necessity for procreation without death, Jensen emphasizes that both aspects are objects of the initiation. The initiated travels to his ancestors in the "world of the dead," and hence into the "sacred world," in order to be born again as a mortal being. The devouring of the novice in the Wemale ritual brings this thought to dramatic expression. Here we have a concrete example that allows us to equate the crocodile, as the initiation-devourer, to the other world. Satene's gate is comparable to the ninefold spiral, which becomes the girl Hainuwele's doom. In the rite this finds its likeness in the crocodile's throat, through which the initiates must stride. The ritual death of the novice repeats the first death, that of the moon-girl Hainuwele.

These myths belonging to the world view of the ancient cultivators are naturally evident not only in Wemale culture. They are based on four major themes: death, fertility, the useful plants and the moon (cf. Jensen 1966: 51).

Considering this agricultural background, the original fusion

between life and death is not astonishing. Just as the perishing vegetation carries the seed of life, so does human death give meaning to the necessity to reproduce. Figuratively speaking, this implies nothing other than what the notions of the hereafter tell us: new life emerges from the world of the dead.

In the Wemale myths Hainuwele appears as the moon. There are cases, however, in which we can see even more clearly the analogy between the destinies of man, the initiated and the moon as the devoured and thence spat-out life. The myths of the Toba Batak of Sumatra portray the notion of the devouring of the moon particularly clearly.

Here it is the giant snake, "Hala na Godang," who periodically devours the moon. The myth relates how one day a shepard used stones to unmercifully shatter the eggs being brooded by the snake. The shepard fled to the moon and was pursued by the snake after she had discovered the offense. The moon and the sun recommended a course of action, but the giant snake did not accept the suggestion that the shepard be given a fine:

Finally the moon generously came to the conclusion to offer himself, in place of the shepard, to the snake. The latter accepted, and so much the more, as the moon promised to be at her disposal every twenty-nine or thirty days in order to be devoured (Pleyte 1894: 97).

The notion of the cyclical devouring of the moon is also, to mention only one other case, found in South America. In the higher Andean cultures the jaguar assumes a role similar to that of the tiger in Shang dynasty China, which is a circumstance that can also be studied from the historical point of view.³ The opinion still existed in the popular belief of the early twentieth century that "the moon fell prey to a feline carnivore, perhaps a puma, who everyday ate a piece of the moon . . . whilst the satiated animal lets the moon grow again" (Kunike 1915: 8-9).

IV.

Japanese mythology also indicates the existence of the world views I have been discussing. As an example, I would like to consider the narration about the White Hare of Inaba 因幡の素兔, an episode from the so-called Izumo myth cycle.⁴

At the beginning of his development as the cultural hero of this myth cycle, the god Ōkuninushi 大國主神 (also known as Ōnamuji 大穴牟遲), the central figure in the Izumo myths, serves as the escort and servant of his divine brothers on a venture to Inaba, where they

have the desire to court Princess Yagami 八神比賣. The gods have a peculiar encounter on their trip: on the ocean beach they meet a hare without fur. Ōkuninushi's brothers give the animal the perfidious advice to bathe in salt water, which naturally causes his condition to worsen. The youngest god counsels differently, suggesting that the hare should roll in the pollen of a medicinal plant. This leads to the healing of the tormented animal. Before this happens, however, the hare relates how he has gotten into such a situation. He had been on an island, and had wanted to reach the mainland. In order to attain his goal he had had to deceive the sea monsters (*wani* 鱷), who presumably were crocodiles.⁵ Under the pretext of wanting to count which animal family had the largest number of members, he had the monsters line up across the ocean, then hopped across while counting them. He triumphantly admitted his trick to the last crocodile, however, and full of rage, it tore the fur from his entire body. In conclusion the hare announces that since the younger brother's suggestion has led to his recovery, Ōkuninushi—the escort and servant—and not his divine brothers will win the princess as wife.

This episode thus determines early on the result of all the conflicts to come between the youngest god and his brothers. At the end of their struggles he receives the charge from the god Susanoo to become the "Ōkuninushi," or the "Great Land Master." He is to proceed with the formation of the human world.

At first glance, the story of Ōnamuji and the hare appears to be a real fairy tale, at the most an ornamental element in the mythical occurrences.⁶ The background that has been presented here, however, permits one to doubt this widespread belief.

The hare, *the* moon animal par excellence, endures a particularly lunar fate—he is skinned. Next to being devoured, this is the most prevalent element in the cycle of the moon death. Hence, the encounter between the god and the hare does not seem to be an unnecessary element of the plot. It rather is a trial for the deities, and is indeed a truly *cosmic puzzle*. The action between the crocodiles (*wani*) and the hare has a logical termination. It leads to the killing of that which represents life. The existential plot, however, is not therewith brought to an end. The entire world view present here is based on the conception that death must be followed by new life. The moon does not ellipse and forever remained concealed. In the same manner as the young life is freed from the hereafter and the initiated can return to the world of the living, so does the moon emerge again out of the darkness. In this case it means that the hare will absolutely *need* his fur again—the cyclical train of thought demands this conclusion.

So the gods are confronted with a puzzle which demands a solution that will clarify the logical succession of the matter. The brothers cannot—or do not want to—solve it. The youngest brother, however, finds the solution to the puzzle and thus guarantees the course of the world. Thus the “moral” to this myth is not ethical, but rather is utilitarian: the person rewarded is not he who has done a good deed, but rather is he who has done the *right thing*.

Therefore the hare not only predicts but also determines the young god's fate; he, as the cosmic, universal incarnation of the eternal life cycle, is situated “one step higher” in the existential hierarchy than the grounded cultural hero Ōkuninushi.

That this interpretation of the myth is not an over-interpretative speculation is verified among other things by the representation on an ancient Chinese bronze vessel of the Shang Dynasty. On this we have the depiction of a dragon, the demon of darkness, with a lunar rabbit emerging from his mouth. Completely identical thematical presentations are also known from ancient America (cf. Hentze 1941: 139 and Antoni 1982: 284–286).

The Japanese myth shows just how much influence this conception of the world had in that the knowledge and considerations of its basic assertions are hidden in a puzzle. He who possessed the logic needed to solve the puzzle—which was in actuality nothing less than a test—would gain leadership of the human world.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this exposition three complexes have come to light:

1. *The journey*, as an explanation for man's existence after death.
2. *The initiation*, as the transformation from the state of ignorance to knowledge, hence from the “immortal”—that is, innocent—to the mortal.
3. *The cosmology*, as the proof for the constant revival of light from darkness.

The problem of the voyage takes a particularly difficult form. Although men have no experience with a “life after death,” it is evident that concrete conceptions of an existence in the hereafter are present. The dead person takes a journey to the other world and further exists there in some form. This world of the dead is at the same time the source of new life. The tree of life in the hereafter is persuasive proof for this. It is not worth discussing whether the idea of rebirth is present here. Under no circumstances do I mean that an individual will return as a concrete, completely reborn person. What is apparent rather is the notion of “living in our children,” or a transition of the

“self” to a new form of existence. The blossoms of both life and death in the Mapi-tree in the other world give this notion a comprehensible metaphorical expression. The one who dies reaches the hereafter and in exchange a new life surfaces in this world.

The concept of the transformation as a change in one’s manner of existence is, in my opinion, the fundamental key to the understanding of this cyclical explanation of life.

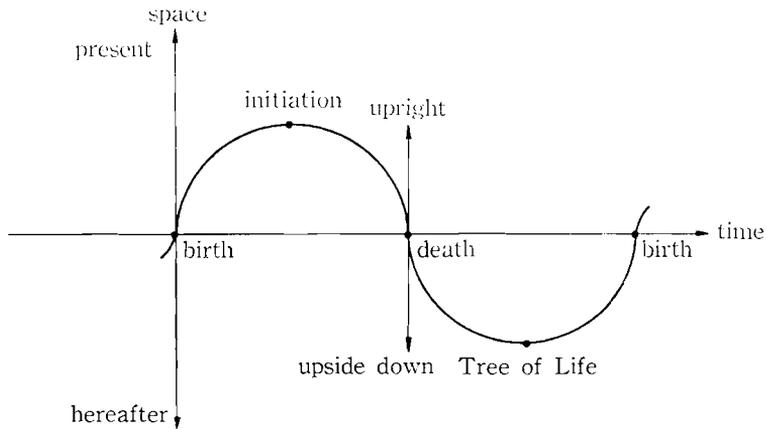
The transformation also underlies the initiation. In the beginning, the novice undertakes his journey to the hereafter so that he may return as another. On a small scale, he is striding through the great cycle of human life and death. The knowledge of death has changed him. Death, however, is not an expiration, but is itself a transformation. Therefore, the initiated recognizes the entire span of human existence within the framework of the ceremony.

The thematic presentation of the lunar fate shows that this principle of transformation not only determines human beings, but is also analogously effective in cosmic appearances. The cyclical lunar course gives the complete image for this principle of change. The installation of this doctrine is explained in myths. The first death, the murder of the lunar being, brought this into force. Although Jensen remarks that the motive for this act is not clear (cf. Jensen 1960: 210), it seems to me to be plainly recognizable. Had the unchangeable, “eternal” life existed in the place of death during the primeval period, so too it must have been impossible for death to emerge in a natural manner. When it occurred for the first time it must have been caused. What could give a more penetrating picture of the first death than a death brought about by murder? Just as death and birth are, from this point of view, identical—every birth in an existential form also represents the death of the preceding being—so too does this mythical act in fact demonstrate not so much the introduction of death as it demonstrates life in its continuously changing form.

Here lies the analogy to the lunar fate. None of the myths negates the reality of death, by stating, for example, that man will arise uninjured after a certain phase of non-existence; what is so clearly demonstrated by the dying and arising of the moon is the cycle of life as a whole, and not that of an individual. It is evident that the moon belongs to this concept of life. The older lunar mythological statements, which place the moon as the center of interest and comprehend it as the myth-constituting factor, however, are to be rejected. The moon is a perfect image for a theory of life that depicts a cyclical emerging and vanishing of all beings, but it is not the cause of the idea.

This can be demonstrated on a sine curve, as in diagram 1. In

DIAGRAM 1



this curve the space of life on earth and in the Other World are developed along the time axis. The protruding points are birth, initiation, death, the new existence from the tree of life in the hereafter, and birth again, and they mark the momentary transition from death in one form to the assumption of a new form. In addition to this the curve gives a demonstrative picture of a further notion related to this complex. The “wave crest” in the present and the “wave trough” in the hereafter give a complete demonstration of the polar contrasts between the upright and the inverse worlds: the initiation and the tree of life are logically situated across from one another. The recognition of death during the initiation corresponds to the recognition of life at the tree of life in the hereafter.

The topographies belonging to the other world describe the shape of this realm, and the journey of death to the tree of life therefore corresponds to the ignorance of childhood before the initiation. We were introduced to the crocodile as a vehicle for the journey of death as a substitute for the ship of the dead. This ship often carries the tree of life and is therefore in itself a medium for the transition in the other world, which is a transition to the living. Hence it is not astonishing that, for example, in the Indonesian presentation or in the Tu-shuo Mountain description, the elements belonging to the temporal succession in the sphere of the hereafter—the death journey, the tree of life and the “life journey” back to earthly existence—fall together: they belong together as aspects of the whole.

The dramatic anticipation of the great cycle of life present in the initiation ceremony can more clearly demonstrate these successive

TABLE 1

The devoured and then liberated one	The devourer and liberator	level of existence
living man the initiated	the Other World the monster	human
moon light	demon of darkness darkness	cosmic
life	death	universal

temporal and spatial attributes than the sphere of the "journey." The attributes mentioned here are all picturesquely reduced and visibly present in the crocodile. The crocodile represents the entire world of the hereafter. The passage to the Other World takes place inside the monster: he is the devourer, the realm of the dead and the donator of life, all in one. The fate of the moon is also consistent with this idea. The moon, too, is devoured and spat out again. The moon also enters the sphere of death—the demon of darkness—in order to leave once again.

The antagonists situated opposite one another in this cycle are detailed in table 1. If we desired to summarize these basic assertions and to contrast them with our understanding of life and death, we could do so with the catch phrase "emerging and vanishing." Through this we place non-existence at the end and thus finalize death.

On the other hand, the world view of the archaic cultivators combines the same elements—life and death—in a contrary manner. It speaks of the "vanishing and emerging" of nature and thereby opens the continuous cycle in which life perpetually emerges from death.

NOTES

1. For more detailed information on the problems discussed here see Antoni 1982, which is an analysis of a Japanese animal myth.

2. Taken from *Lung-heng*, chapter entitled "Ting-kuei." My translation. Cf. also Forke 1907 I: 243; Münke 1976: 262-263, and Hentze 1941: 23.

3. In this regard cf. Hentze 1941 and 1960 and Krickeberg 1975: 578.

4. For the story see *Kojiki*: 90-93. Translations are included in Philippi 1969: 93-95 and Florenz 1919: 46-48. Cf. also Antoni 1982, especially pp. 273-302.

5. Though there is considerable debate over the exact meaning of the word *wani*, and many scholars hold that it meant "shark" rather than "crocodile," I am convinced that the meaning here is "crocodile." In all Indonesian versions of the story, for example, there is a special kind of crocodile, the "*crocodilus porosus*," which is represented in Chinese as *wan-e* 灣鱷. This, I believe, is the original form

of the Japanese *wani*. See Antoni 1982, p. 175.

6. This opinion is held, for example, by Ōbayashi Taryō (see Itō 1973, p. 47), Asakura (1971: 69), and Florenz (1925: 271), among others.

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