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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 106, No. 421 (Summer, 1993), pp. 304-337

Published by: [American Folklore Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/541423>

Accessed: 03/06/2012 22:57

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The Flood Myth and the Origin of Ethnic Groups in Southeast Asia

Virtually every ethnic group in mainland Southeast Asia tells myths of a great deluge that leaves only two survivors alive to reconstitute humanity and to create the ethnic groups of the region. The survivors—typically a brother and sister, or a woman and dog—must consummate an abnormal marriage; from the incestuous match is born a gourd or a gourd-shaped lump of flesh. The gourd in turn is the source of the various ethnic groups of the locality. Based on a collection of more than three hundred such myths encountered during recent field research throughout Vietnam, this essay traces the main elements of the myth and presents its major variants. The myth in its many forms offers a unique window onto the cultural traditions of mainland Southeast Asia.

THE MYTH OF A GREAT FLOOD WHICH ANNIHILATES ALL HUMANKIND, leaving only a man and a woman who become the ancestors of all ethnic groups, is encountered in one or another form in virtually every part of the world. In many places it can be shown to have indigenous origins, and despite its global distribution, it cannot be traced to a single common source.¹ In its skeletal form, the myth includes the following elements:

great flood → man + woman → ethnicities

Ethnographers and folklorists see in the deluge/creation myths of mainland Southeast Asia many original elements of an indigenous culture of great antiquity. According to many scholars, an autochthonous corpus of Southeast Asian tales originated among ethnic groups speaking Austroasiatic languages, with localized variations reflecting influences from neighboring cultures.² Curiously, we find at least one such text in every Southeast Asian ethnic group. All the texts share general elements despite differences arising from the environment and the social and economic development of each group. We have had the opportunity to carry out field research among almost all of the ethnic groups in Vietnam, from north to south, receiving help from many friends. In this study I compare 307 texts, almost half collected during my own research in the field.³

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Let us take a text recorded from the Khmu, an ethnic group in Northwest Vietnam, as an example for comparison and analysis:

There once lived a *young brother and sister*, left *orphaned and poor*.⁴ One day they went into the forest looking for food. They saw a *bamboo rat* and began to chase it. The bamboo rat leapt into its hole, but the children started digging and soon caught it. The rat begged for its life and in exchange offered to tell them how to survive the great rain that would soon come to *flood the entire world*. The children released the bamboo rat, and it told them the following: "Hollow out a big log and gather enough food and water for *seven days and seven nights*. Then you must hide inside the log and seal each end with beeswax, like the head of a *drum*. After *seven days and nights*, you must pierce the wax with a porcupine quill; if no water comes in, it is safe to come out of the log." The children started preparing as the bamboo rat had instructed them.

Then the great rain began to fall and the seas, lakes, and rivers overflowed and soon flooded the whole world. After *seven days and nights*, the children emerged. Their log had settled on a wild oleaster tree, which is why to this day it is bent and crooked. They climbed down, gave each other betel leaves and areca nuts as a surety, and went to find those who had survived. They each went in different directions but did not meet a single person, for everyone had died. They searched everywhere for a long time and at last met each other again. Desperate, they sat down and cried. A *gook* bird advised them to become husband and wife in order to give birth to humankind.⁵ A short time later, the wife became pregnant. After *seven years, seven months, and seven days*, she *gave birth to a gourd*. The husband wanted to smash it into pieces, but the wife opposed this and placed the gourd on the smoking-rack over the cooking fire.

Coming home one day from the swidden, they heard laughter and joking coming from the house, but when they entered, the house fell silent. Astonished, the husband climbed to the smoking-rack and pressed his ears against the gourd, when he heard confusing noises. He brought the gourd down and took a knife to cut it. Fearing the knife could hurt her children, the wife ordered her husband to burn a stick and prick a hole into the gourd instead. First, the Xa (Khmu) came out, very pleased, and the husband enlarged the hole. The Thai, the Lao, and the Lue came out, one after another. Burning with impatience, the wife took a stick and cut the gourd into pieces. At last, the Vietnamese and the Chinese came out.

The Xa were soot-covered with charcoal, so they had black skin. The Thai, the Lao, and the Lue were less soot-smeared, so their skin was less black. The Vietnamese and Chinese were not soot-covered at all, so their skin was white.⁶

Tales with even simpler content than the above tale are often found among Mon-Khmer and Viet-Muong peoples, and these tales may retain much of their original form. The tales collected among Hmong-Yao, Tibeto-Burman, and Kadai peoples already belong to later forms.⁷ Tales from the Tay-Thai, Viet, and Muong groups have undergone many changes,⁸ even merging into older tales and unofficial history; they are often considered one element or a short part of a longer tale. Appendixes 1–3 offer summaries of typical examples of the major variants of these tales from the Sedang, the Thai of Vietnam, and the Yao. Appendix 4 summarizes the main structural elements of each of the 307 tales studied here. Appendix 5 provides a list of the folktale motifs of the four primary texts included in this article.

My comparison of these many tales can best be accomplished by considering the following main elements:

- I. There was a great and catastrophic flood.
- II. What was the cause of this catastrophe?
- III. By what means did the protagonists escape catastrophe?
- IV. What trials did they undergo before marrying incestuously?
- V. Who induced or convinced them to realize this mission?
- VI. What form did the prodigious birth take?
- VII. What ethnicities were born of this object?

Let us compare and analyze different texts to trace the variability and evolution of the tale, making use of comparative methodology to understand the essence of the problem. Each of the elements noted above will be discussed in turn.

There Was a Great and Catastrophic Flood.

All the tales begin with a catastrophe that humankind had to endure:⁹ a great flood or deluge. The deluge that covered the earth and submerged all humankind was explained by Near Eastern and Judeo-Christian theologians as a punishment from God: in religious terms, humankind was purified to give birth to a newer humankind living in a more advanced time.¹⁰ This punishment-purification theme is not found, however, in Southeast Asian origin myths. In the myth of the Thai of Vietnam, for example, we see the change after the deluge from a savage society to a society with cultural heroes and at last to a society ruled by a landlord, with no hint of punishment or purification (Dang Nghiem Van et al. 1977:52; one episode from this myth is included here as Appendix 2).

As for the deluge itself, even J. G. Frazer recognized that ancient storytellers exaggerated descriptions of floods that had occurred in their locality. Among insular and coastal inhabitants, this catastrophe was described as a rising of the water level with heavy rains and strong winds. The Vietnamese and Muong tale of Son Tinh (Mountain God) and Thuy Tinh (Water God) has the same form and therefore is like a number of tales from Indonesia and Melanesia. In cold regions, it was a great snow that fell. Among tropical inhabitants (some highland ethnic groups, for example) the deluges were long rains over "three years, three months, three days," or "seven days, seven nights" or only "three days, three nights." (The numbers three and seven have symbolic religious significance: they are ill-omened numbers.) Not all floods are catastrophes for humankind, but it is clear that floods were common and that everyone had heard stories of or seen terrible floods. Flood tales were born to explain this reality of nature.

Not all flood tales are connected, then, with the primordial deluge and its consequences. (That is, not all are myths of the origins of ethnic groups.) Flood tales are very widespread in many localities of Vietnam, such as the tale that explains the changes of the Nam Rom River at Dien Bien Phu, the origin tale of Ba Be Lake in Bac Thai Province, tales of catastrophes in Tay Nguyen (the Central Highlands), and those explaining why Muong Chat (in Con Cuong District of Nghe An Province) and Nguon Son (in Binh Tri Thien Province) are inhabited.

Many previous scholars have written extensively on the deluge tales in Southeast Asia. Wen I-to demonstrated that it is sometimes merely a preface to the main part of the tale, inserted in order to dramatize the origin of the people involved (1956). Thus, in a small number of origin tales, this beginning section on the deluge is absent altogether, especially among the Lao, western Thai, and northwestern Mon-Khmer groups.¹¹

What Was the Cause of This Catastrophe?

Each group explains the cause of the deluge differently, varying in part with the degree of social development it has attained. The Cor, Tay Pong (a local group of the Tho in Nghe An Province), Yao, Cao Lan, and Lolo do not mention the cause of the great flood. The Khmu and a number of their neighbors believe it was a natural catastrophe that favored the young brother and sister for survival. In Tay Nguyen (the Central Highlands of southern Vietnam), a black crow defeated by a drongo sought revenge by blocking all the streams, creating a flood that killed all things. The Bahnar think that a crab, angry at a common kestrel that had picked at his shell and broken it in a fight, made the seas and rivers rise to the sky to kill this bird (Ngo Vinh Binh 1981:20-22).¹² The Hre, Ta Oi, and Bru-Van Kieu blame the toad for having caused the disaster by asking for too much rain from heaven during a period of drought.¹³ The Kabeo (Pupeo) blame the water serpent.¹⁴ We can examine the role of the toad and batrachians in general. They are considered by many Southeast Asian ethnic groups as having close ties to heaven, for they will often cry aloud before heavy rains. Vietnamese believe that the toad is the brother of the mother of heaven. For the Sedang the toad is the essence of Yang Sri (Yang Hri or Yang Hrai), the Rice Goddess and the lover of the Thunder God.¹⁵ Despite his consideration for his long-time lover Yang Sri, the Thunder God was captivated by the Water Goddess. During droughts, the Sedang often bind up a toad (representing the Rice Goddess, or Yang Sri) to ask for help from the Thunder God, who, on account of his long-standing love for the goddess, will order rains to fall.

Often, gods created the catastrophe, either consciously or unconsciously. Many ethnic groups think the deluge was the result of a conflict between earth and water (Cao Huy Dinh and Dang Nghiem Van 1971). The tale of Son Tinh (Mountain God) and Thuy Tinh (Water God) of the Viet-Muong is typical. Among the Hmong, Yao, Nung, Hoa (Vietnamese Chinese), San Diu, and other groups, the tale of Loi Cong (Thunder God) becoming angry because he was taken prisoner by a Lo Ko hero is widespread. The Kabeo interpret the catastrophe as a conflict between the Water God and the Fire God.

In the majority of the tales above, although gods cause the floods, the theme of a god punishing humankind is not evident. Within Southeast Asia, the concept of a supreme being punishing humankind exists only in tales of a small number of ethnic groups that have a high degree of socioeconomic development and that have been influenced by exogenous religions.¹⁶ In these tales, vengeance was provoked by a lack of respect for heaven; by too many births in a time when “people threw off their skins in their old age but the old snakes died in their holes” (in the words of the tale);

laziness, debauchery, or insubordination of inferiors to their superiors (almost all Tay, Thai, Hmong, Yao, Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups); or by stubborn actions (conscious or unconscious) that violated religious beliefs or social customs. Sometimes the stories begin with men praying to heaven for rain to escape droughts, only to receive hard rains and storms that flood the entire world.

In Vietnam, there is often a legendary story that explains an earthquake or landslide—phenomena not uncommon in various Southeast Asian regions, especially in northern Tay Nguyen and in southern Quang Nam-Da Nang Province around the Ngoc Linh mountain. Here, within their own lifetimes, people have witnessed landslides that created lakes, buried villages, or brought panic and chaos. These landslides are commonly attributed to incest committed by unknown villagers. When the crime is discovered, the villagers may ask for heavenly pardon and may be forgiven only if they expel the couple from the village, forcing them to live naked and eat from swine troughs. Certain animals (including swine with a black nose, big ears, and a short tail; the *thuong luong*, a kind of serpent with legs, a short tail, and a red crest; and a kind of swamp eel called *huynh* which creeps underwater in the rainy season) are the reliable servants of the Water God or of heaven. Angry at the crime of incest or at the villagers' disrespect by eating taboo animals, gods will punish them by causing landslides that cover the entire village.

Explanations such as these are given to account for earthquakes that transform a region into a lake, as in the Mnam tale of the origin of Tangbo Lake in Mang Den, the Sedang tale of Kloong Lake in Dac Toan, the Todra tale of Hung Lake at Dac Uy, the Kayong tale of Dnau Pha Lake at Bo Y, the Radé tale of Ia Nuang Lake (or "Sea Lake"), or the tales of Chieng Lake in Northwest Vietnam or of Ba Be Lake in Bac Thai Province. In West Africa, similar tales explain landslides and avalanches.¹⁷ As contrasted with deluge tales, these avalanche or landslide tales describe a catastrophe that happened to a certain village in a particular locality.

Who Advised the Protagonists to Escape the Deluge?

In most versions of the tale, the protagonists who will escape the deluge receive some warning of the impending disaster and are counseled on how to avoid death. The Lamet tell of a bamboo rat who learned of the future disaster by having sexual relations with girls in heaven. The bamboo rat passes this information on to the brother and sister so that they might survive. Often, the prophet takes the form of an animal that lives near people (bamboo rat, tortoise, bird) and whose prediction reciprocates acts of generosity bestowed on it by the protagonists. Despite relations with supernatural beings, the prophet remains a familiar and ordinary animal—one that lives in proximity to humans but that is not a domesticated beast. Heaven, thunder, and lightning bolts, although personified as gods, still remain common natural phenomena, and the relationship between people and supernatural beings is one based on prayers and reproaches, never submission or fear.

Among other ethnic groups, intervention by supernatural beings has deeper consequences. The Lolo believe that Gna Gna, a supernatural being, predicted the catastrophe. In other cases, where the deluge itself was caused by a god, the god chose

to warn the protagonists because they did not participate in the transgressions (Lolo) or because they had saved him (Pa Then, San Chay, Yao, Hmong). Among several groups, it is the Buddha himself who warns the protagonists (Thay, Katang).

By What Means Did the Protagonists Escape Catastrophe?

If humankind was exterminated by the deluge, little more would remain to be said. In a small number of tales both from Vietnam and elsewhere, people who escaped the catastrophe simply by climbing to higher ground gave birth to a new humankind. In Greece the refuge from danger was the Othrys Mountains, in India, it was the Meru Mountains, and in China, the Kunlun Shan (“Kunlun Mountains”). In Vietnam it was the Ba Vi and the Pia Ia between Bao Lac (Cao Bang Province) and Cho Ra (Bac Thai Province). Especially around the Ngoc Linh Mountains, local groups of the Sedang determined the haven to be Ngoc Ang Mountain in Dac To District. The tale of the Halang group in Sa Thay District identified the place of refuge as Dang Morai Mountain, and the Todra determined that it was Ro Ke Mountain in northeast Kon Plong District. The Kayong of Ngoc Tam commune determined that it was Ngoc Bum Mountain, yet within the same group at Tra My, many said it was Hon Ba Mountain (Mul Kon Ot or Leng Ot) in their district.

In the majority of stories, however, the protagonists escape through the help of an animal or god who predicts the danger and advises them to take appropriate measures. To survive the flood, they make use of a straw bed, a ship, a hollow piece of wood, or a gourd. At last, they anchor on top of a mountain, a banyan tree, a bombax, a bamboo, or an olive tree or simply on the earth, whose surface is still “sticky like cock shit” from the flood.

The gourd was the most common vessel used for escape, and in many cases it was also the gourd that gave birth to the ethnic group. So we must consider it not only as a means of escape but also as a supernatural element that protected the couple. Among 236 tales collected in continental Southeast Asia, 129 tales speak of the couple escaping danger by means of a gourd. If we compare these results to the 63 out of 95 tales of our first collection (Dang Nghiem Van 1972:55), the proportion of tales attributing the escape to the gourd has decreased, since the new tales are mostly collected in the Tay Nguyen and Truong Son highlands, where the gourd is not a prominent motif. Tales relating to the gourd occupy more than half of the origin tales in northern Indochina, northeast India, and southern China. A distinct set of variants is typical of the Lao and Tay-Thai groups, involving a sacred gourd that grows from the nostril of a water buffalo (see Nguyen Tan Dac 1985).

In deluge myths, the gourd was not a common gourd but a “sacred” one, growing leaves overnight, flowering in three days, bearing fruit in five days, the fruit ripening in nine days, and so on. According to ancient beliefs, the spirit of any animal or plant was often concentrated in a symbolic object—not a commonplace one but an extraordinary one. The rice soul is symbolized by a handful of sacred rice seeds sown on a sacred plot in the swidden that has been prepared for planting. After the harvest, the rice from this sacred plot is kept in a special place in the granary or put on the altar. The buffalo soul given by heaven symbolizes all buffalo. The gourd that grows

from the buffalo's nostrils and saves humankind and the ethnic group's ancestors is the spirit of all gourds.¹⁹ It saved them from the deluge and gave birth to all peoples. This phenomenon reflects the gourd's place in the group's life of the distant past. It fed them and accelerated the development of society—when people planted only tubers, they still depended primarily on hunting and gathering. With the planting of cucurbitaceous plants, humankind could have more food and breed more domestic animals, thus sustaining larger and more stable organized groups.²⁰

The myths remind us that the gourd is a plant fairly widespread in Southeast Asia. According to Dournes, among the Sre and Ma the supreme god Ndu gave the poor orphan boy Doc the seed of the gourd. From this seed grew a vine that had a single gigantic gourd. This was the future gigantic rice grain (Dournes 1955:365). A Laha tale says that the first rice grain was very large, as large as a gourd.²¹ The relationship between rice and gourds is seen in many other tales as well. Consider an episode of the origin myth of the Kharian people of Orissa in India: God gave a gourd seed to the brother and sister survivors of a deluge and advised them to plant it on a swidden. On the gourd vine, three kinds of grain appeared: millet, dry rice, and wet rice (Roy and Roy 1937:424–425).

The ancient importance of gourds in Southeast Asian culture is demonstrated in many ways. In many Indochinese agrarian rituals, gourds are used in a procession or offering together with rice sheaves. In paddy baskets (where rice sheaves are kept for planting future crops), gourds are often found. People consider taro and cucurbits as strengtheners of rice—sweethearts of rice. In rites for building a new house, cucurbits symbolize prosperity for the family. The Thai put cucurbits near the main house pillar, the residence of the house spirit. Cucurbitaceous fruits are also used ritually to drive away tempests, while some ethnic groups use them to replace healing magicians as the representatives of the family head before the gods; this is the case among the Mon-Khmer and Thai in Northwest Vietnam.

Concerning the prevalence of the gourd, we note that the group-origin tales in Indochina, especially northern Indochina, have unique features. We may agree with Przulski that this mother-gourd myth was created by peoples speaking Austroasiatic languages with clear autochthonous cultural characteristics (1926).

Who Was Saved, and What Were the Obstacles to Their Marriage and Reproduction?

Who was saved? In almost all of the tale variants, a pair of male and female blood relations—brother and sister—survive the flood. In some, however, the survivors are a woman and her dog, or simply a woman. These people—the orphaned children or the widow with no heirs—are kind and good-natured, yet unrecognized and clearly abandoned by society or relegated to the humblest class in the village.²² Why were other figures not chosen? Because the tales expressed a change, a metamorphosis: for when society was divided into classes, oppression and alienation grew out of differences in property and the degeneration of virtue by a number of privileged people. Thus, the people who must change society do not come from among the old leaders. On the contrary, they come from the masses; they are from the laboring class, and

they suffer the most from injustices. This is the common logic of the old tales. Of course, in tales that have been distorted by a class-divided society, leaders might receive favors from the gods or might even be embodiments of gods, but people of the upper classes are absent in flood myths, except in the Yao tale of Ban Ho, whose contents are manifestly feudal, heavily influenced by Taoism.²³ At the outset of the tale, the protagonists, deliberately or inadvertently, perform an act worthy of a return favor: for instance, catching an animal and, although hungry, releasing it (the Khmu, Laha, Lamet). In other cases, they avoid participating in bad deeds (Mni Ha and his sister Thao in the Lolo tale) or bestowing favors on others (the Kabeo, Hmong, Yao). This motif has no inherent religious meaning; it comes only from the common wisdom that a good deed will be reciprocated. But when good actions are juxtaposed with bad or wanton acts worthy of heavenly punishment or karmic repercussions, as we see in tales of peoples living in complex societies, the action takes on a religious aspect.

The man and woman protagonists usually have no names. Only developed groups give them concrete names like Y Cap and Y Ke (among the Thai), Gomzazi and Domzanyo (among the Yi), Fu Hi and Nu Oa (or simply Fu Hi and his younger sister), Fu Hi and the fairy Cuu Huyen (among the Tay, Zhuang, Hmong, Thai, Yao, etc.), and Ban Ho and a girl or a Han princess (among the Yao). Fu Hi and other personages of Taoist influence were named arbitrarily. So in some tales Fu Hi is only understood as Pu (i.e., the first man): Pu was sinicized to Fu Hi in Vietnamese tales (Wen I-to 1956, Hsu Hsu-sheng 1962:128–161). In Vietnamese mythology, this man and woman were the god Tan Vien and princess My Nuong, daughter of King Hung, but those who gave birth to a bundle of eggs from which all ethnic groups came were Lac Long Quan and Au Co. The Bahnar call the protagonists Sir and Madam Drum, for they escaped danger by hiding themselves in a drum.

The tales relate a complex variety of abnormal unions. On Kalimantan Island, in the Dayak (Iban) region, a man escapes danger and marries a tinderbox (in the context of the discovery of fire). And in an Engano tale, a girl escapes danger and then throws stones on the corpse of a dead man; the man comes to life, and the two marry (Frazer 1918). In mainland Southeast Asia, the abnormal mate of the surviving woman is typically nonhuman: a dog.

Tales in which a dog marries the surviving woman are very widespread and beg for analysis. The outline is simple: in the flood, a woman runs up a mountain with her dog to escape and afterward has to take him for a husband, since everyone else has perished. This tale is common in regions of the Hmong-Yao, especially in the Yao branch. Here, the Long Khuyen or Dragon-Dog, in return for his services in annihilating the enemy, insisted that the Chinese (Han) emperor keep his promise by giving him his daughter in marriage. Afterward, the couple went south, lived in grottoes, and gave birth to the Yao branches. This tale has many variants and incorporates Taoist elements. Regarding the deluge tale about Fu Hi, the existence of Long Khuyen of Ban Vuong or Ban Ho and the princess is also noteworthy. No doubt this is a later addition with the added elements of crossing the sea and the dog being a “sea dog.” (*Long*, or dragon, is the water element, and Long Khuyen or “Dragon Dog” is the “Sea Dog.”) This motif is familiar among inhabitants along the

Pacific coast of Asia, and it is a combination of North Asian and Oceanic cultural influences.

Simpler woman-and-dog tales are found among northern Tay Nguyen residents who speak Northern Bahnaric languages, such as the Sedang, Gie Trieng, Cor, and Bahnar,²⁵ as well as Mon-Khmer groups in southern Laos such as the Laven and Nhaheun. We encounter similar tales among the Cham with the monkey and dog phratries that E. Porée-Maspero has recalled (1962–1966:439), and in insular Southeast Asia among the inhabitants of Java, Sumatra, and Kalimantan who speak Malayo-Polynesian languages. Such tales are also found among Tibeto-Burman inhabitants in northern Burma (such as the Chin) and in north India, as well as along the Pacific rim, among natives of Taiwan, among natives of Ryukyu, among the Ainu, and even among Siberian inhabitants such as the Eskimo, Koriak, Nivki, and Chukchi (Chesnov 1976:160–174).

In Vietnam, wild dogs were tamed fairly long ago during the middle stage of the Neolithic period, but according to Vu The Long, we have no data to establish the geographic origin of canine domestication—perhaps it came from the south, from the dingoes of Oceania (Vu The Long 1979). Like the myth of the first couple, the myth of the woman and the dog reveals an interrelationship between very distant groups of languages now existing far apart from one other and enables us to draw conclusions regarding a common ancestry of language and culture among southern ethnic groups. There are no ethnic groups in Southeast Asia that have dogs, even wild forest dogs, as totems. The custom of abstaining from eating dog flesh is widespread among a number of ethnic groups, including those who did not undergo the influence of Buddhism. Probably the most ancient domestic animal, the dog is a close friend of humankind. The myth of the coupling of woman and dog to re-create human society reflects this ancient intimacy.

Following the catastrophic flood, an urgent need arose to re-create humankind, to re-form the community, and to perpetuate the race.²⁶ We therefore agree with Alan Dundes that “it might be more apt to say that the flood is not so much a creation myth as a re-creation myth” (1988:172). This couple is nevertheless abnormal: half sacred, half vulgar. The idea of a wondrous birth from uncommon beings is widespread in religion, even in its most primitive forms. We can only comment on the most general features of this special couple; the concrete expressions in each ethnic group have their own particular characteristics.

If the man and woman had belonged to different ethnic groups, or simply to different blood lines, little more would need to be said. This is the normal pattern of contemporary quotidian social relations and the ongoing reproduction of society. But in their mythology, Southeast Asian ethnic groups endeavor to contrast the ancient, ancestral world—regulated by its own distinct customs and practices—from our contemporary world. If today’s strict taboos prohibit incest or close consanguinal sexual relationships, then inversely, in the ancestral world such relations must have been the rule rather than the exception.²⁷ This idea is reflected in the tradition, practiced even today by certain Southeast Asian peoples, of an annual ritual of unrestricted sexuality which they believe reenacts ancestral patterns of behavior. Whereas sexuality is strictly regulated in today’s society, in ancestral society it must

therefore have been unregulated. Once a year, this ancestral license is revived in springtime festivities to ensure fertility and prosperity.

Documented for many centuries for many Southeast Asian peoples, these springtime festivals have the overlapping purposes of ensuring agricultural fertility and ensuring human fertility. In his study *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, the French sinologist Marcel Granet includes ethnographic accounts of these festivals as practiced in southern China and Southeast Asia. They culminate in what is variously referred to in Granet's ethnographic appendixes as "a sort of saturnalia," "scenes of license," "rustic games," "all sorts of excesses," and an "orgy" (Granet 1932[1919]). Through these unrestrained sexual relations, including those otherwise considered incestuous, people believed they were establishing contact with their ancestors for the community's prosperity and, indeed, survival.

The deluge-origin myths reflect this same idea: in the ancestors' world, consanguinal relations were the rule, not the exception as they are today. The myths consequently show that *the offspring of the couple escaping the deluge, the ancestors of a single or all ethnic groups living in a locality—the ancestors of future humankind—must be born from the same blood and from the same fetus, and this birth must be a miraculous one.* This conception—common to all Indochinese peoples—that humankind must have only one bloodline, even if it has since divided into numerous ethnic groups, is reflected by the popular folk comparison of humankind to a tree that has one root and many branches.

This marriage is inevitably contrary to contemporary custom. If it is the case of a single remaining human (almost always a woman, as a vestige of matriarchy)²⁸ who marries a dog, then an incestuous act is also involved: the son who is born of this unnatural union must later kill his father and marry his mother.²⁹ (The tale of a canine father is widespread among northern Tay Nguyen inhabitants.) If it is a tale in which both man and woman survive, they must be brother and sister in the most primitive tales.

Here arises a paradox: even if, as we have noted, ancestors are understood to have observed different rules than those in force today, the incestuous marriage remains problematic and requires narrative motivation. If consanguinal unions were the rule in the time of the ancestors, why then do the couple not enter willingly into their incestuous marriage but instead hesitate or face obstacles? The quandary arises because, although in one aspect the survivors are the ancestors of today's humanity, in another aspect they are themselves mortals who survived from a preexisting humanity. Their initial reluctance to enter into an incestuous union reflects their mortal, not their sacred, aspect.

In traditional Southeast Asian societies, severe punishments were implemented against those who broke taboos against incest, equating them with those who had betrayed their community. They were considered animals and were regarded as the cause of catastrophes that befell their communities, because an individual's crime against the gods was considered the community's crime against the gods.³⁰ Only in very severe cases, in the likelihood of the extinction of the whole family or group, was exogamy not preserved. Otherwise, it was stubbornly enforced; one could not violate an obligation that had received the consent of heaven and of the gods through

a great offering. In contemporary society it is only in the most dire of cases that a brother and sister or even a mother and her son could become husband and wife.³¹

One can say that, in the majority of variants from diverse ethnic groups, the problem of reconstituting humanity from a single bloodline has been satisfactorily solved. In each tale, in each ethnic group, and in each local group, the details were very vividly built up and very skillfully adapted to the psychology, custom, and degree of material development of each community. They begin with a man and a woman (or a woman and a dog) surviving after a catastrophe, each trying to find their own companion and, after many unsuccessful searches, having to become husband and wife to perpetuate the race. But they do not decide on this abnormal marriage by themselves. Either the woman rejects the man's (dog's) proposal or vice versa. While they hesitate, a third magical helper appears to explain the reason for the noble task: to save the community from extermination.

Who Induced or Convinced the Survivors to Realize This Mission?

In a few tales from ethnic groups with a high degree of socioeconomic development, the third character is often a supernatural being. It may be the "sky ghost" (Kolao), the Earth God (Hmong, Yao), the Supreme God (Yi, Lisu), the Golden Tortoise God (Chinese, Hmong), Then (Thai, Lao), Khun Borom (Thai, Lao), or an immortal (San Diu).³² In the vast majority of cases, it is an animal, even an inanimate object, very familiar in daily life. In Mon-Khmer tales of Northwest Vietnam, they are different kinds of birds—*tgook*, sparrow, and dove—that advise the pair to become husband and wife. A tale from the Thai in Nghe An Province describes a brother and sister chancing upon a pair of grasshoppers in the act of making love. The grasshoppers urge them to marry, following the custom of heaven, to save the race. In a Hmong tale, a fig growing on Kunlun Mountain is the matchmaker for the couple, and this action is approved by a tortoise, a bamboo, and so on. According to the Pupeo tale, a banyan tree protected the brother and sister from the wicked intentions of heaven to annihilate humankind. Afterward, the protagonists followed the advice of a stone block, a fish pond, and a water dragon, and became husband and wife.³³

In fact, the fear of committing incest still haunts the survivors and makes them waver. A tale of the San Chi (a local branch of the San Chay group) presents the act as an unconscious one. The brother and sister sleep near each other, separated by a banana leaf. (A variant tale utilizes a sweet potato leaf.) During the night the leaf tears, and the woman is impregnated. Or they sleep next to a stream separated by water current; two trees grow from their bellies and adhere to each other, and the sister becomes pregnant. In other tales, the couple decides to marry after magic trials symbolizing supernatural intervention: they throw to two different places two pieces of a hairpin, a handle and knife, or a needle and thread, but inevitably the two pieces are reunited; they burn trees on two distant mountaintops, and the smoke rising from the two places joins together. Heaven decides they should become husband and wife, and the incestuous act is allowed.

This unusual union must be followed by an abnormal birth. Pregnancy must last “seven years, seven months, seven days” or “three years, three months, three days.” The offspring must be abnormal.

What Form Did the Prodigious Birth Take?

In the oldest tales, the woman gives birth to a gourd.³⁴ The gourd was a source of food, in addition to cultivated tubers, and was considered by many groups (the Yi in Burma and China, the Bahnar, Lao, Shan, Thai, Laven, Brao) as the symbol for a good harvest. In a number of tales a gourd ship was the means for saving the brother and sister from the deluge. But here the gourd becomes a fetus that gives birth to all ethnic groups in a region, a new kind of person with a new kind of food. In the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Sumati, a wife of King Sagara in Ayudhya, received the promise that she would have 60,000 princes. She gave birth to a gourd from which 60,000 bright-looking princes emerged (Eliade 1949:256).

At first, the gourd was chiseled open so that each ethnicity, each family, could emerge. Then the seeds were sown, and each seed sprouted a child who would be the founding ancestor of a lineage (Yao, Nung), a local group, or an ethnicity. The number of lineages or groups may be eight,³⁵ nine,³⁶ 60,³⁷ or 100, but this number often corresponds to the number of groups present in the locality according to local knowledge. The number becomes larger and larger with the development of each group; in fact, recent tales even included white men. The order in which groups emerge follows the knowledge of each ethnic group and reflects a certain reality. The natives came out first, the newcomers came out next, and distant peoples came out last, all with their own local ethnic identity (skin color, costume, etc.). In addition, some tales depict peoples' homes, tools, and domestic animals, and some also specify the gourd's location (e.g., Muong Va, Tau Pung Village, or “Gourd Village”).

Among the Thai and the Lao, there is a distinct tale about the gourd vine that grew from the nostrils of the buffalo given by heaven, and that bore a gigantic gourd from which different peoples emerged. A different tale describes Khun Borom and Tao Lo, or Tao Ngan and Tao Suong—gods sent by the king god to earth with the bronze pillar that symbolizes the prestige of the feudal lord, and many gourds of different sizes containing men, properties, domestic animals, and tools for founding a village or a *muong*.³⁹ It is clear that the second myth appears later, reflecting a concept of life and society divided into classes.

No doubt, every detail in these myths changes with time. People escaped danger by using the gourd ship, gave birth to a gourd, and emerged from a gourd. Then came tales in which persons came out of a drum or a gourd-shaped ship. The gourd-fetus being born and then giving birth to ethnic groups was incredible, especially among civilized people who regard tubers and cucurbits as inferior to plants like maize, manioc, and, above all, rice. This is the reason that millet and rice varieties are described as having grown from the gourd vine. A woman normally gives birth to a human being and, in abnormal cases, to an undeveloped fetus—a lump of flesh. The transition between the gourd-fetus and the gourd-lump of flesh generally occurs as follows:

gourd → fetus → bundle of eggs → abnormal gourd-shaped fetus

If, in later forms of the tale, gourd seeds or chopped-up gourd pieces give birth to a group of persons or an ethnic group, in earlier forms the lump of flesh contains eggs—from seeds to eggs, the transition is logical. At last, humankind is born.

The tale of the group of children divided into two parts—either equal parts, with 50 children going up the mountain and 50 going down to the sea, or unequal parts, reflecting ancient dualistic thinking—corresponds both to the geographical-social environment (the mountains and the seas, the mountainous region and the coastal plains) and to two cultivation tendencies: swiddens in mountainous regions, and wet rice fields on the plains.

When, in groups influenced by China, society was differentiated into classes, the ruling class and the ruled class appeared in each community, and ethnic-origin tales were no longer intact in their ancient form. Lenin's viewpoint on two cultures in each nation (1960[1913]) is expressed even in this tale. In its endeavor to separate itself from the community, the ruling class did not accept the notion of derivation from a common bundle of eggs, from a lump of flesh, from a unique origin, or from the same blood as the ruled class, but wanted to be derived from a particular material. Other myths therefore were fabricated to deify and heighten the social role of the ruling class. Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Khmer, and Cham aristocrats tried to make the common people believe that their lords were children of heaven. Such myths are numerous. Here is one example I collected from the Thai in Northwest Vietnam:

Once, people in this world could not get along with one another and had to send the elders of the village to bring the offering of a buffalo leg to Then (God) and ask for a man to be sent from heaven to come down and rule the people. While Then was bathing and could not yet do the choosing, his youngest child came back after sending the paper knife in the air; being hungry and seeing the buffalo leg, he started eating. Then ordered him to become a *tao* (ruler) on earth. Though displeased in anticipation of having to suffer from hardships on earth, the youngest child had eaten the offering, and so he had to obey his father, the ruler of all of the *muong* (territory or region). After a short time, he returned to heaven, for he could not endure the suffering on earth. People begged once more for Then to send his son back. This cycle was repeated many times. Finally, to prevent his son from returning to heaven, Then struck a bargain on both sides: he made the people swear to respect the inviolability of the tao and enclosed the tao's home from the roof to the floor and encircled the four sides with a wide-meshed lattice.⁴⁰ This lattice prevented the soul (the ghost, the supernatural being) from escaping, and by means of this, Then's youngest child was kept on earth. Since then, the tao must remain on earth from one generation to the next in order to rule people. Even so, now only aristocrats' houses have a wide-meshed rattan lattice around their house walls.

Tales of the gourd and of the bundle of eggs, with many beautiful and naive elements, remain among various ethnic groups. In more complex societies they were historicized and regarded as official histories, but feudal historians could not accept them. They therefore attributed merit to supernatural beings, and the myths were modified to heighten the role of religion while preserving aspects of popular tales. So

the couple became Fu Hi and Nu Oa, King Lac Long and Au Co, or Ia Tuam and Ia Tai (the god protecting the custom of hunting for human heads). Thai and Lao myths totally suppressed the tale's beginning and added the motif of Then bringing the bronze pillar (symbolizing the landlord's power), the motif of a gourd giving birth to people of the lord and another gourd giving birth to functionaries of the ruling mechanism, or the motif of Then sending many incarnations of Khun Borom with heavenly escorts or many Tao Ngan and Tao Suong who brought heavenly bronze pillars and gourds to establish the village, the *muong*. These tales were officially recorded in the first annals of Thailand, Laos, the Shan region, and Northwest Vietnam. Humankind was thus divided into the free and independent people and the dependent people. Little by little, these later tales lost their original characteristics and were influenced by the religious spirit.

Conclusion

Ethnic-origin myths also explain the first native place of each group, recounting the time of its settlement, with victories and defeats magnified for greater effect. Examples of this are the Jarai tale, that of the Ede coming out of the earth through Bang Adren Cave southeast of Ban Me Thuot (Y Dieng and Hoang Thao 1978: 13–15), myths about the Thai-Tay ethnic groups' native locality either in Muong Theng or in the Salween Valley, Hmong myths about the emigration road filled with blood and tears, or the Yao sea-crossing tale.⁴¹ Some myths explain why one group lives on high mountains, why another lives on plains, and yet another lives on the sea or rivers. Other myths explain the animal origins of a group (a vestige of totemism), or a group's choice of its emblem when the worship of national deities began.

Nevertheless, the myth we analyze is common to Southeast Asia and has a character that is almost universal around the globe:

catastrophe (flood) → male and female pair → the ethnic group

It marks the stage of many changes in human society in the remote past: profound changes marked by the appearance of new sources of food, more advanced production techniques, and greater social organization. It explains these changes by an act in which humankind is purified and accepted by the gods, solely by means of water. The entire population dies, to be born again into a more advanced world. All the acts occurring before and after the flood lead to the appearance of new human communities—new both qualitatively and quantitatively when compared with antediluvian humankind. These acts serve a magic function, leading to a miraculous change brought on by an abnormal birth resulting from an unnatural relationship. Here, in the most primitive variants, the cases of retribution are very rare, unlike later variants that were reshaped to satisfy the ambition of ruling classes and religious leaders. The flood is not a punishment from heaven but stems from the necessity for humankind to be reborn. Just as initiation rites mark the transition from a young man to a respected member of the community, confirming his rebirth, here it is the rebirth of the whole

community that is the focus of the myths. The community dies in order to be born again with new social mechanisms and new cultures.

Here, purification is done only by water and not by other elements such as fire, abstinence, or obligations to partake of sacred food or drink. Water was an element predicting a good event, a symbol of life and fruitful harvests. "Water! Thou are the origin of everything and of all existence," stated a Veda hymn (Bhavigyottra Purana, 31,14, cited in Eliade 1949:165).

Myths on the origin of ethnic groups in Southeast Asia also bear this general meaning. The remarkable fact is that, here, the role of the gourd ship, gourd-fetus, and in general the ancestor gourd is very important and has remained in its primitive form, altered little by history. Differing from other similar tales elsewhere in the world, the person saved is a woman—if only one person is saved—and not a man. This reflects women's status in currently matriarchal societies (as in Austronesian groups in Vietnam, Sumatra, Celebes, and Kalimantan), or even after it passed to bilineality or even patriarchy.

In Southeast Asia in general and Vietnam in particular, tales have a common basis, at the same time expressing their peculiarities according to different cultural zones. In southern China and northern Vietnam, we find a developed form in which primitive elements are influenced by three doctrines—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism—especially Taoism, with its many miraculous elements and details. The gourd plays a manifest role: the couple in the gourd ship eats the contents of the gourd and therefore gives birth to the gourd-fetus or the child without a head, legs, or hands (tales of the Hmong, Yao, San Chay, Thay). Among the inhabitants of southwestern China and northwestern Indochina, the typical form is the gourd ship with Brahmanic gods, Buddha, or Then, who brings down the bronze pillar. Tales are adapted to a society divided by classes and to religion. Primitive forms are found among inhabitants at the threshold of a society divided into classes and living a dependent life—for example, in Truong Son and Tay Nguyen, or in northwestern Vietnam and Laos, and among the Mon-Khmer peoples and Viet-Muong groups in the mountains, for they did not undergo the influence of Indian or Chinese cultures.

Almost all authors, from Przyluski (1926) through Chesnov (1976) to Nguyen Tan Dac (1985), consider the origin myth to date from the era when humankind entered the cultivation stage, in which cucurbits, and then rice, played important and decisive roles. Group-origin tales are therefore products of the appearance of agriculture. The appearance of agriculture helped humankind to live a sedentary life, on a larger territorial scale, and to unite many small communities into one large one. Probably, at that time, communities based on territory replaced those based on blood.

The old popular verses of the Vietnamese reflect this older meaning:

Oh gourd, you must love the pumpkin,
Though of different species, both are on the same trellis.

Ethnic-group-origin tales have reason to stress a single common origin for all groups in a country that has suffered continually from foreign invasions. These tales are extremely lively, particularly since they are told during the great festivals of the community and illustrated with rites. On the other hand, they confirm the inde-

pendence and peculiarity of each group, of social organizations in a transitional stage from primitive society to hierarchical society. The common basis is confirmed, together with differences, and these undergo changes in time in order to be adapted to history.

It is noteworthy that many ethnic groups have chosen motifs from these tales to symbolize the group. King Lac Long and Au Co, two mythical ancestors of the Vietnamese, represent two constituent components of Au Lac state. Among the Thai, the ancestor-gourd was linked to the native land Muong Theng (Dien Bien Phu), which contains Uva Lake where the gourd grew with Tau Pung (i.e., Gourd Village, Quan Bau). The Bahnar regard Sir and Madam Drum as ancestors of ethnicities in the region. And Christian missionaries regard them as Noah and his wife floating in the ark-bucket after the deluge. The Yao regard Ban Ho as their ancestor; the Sedang and Gie Trieng regard the high mountains in the Ngoc Linh chain, where the sole surviving woman lived after the flood, as the mountain-ancestor, a sacred mountain with many miraculous legends.

When we study the myths of the origin of humankind, we see their endogenous character, despite the introduction of many exogenous elements reflecting relations among ethnic groups and cultures. But owing to a fairly harmonious acculturation, they are considered to be a cultural product of each ethnic group, and they remain vivid in their evolution.

Notes

I would like to express my appreciation to Frank Proschan for his editorial assistance in preparing this article for publication. I am also grateful to Alan Dundes for his enthusiasm and encouragement, and to Kristina Lindell and Jan-Ojvind Swahn for their assistance in identifying folktale motifs included in the tales discussed here. The Vietnamese orthography presents problems because it requires diacritics unavailable here; the following expedient has been adopted. Place names, character names, and bibliographic citations are provided without any diacritics; a regular English “o” and “u” are substituted for the Vietnamese “bearded o” and “bearded u” respectively. For the names of ethnic groups and languages, rather than using the Vietnamese forms without the necessary diacritics, we substitute the forms utilized by Huffman (1986). Chinese and Russian bibliographic citations also omit diacritics.

[The *JAF* editorial office wishes to thank Frank Proschan for helping see the article through publication, and Allen Riedy, of the Echols Collection at the Cornell University library, for assisting with reference citations.]

¹See, for example, Milloué 1907, Frazer 1918, Wintemitz 1901, Saintyves 1934, Walk 1949, Kühn 1935, and Li Hwei 1955.

²See, for instance, Przulski 1926, Dang Nghiem Van 1972, and Chesnov 1976, and for related myths from China, see Wen I-to 1956, Hsu Hsu sheng 1962, and Yuan Ko 1964.

³The main supplementary documents are from Frazer 1918, Wen I-to 1956, Yuan Ko 1964, Chesnov 1976, and a number of Vietnamese books on ethnic groups in Vietnam published after 1954.

⁴Words in italic are important elements of the myth and will be discussed later.

⁵The green-billed Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus tristis*), called *Nooc mung ho* by the Thai, as big as a dove with purely black feathers, cries “*tgook tgook*.” A Khmu clan makes this bird its totem.

⁶Collected among the Khmu at Nghia Son commune, Hoang Lien Son Province, by Dang Nghiem Van. Other published versions of the Khmu flood myth can be found in Lindell, Swahn, and Tayamin 1976, Ferlus 1972, and Proschan 1989.

⁷According to P. K. Benedict (1942), Kadai includes Colao, Lachi, Pupeo, Laha (Vietnam), and Li (Guangdong China) groups.

⁸Here we follow Vietnamese usage. "Thai" does not refer solely to the residents of present-day Thailand but also to their confreres in other countries.

⁹Here *humankind* is understood as a community of inhabitants in a given territory. In a number of tales that have been influenced by class-divided societies, humankind may mean the whole world. The *world* is the living space that humanity can conceive of in each historical period; in primitive times it was a region, later a larger zone, and at present the whole globe.

¹⁰See Eliade 1949:182. See also Kelsen's 1943 account of "Retribution in the Flood and Catastrophe Myths," reprinted in Dundes 1988:125-149.

¹¹This is according to Nguyen Tan Dac (1985). The tale is most widespread among Laotians, people speaking Tay-Thai languages of the western branch, among the Shan (in Burma), the Thai (in Thailand and in Vietnam), the Lue (in China), and the Mon-Khmer inhabitants (in northwest Indochina). According to the tale, in the olden days the land was deserted. Then humankind came out of a gourd vine. This tale remains in unofficial histories, but it does not speak of the original cause of the abandonment of the territory or answer the question as to who pierced or broke open the gourd.

¹²Tales of the Gie Trieng, the Sedang, the Cor, and others belonging to many local groups and collected by this author show that animals took revenge on each other or took revenge on the animal that caused the waters to overflow.

¹³In an Australian aboriginal motif, a naughty frog had drunk all the rivers and seas and thus created drought. Every fish, toad, and swamp eel told jokes in order to make the frog laugh and spit out the water. But the frog laughed too much, water gushing out of his mouth, thus causing a flood (Frazer 1918).

¹⁴A half-mythical animal related to concepts of the *dragon* and the *king of the river*, living in deep rivers and creating rain and wind. The Khmu call it *Pryoong* and the Thai *Tu Luong*.

¹⁵Like the toad's skin, the paddy husk is also rugous, but rice grain is white and feeds people. Therefore the Rice Goddess often transformed herself into a toad with rugous skin. The toad grinds its teeth in order to ask her husband to water the plants. In storms and diluvial rains, the toad is angry and cowers, hoping that the god of thunder and thunderbolts makes up with his wife. Afterward, the Thunder God leaves his wife to live with the Sea Goddess. In winter, when the toad sits alone in a corner, the Rice Goddess rests in the paddy granary, and the Thunder God slips out to live with his goddess-lover; so there is no thunder, and water is colder than in other seasons. The Sedang think that the Rice Goddess Yang Sri hates the Water Goddess; so when they stage a procession for her from the swidden, they must not ford streams but must build a bridge. The Kayong abstain from touching water during the whole period of pulling off seeds from rice ears, because if both goddesses meet each other, their jealousy will result in a fight. At last, with the help of the Thunder God, the Rice Goddess will have to give way. Angry, she will leave the master of the house for having created such an intricate affair. See Dang Nghiem Van et al. (1981:224-231).

¹⁶In Vietnam, the content of these tales might be distorted by missionaries to conform to biblical tales. In northwest Vietnam, even with the lack of Christian influence, an Adam and Eve-type tale is widespread, though Thai influenced. One can see analogous cases in the regions of the Lolo, Hmong, and Bahnar, where Christianity has taken root.

¹⁷See Nguyen Dong Chi 1972:240-248 and Dang Nghiem Van et al. (1985, 1:27-31). Here is one of the simplest tales:

In the old times, Mang Den Valley (Kon Plong District) was very high up. Once, a man going to his swidden field met a Chu Chuc Phuc swine; it was white with large ears and had a string on his foot. He brought it home and raised it. The swine ate sand instead of bran and grew rapidly. On a festival day, the villagers killed, butchered, cooked and ate it. One old woman was afraid and did not eat. After the feast, rain started to pour down, the earth quaked, and the whole village perished. The old woman lived with her grandson, who perished for eating the pork. Anguished in being left alone, the old woman licked the chopsticks still greasy from pork fat and died. (from the Mnam-Sedang group)

¹⁸The banyan tree is often considered by Southeast Asians to symbolize the long life of a community. The bombax also served as a sign of a strong life, because it grows very quickly. In his text, Ngo Vinh Binh has simplified the story and also added incorrect details (1981:20-22).

¹⁹The growth from the buffalo's nostrils derives from the concept of the soul's location being in the head; the gourd vine came from the buffalo's soul through its nostrils. For Southeast Asian people, the

buffalo is used as a sacrificial offering to the gods. This practice is still very strong among the inhabitants of Tay Nguyen.

²⁰Most authors, especially ethnologists, think that before planting rice, Southeast Asian inhabitants planted tubers and vegetable cucurbits. A number of botanists in Vietnam are of the same opinion; others like Dao The Tuan do not accept a tuber stage before a rice stage (1983:5).

²¹See Dang Nghiem Van 1972. The author thinks that a cucurbit stage existed between the tuber and rice stages. Because of new data, he agrees with those who propose the existence of a stage when tubers and cucurbits were planted before the rice stage; see Dang Nghiem Van 1980:52.

²²In traditional societies like the Thai in Northwest Vietnam, for example, a widow having no one to continue the ancestral line or orphaned children without relatives had to become slaves of the landlords and lost their rights to be considered full human beings.

²³The Ban Ho tale is very widespread. See Trieu Huu Ly 1982.

²⁴If we examine 236 tales, not counting the Ban Ho tale and the Lao-Thai gourd tales, we see 180 tales in which the brother-and-sister pair have no names. Tales having names are concentrated in Northwest Vietnam and southern China; most of the groups are Hmong-Yao or Tibeto-Burman. Even in nine tales collected by Wen I-to in southern China (1956), over half give no names for the pair.

²⁵Guilleminet found this tale among the Bahnar (1943:369–370), but the tale of Sir and Madam Drum is more widespread among the Bahnar regarding the origin of the ethnic group.

²⁶The more primitive the society, the greater the urgency of these needs when illness, hunger, weather, and predators threaten its existence. Therefore, in many ethnic groups, large families and mothers who bear many children are respected, honored, and given high status, while childless families and barren women are not.

²⁷The subject of sibling incest has also been analyzed by Walk (1949) and Li Hwei (1955), according to Dundes (1988:174), but neither source is available to me. Contrary to Dundes's suggestions, I do not think that the incest motif represents male fantasies of incest. Rather, it is a result of a logical operation: if in today's world incest is prohibited, in the ancestral world inversely it must have been a normal pattern. Nevertheless, this view is not without problems, as we see below.

²⁸The Southeast Asian tradition thus runs contrary to Dundes's observation that "most flood myths involve male gods destroying the world but saving a male survivor to repopulate the earth" (1988:170).

²⁹See the text in Appendix 1. Dundes points out the oedipal nature of flood myths in his article "The Flood as Male Myth of Creation" (1988[1986]).

³⁰In Indochinese mountainous regions, a widespread custom required that the man and woman who committed incest be forced to live naked like swine and eat from bran-filled pig troughs, in the presence of a witch. There existed many ways of solving the problem of incest; either the two were driven out of the village, or they might remain if the woman became pregnant; or, in extreme circumstances, where there were too few people in the village, they were made to pay a fine and then could become husband and wife.

³¹Before the Vietnamese Revolution, among the Kayong local group of the Sedang ethnicity (Tra My district, Quang Nam-Da Nang Province), marriages contrary to custom were permitted if the population was limited and a marriage partner difficult to find.

³²In many ethnic-group tales, the golden tortoise is the advisor; it is the source of the majority of Hmong tales. But in a number of variants, the golden tortoise became a Taoist personage, Kim Quy ("golden tortoise god") or Thai Bach Than Nhan Kim Quy ("golden tortoise god"), who was the god of Thai Bach's star. Kim Quy also appeared in the tale of King An Duong building the Co Loa citadel of the Vietnamese.

³³The banyan tree symbolizes longevity; stone blocks symbolizes solidity. The custom of worshipping stones is very popular in Southeast Asia. The fish pond and the water dragon both symbolize the water god and are thought to be supernatural beings protecting humankind, often seen in southern Chinese and northeast Vietnamese tales.

³⁴Here, the gourd is considered a fetus. In southern Vietnamese dialect, a woman "bearing a gourd" or "having a gourd" means she is pregnant. In the 236 collected tales, there are 128 with the gourd-ship, and only 72 with the gourd-fetus, 56 with the gourd-lump of flesh, and 28 Thai-Lao tales with the gourd-ancestor.

³⁵According to Bonifacy (1908a), eight men and eight women were ancestors of the Pa Then family.

³⁶This number is from Lisu mythology according to Rose and Brown (1910:250), cited in Chesnov (1976:254).

³⁷This number occurs in the Muong tale "The Birth of the Land and Water" and in the Viet tale "King Lac Long and Au Co."

³⁸Tales and unofficial histories of the Lao and Thai in northwest Vietnam and the Khmu at Tau Pung hamlet in Muong Theng District, i.e. Dien Bien Phu, the place regarded as the starting place of Lao-Thai branches in Lai Chau Province (Roux and Tran Van Chu 1954).

³⁹Regarding the feudal lord, see Finot 1917:1–18, 49–55 and 1956; Pavie 1902–1910; de Frayssinet 1949; and Nguyen Tan Dac 1985.

⁴⁰According to ancient concepts of the Thai, the Lao, and almost any ethnic group in Vietnam, the old net or the wide-meshed bamboo lattice (the Thai called it *taleo*) had the magical effect of driving away ghosts and blindfolding the eyes of the gods. It is the *taleo* that helped man triumph over supernatural forces, for "when the net is hung over burnt-over land, ghosts dare not come to eat the seeds; when the net is hung before the house, ghosts dare not harm the master of the house," as the saying goes. There exist many tales about men having slept with the daughters of the Water God but escaping the punishment of the Thunder God by hiding under the net. If the net is thrown over a man possessed by a ghost, the ghost must show its cloven hoof. Among the Vietnamese of Hai Hung Province, people hang a fragment of old netting before the front door to prevent ghosts from entering the house.

⁴¹Regarding Muong Theng, see Dang Nghiem Van and Dinh Xuan Lam 1979, and *Dien Bien Phu: Before, During, After* (1976).

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Appendix 1: The Flood Myth of the Sedang (Southern Mon-Khmer)

Once upon a time, humankind was very numerous. People had more than enough rice and plenty of food. When rice matured, its grains automatically flew into homes and fish jumped from the water onto grills to be cooked. Human lifespans were so long that people became decadent. Men and women engaged in promiscuous sex and lived together outside of wedlock. Yang (“heaven”) flew into a rage when he learned

of this. He sent Bok Glaih to make thunder and rain and to cause a deluge that covered the whole surface of the earth, drowning all humanity.

Only one woman and a dog escaped, by climbing to the highest peak of Ngoc Linh Mountain. Every day the woman Xngghi labored in the swidden, accompanied by the dog. One day the dog urinated on the same spot where the woman had urinated previously. Many days afterward Xngghi found that her breasts had darkened, her belly grew bigger, and finally she gave birth to a son. (Another version says she gave birth to two children, a son and a daughter.)

When the boy grew up, he asked his mother who his father was. The mother responded with silence. One day the woman asked her son to take food to his father in the swidden. The boy was happy because he thought he would finally meet his father. When he arrived at the swidden, he found only the dog, merrily wagging its tail. The dog asked for food but the boy refused, asking the dog where was his father. The dog replied, "I'm your father." Thinking that the dog was attempting to deceive him, the boy grew angry and beat the dog to death. Returning home, he related the story to his mother, who replied with silence.

When he became a man, the son wanted to marry. His mother told him that there was nobody else on earth, and the mother and son became wife and husband. (The other version says the mother told her son and daughter to set out to find spouses. Unfortunately they met one another in the dark of night and did not recognize each other. They slept together and had sexual intercourse.) Afterward the mother (or sister) gave birth to many children, four sons and four daughters. The new generation married in turn and gave rise to many offspring. The parents sent each couple away to establish their own household.

The eldest couple went to the plains and became the ancestors of the Doan (Viet) people. The second couple went to Laos and became the forebears of the Lao people. The third went to the midlands, where their offspring are now the Cham people. The last couple stayed with their mother, and their descendants are the Tmoi (a common name encompassing all the ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands).

Appendix 2: The Flood Myth of the Thai of Vietnam

Then ("heaven") sent a new batch of human beings down onto the earth. At that time, men shed their skins in their old age, just as snakes do, and they lived a long time. Living a long time without offspring, they got tired because there was no chance to return to the heavens. They conspired to do things against Then's will. Men went around to hunt frogs, kill snakes, and barricade toads' caves. Frightened, these animals sent deafening cries of help to the heavens. Then got angry; his anger was as big as three buffalo, and his fury as large as seven elephants. Then opened up the seven paths of the sun's rays and closed down the nine paths of the rain. Drought reigned over earth, and all of humanity was extinguished. Human corpses lay scattered under trees.

Only Lang Ai and Lang Nhi managed to survive. They fled to Thanh Nua, making tools for fishing. The first three days passed without a fish in sight, and the next six days went by in the same way. Getting angry, they felled trees to make cabinets, killed snakes and held sham funerals, shrouded frogs as if they were human corpses, used

shellfish to make a cooking tripod, and caught owls to play spirits and salamanders to play sorcerer, offering small jars of wine to Heaven's shrine. Instead, Then became angry. He ordered the opening of the nine paths of rain and the closing of the seven paths of the sun's rays. The water level rose up to the sky, and everyone perished. Humanity and the animal world thus ended a life cycle. (Then created other life cycles again and extinguished them in their turn.)

Afterward, Then sent another batch of human beings down to restore order on earth. Then assigned Tao ("chieftain") Tum Hoang as master of the region embracing Nam Lai, Nam Te, Nam Pa, and Nam Tao rivers. Tao Tum Hoang (Then's son-in-law) sent two brothers, Tao Xuong and Tao Ngan, to the Muong Om and Muong Ai regions, beyond his own realm. Then gave these two taos eight gourds containing 330 Xa and 500 Thai lines of descent and eight brass pillars. Then also placed everything they would need in the gourds: 330 species of rice, 330 species of fish, books of prayers and fortune telling, and calendars. He also taught them to hang the placenta in front of the house when a woman gave birth to a child.

The two taos sent six gourds and six sky-supporting brass pillars to the Muong Bo Te region. They gave the remainder to the Kinh (Viet), Moi, and Lao in Muong Don, Muong Toi, and Muong Tao. The two taos then went down to build the region of Muong Lo Luong. Accompanying them were the Lo, Luong, Zuang, Tong, and Lao lines of descent. The new lines of descent then hailed the Lo as their masters.

Before their arrival, Muong Lo had been inhabited by the Moi and Mang ethnic groups. After the founding of Muong Lo, Tao Ngan returned to Muong Bo Te. Tao Xuong remained in Muong Lo and married, having a son who later became Tao Lo. But because life there was too hard to sustain, Tao Xuong returned to Muong Om and Muong Ai, his native land.

Appendix 3: The Flood Myth of the Yao of Vietnam

Chang Lo Co built a house with roofs of banana leaves. In an attempt to destroy the house, the Thunder Chief transformed himself into a cock and landed atop the house. Unfortunately he slipped onto the ground and was caught and caged by Chang. The next day, Chang went to the market and bought wine, planning to kill the cock for a party. At home, Chang's young son Phuc Hy found that a man was being confined in the cage. He stopped to see the stranger. The thunder chief pretended he was very thirsty and asked for drinking water, which the boy fetched for him. After drinking, the thunder chief regained his strength, broke the cage, and freed himself. Grateful to the child for rescuing him, he gave the boy a tooth, telling him to sow it and that after seven days the tooth would grow into a gourd. He warned the child to take refuge inside the gourd.

Phuc Hy and his younger sister acted as the thunder chief had instructed. On the first day, the tooth grew leaves; the third day it blossomed; the fifth day it bore fruit. By the seventh day, the gourd was very large. As heavy rains fell and strong winds blew, the brother and sister climbed into the gourd and filled the opening with beeswax. They brought along food and a pair of each species of domestic animal.

Well aware of the thunder chief's vengeance, Chang Lo Co also constructed a raft and sailed to the gate of heaven to fight the thunder chief. But the tide withdrew too quickly, and his raft crashed into a mountain, crushing Chang's head and causing his death.

The gourd bearing Phuc Hy and his sister landed on Con Lon Mountain. They each sought spouses for themselves but met only failure. One day, Phuc Hy met the golden tortoise. The tortoise advised that the two marry in order to save humankind. Angered by the suggestion, Phuc Hy threw a stone and broke the tortoise's shell, but it regained its original shape at once, albeit with marks where it had broken. Then a bamboo gave them the same advice. Phuc Hy, angered again, took his knife and cut the tree into pieces, but like the shell it regained its original shape, showing the marks where it had been cut. Frightened, Phuc Hy told his sister that these were omens from heaven compelling them to marry, but the girl refused.

That night, the brother and sister went to sleep on opposite sides of a stream, with the water separating them. But as they slept, two trees grew from their bellies and got entangled together. Three years, three months, and three days later, she gave birth to a gourd. Phuc Hy told his wife to cut open the gourd and sow the seeds everywhere. The wife began sowing in the lowlands, and when she reached the uplands, there remained only a few seeds. That is why the population in the plains is so large and in the mountain regions the population is much smaller.

Appendix 4: Structural Elements of Each Tale

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i># of tales</i>	<i>Cause of deluge</i>	<i>Creator of deluge</i>	<i>Source of warning</i>	<i>Male, female heroes</i>	<i>Means of escaping dangers</i>
Sedang, Gie Trieng, Kayong	14	natural	unknown	nobody; sun ghost (Kayong)	dog, woman	ran to high mountain
Cor, Hre	5	natural; in drought, toad asked for too much rain	unknown; the toad (Hre)	nobody	dog, woman	
Mon-Khmer in southern Laos	30	natural	unknown; Buddha (Katang)	nobody; Buddha (Katang)	dog, woman	
Sedang	5	drongo and crow fought one another	crow	nobody	brother, sister	ran up to Ngoc Linh mountain
Katu	5	unclear	unknown	nobody	none, woman	ran up to the mountain
Bahnar #1	11	mankind became debauched	Supreme God Bok Kei Dei	Bok Kei Dei	Sir Drum, Madam Drum	a drum
Bahnar #2	1	crab and crow fought one another	crab	nobody	brother, sister	a trunk
Ede	3	during drought toad asked for too much rain	toad	Bok He Die	man, woman	drum
Jarai	4	mankind became debauched	Yang (a god)	Yang (a god)	brother, sister	great trunk
Dayak	1	they ate the flesh of the sacred python	god-python	god-python	none, woman	ran up a high mountain
Bru-Van Kieu, Ta-oi	13	man ate toad-flesh; toad did not grind teeth to heaven	heaven, allied with toad	frog	3 brothers, sister	raft, gourd
Tay Pong	2	unknown	nobody	nobody	brother, sister	straw bed

^a Based on previously unpublished fieldwork.^b Personal communication, 1987.

<i>Trials before marriage</i>	<i>Advocate of marriage</i>	<i>Issue from marriage</i>	<i>Group(s) created</i>	<i>Source cited</i>
woman and dog gave birth to son who killed father, married mother	sun ghost (Kayong)	offspring	Viet, Lao, Cham, Moi	Dang Nghiem Van ^a
dog and woman married, gave birth to two children; son unknowingly killed father and married mother		offspring	ancestors of Cor and Hre	Dang N. V. ^a
dog and woman married, gave birth to son who killed father and married mother	Buddha advised to marry mother	offspring; gourd (some tales)	ethnic groups	Wall 1975, Dang N. V. ^a
searched many times	Yang (god)	offspring	ethnic groups: oldest Sedang, youngest Viet	Ngo V. B. 1981
became pregnant by herself		brother and sister	ethnic groups	Do N. T. 1982, Dang N. V. ^a
married by their own will		offspring	ancestors of the Bahnar	Nguyen D. C. 1972
married by their own will		3 children	Sedang 1st son, Lao 2nd son, Viet 3rd son	Guerlach 1887
toad asked heaven to withdraw water	toad advised them to marry	offspring	ancestors of the Ede	Jouin 1950, Y and Hoang 1978
married by their own will		3 boys	Jarai 1st, Lao 2nd, Viet 3rd	Kemlin 1917, Dang N. V. ^a
made her from the silex husband		man had only half body, one eye and one ear	ancestors of the Dayaks	Roth 1896
1st brother became sun god; 3rd took sister as wife, kidnapped by 2nd, who became moon god; 3rd became earth god, made gourd grow		gigantic gourd	all ethnic groups; youngest was Viet	Mai V. T. 1978
Liep Loc (god) ordered king of rats to advise them to marry; they threw two stones twice but they united again		headless limbless lump in form of gourd; cut into pieces	Pong, Thai, Viet	Nguyen Anh Ngoc ^b , Dang N.V. ^a

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i># of tales</i>	<i>Cause of deluge</i>	<i>Creator of deluge</i>	<i>Source of warning</i>	<i>Male, female heroes</i>	<i>Means of escaping dangers</i>
Wa-Kawa (China-Burma)	5	unknown	nobody	bird	brother, sister	hid in hollow in tree on mountain
Khmu (Vietnam-Laos)	9	unknown	nobody	bamboo rat	brother, sister	hollowed wooden drum
Lamet	1	unknown	heaven	bamboo rat told girls in heaven after sex	brother, sister	bronze drum
Khang	2	unknown	unknown	bamboo rat	brother, sister	gourd
Laha	3	earth god afraid lest mankind eat all the earth	heaven	mole	brother, sister	hid in hollow of tree on mountain
Mang	3	children of heaven greedy, asked too much rain	heaven	all knew but died of hunger, except br-si	brother, sister	raft sank; they went up a mountain
Nung (Lao Cai)	1	Buddha	unknown	unknown	brother, sister	gourd
Tay Nghe	1	natural	unknown	unknown	husband, wife	gourd
Lao Thay Lao	28	Lord Then (God) ordered a flood to punish disobedient humans; three noblemen escaped to heaven. When the waters receded they returned to earth with Then's gift of a buffalo. When the buffalo died, a vine emerged from its nostril and bore three gourds, from which human ethnic groups emerged. Lord Then sent his son, Khun Borom, to govern earth. A vine grew from earth to heaven, blocking the sun's light. Khun Borom ordered the vine cut, and after three months and three days it was severed and sunlight returned.				
Thay	1	Buddha	Buddha	Buddha	brother, sister	gourd
Thay	7	people were not serious in worship	Then Luong (heaven)	Buddha	brother, sister	gourd
Thai (Nghe-Tinh)	5	people too numerous, acted against heaven's will	Then Luong	bird	Y Kap, Y Ke	gourd
Thay Lao	2	Then asked tribute from humankind, didn't receive it	Then Luong (heaven)		3 Khun	house
Xa Phang (Han)	1	unknown	unknown	unknown	husband, wife	gourd

<i>Trials before marriage</i>	<i>Advocate of marriage</i>	<i>Issue from marriage</i>	<i>Group(s) created</i>	<i>Source cited</i>
finding no one else, they had to marry		crow pecked gourd open ; people emerging eaten by tiger; crow chased tiger away	Wa, Lao, Han	Chesnov 1976
finding no one else, they had to marry	<i>igoo</i> (bird)	gourd	local ethnic groups	Dang N. V. ^a
	<i>tia kook</i> (bird)	gourd	local ethnic groups	Izikowitz 1951
after a trial, sparrow advised	sparrow	gourd		Dang N. V. ^a
	mynah (agent of Then)	gourd	local ethnic groups	Dang N. V. ^a
crow advised; they disagreed, jumped into fire, and died	crow	Then ordered children to let persons and animals down	local ethnic groups; ancestors of Mang	Mac D.D. et al. 1985
	crow	3 pairs of brothers and sisters	1 pr. Chinese, 1 pr. Nung, 1 Tay-Thai	Dang N. V. ^a
	cock	children	Thai	Dang N. V. ^a
			Khmu, Pu Noi, Kha Bit; Thai, Lao, etc.	Nguyen T.D. 1985
they searched many times	crow	3 daughters, 1 son	Han, Thai	Cottes 1902
	Buddha	headless limbless lump cut into pcs	360 kinds of rice, 960 ethnicities	Dang N. V. ^a
after trials, saw pair of grasshoppers making love, who advised them to do the same	grasshopper pair	gourd	Kha, Thai	Bourlet 1907
heaven ordered 3 Khun to come to earth with buffalo; buffalo died; gourd grew from its nostrils		3 fruits	Kha, Thai	Finot 1917, 1956
wife couldn't give birth; husband carved wood women; wife felt exaggerated self love, left husband			Xa Phang, Nung, Miao (Hmong)	Dang N. V. ^a

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i># of tales</i>	<i>Cause of deluge</i>	<i>Creator of deluge</i>	<i>Source of warning</i>	<i>Male, female heroes</i>	<i>Means of escaping dangers</i>
Lo Lo (Cao Bang)	2	Lo Lo and Tay fought one another; heaven angered	heaven	heaven merciful to innocent brother & sister	Mni He (brother), Tho A (sister)	gourd
Lo Lo (Lai Chau and Hoang Lien Son)	4	unknown	heaven	Gnigna (supernatural old man)	brother, sister	wood trunk
Co Lao	2	unknown	heaven	Trang Cu Lao	brother, sister	gourd
Pu Peo	3	2 children Pe Si and Pe Say fought one another	heaven	De Linh, De Lua	brother, sister	gourd
Pa Then	3	thunder god angered at being held in custody	thunder god	thunder god favored master's children	brother, sister	gourd
San Chay (Cao Lan)	5	unknown	unknown	unknown	Phuc Hy, sister	gourd
San Chay (San Chi)	3	fight between thunder god and earth god	angry thunder god	thunder god favored his saviors	brother, sister	gourd
Tay Phen, Tay (Quang Ninh)	10	incest	heaven	heaven	brother, sister	gourd
San Diu	3	incest	heaven	heaven	brother, sister	gourd
Yao (Tuyen Quang)	2	rain god kept in custody by earth god	rain god	rain god favored his savior	brother, sister	gourd
Yao	22	Chang Lo Co kept thunder god in custody	thunder god	thunder god favored	Phu Hay, Phu Hay Mui	gourd
Yao	43	unknown	unknown	unknown	dog dragon, Han princess	
Hmong	37	earth god kept rain god/thunder god in custody	rain god/thunder god	rain god/thunder god favored earth god	brother, sister	white gourd

<i>Trials before marriage</i>	<i>Advocate of marriage</i>	<i>Issue from marriage</i>	<i>Group(s) created</i>	<i>Source cited</i>
tortoise's shell and bamboo cut into 2 pieces, reunited		3 pairs	Lo Lo 1st, Phula 2nd, Han 3rd	Bonifacy 1908b
they descended mountain by a liana		men carved from wood (Henry 1903)	unclear	Vial 1898, Henry 1903
	heavenly ghost advised	lump of flesh	Yao, Man, Co Lao	Nguyen Van Huy ^b
many trials		lump of flesh like grindstone	Lolo, Pupeo, Tay, Viet, Han	Nguyen V. H. ^b
many trials; sister pregnant after eating 8 pea grains of Sing Seng (ghost man)	tortoise	8 pairs	8 Pathen lineages	Bonifacy 1908a
cutting mountains, killing tortoises and king snakes	Boddhisadva Cuu, Chan Huyen Nu	lump of flesh cut into 360 pieces	360 families (50 were mandarin families)	Bonifacy 1905
at night they slept separated by a leaf; ants ate holes in leaf; sister became pregnant		lump of flesh cut into pieces	Tay, Han, Cao Lan, Viet, San Chi	Dang N. V. ^a
	golden tortoise Kim Quy	lump of flesh; lump of fetus	families in ethnic group; mountain and plain peoples	Dang N. V. ^a
at night they slept separated by leaf; ant ate holes in the leaf; they became husband and wife		person without heads or limbs	ethnic and local groups	Dang N. V. ^a
tortoise shell cut and united again	tortoise	gourd-shaped lump of flesh	Viet and other ethnic and local groups	Dang N. V. ^a
	tortoise, bamboo	gourd	seeds sown became men, women, local ethnic groups	Trieu H. L. 1982, Diguët 1908
dog/dragon killed enemy chief; Han king gave daughter		went south and lived in caves	different Yao branches	Trieu H. L. 1982
many trials	golden tortoise	gourd-shaped lump of flesh	Hmong groups and families, regional ethnic groups	Le T. V. 1975

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i># of tales</i>	<i>Cause of deluge</i>	<i>Creator of deluge</i>	<i>Source of warning</i>	<i>Male, female heroes</i>	<i>Means of escaping dangers</i>
Giay	4	unknown	unknown	unknown	brother, sister	gourd
Binoua Jakun (Malaysia)	1	earth cracked, water overflowed	man was unconscious cause	unknown	brother, sister	wooden ship

<i>Trials before marriage</i>	<i>Advocate of marriage</i>	<i>Issue from marriage</i>	<i>Group(s) created</i>	<i>Source cited</i>
they separated their beds by grass and leaves, but sister became pregnant		lump of flesh cut into pieces	Gay families, Phula, Tay	Dang N. V. ^a
no child; brother cut his left calf and sister cut her right calf		man and woman	ancestors of ethnic groups	Logan et al. 1898, Skeat and Blogden 1906

Appendix 5: Index of Motifs in the Four Tales

I am very grateful to Swedish folklorist Kristina Lindell of Lund University for her generosity in identifying the folktale motifs included in the four examples of deluge origin myths provided here. Due to decades of international isolation, Vietnamese folklore scholars have had no opportunity to consult Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1955–58) or any other standard reference works on comparative folktale scholarship. Supplementary motifs suggested by Lindell are indicated with an asterisk.

- A132 God in animal form. (Yao)
- *A132.6.2.1 God takes form of cock (to destroy man's house). (Yao)
- A189.1.1 Man as helper of thunder god. (Yao)
- *A192.1.3 Man catches god in form of cock and prepares to eat him. (Yao)
- A632 Successions of creations and cataclysms. (Thai)
- *A634 Earlier conditions on earth. (Sedang, Thai)
- *A634.1 Conditions on earth before world calamity. (Sedang, Thai)
- *A665.2.1.4 God gives culture heroes eight brass pillars to support the sky. (Thai)
- A1006.2 New race from incest after world calamity. (Khmu, Sedang)
- A1015 Flood caused by gods or other superior beings. (Sedang)
- A1018 Flood as punishment for decadence and ensuing promiscuity. (Sedang)
- A1018.5 Flood as punishment for sham rite. (Thai)
- A1021.0.2 Escape from deluge in wooden cask (drum). (Khmu)
- A1021.0.3 Escape from deluge in gourd. (Yao)
- *A1021.0.7 Man escaping from deluge on raft killed when trying to fight thunder god and flood suddenly subsides. (Yao)
- *A1021.1.1 Pairs of animals rescued from deluge in gourd. (Yao)
- A1022 Escape from deluge on mountain. (Sedang)
- *A1029.2.1 Only brother and sister survive deluge. (Khmu)
- *A1048 Drought destroys the race. (Thai)
- *A1048.1 Drought caused by gods or other superior beings. (Thai)
- *A1048.2 Drought as punishment for cruelty to animals. (Thai)
- A1210 Creation of humankind by creator. (Thai)
- *A1236.3 Ethnic groups emerge from gourd after brother-sister incest. (Khmu)
- *A1254.2 Different ethnic groups from seeds of gourd born by primeval mother. (Yao)
- A1273.1 Incestuous first parents. (Khmu, Sedang)
- *A1273.2 First parents trying to avoid incest forced to unite by trees growing from their bellies and linking them to each other. (Yao)
- *A1484.3 Origin of books. (Thai)
- A1610 Origin of various tribes. (Khmu, Sedang, Thai)
- *A1611.4.1 Origin of various peoples in Southeast Asia. (Khmu, Sedang, Thai)
- A1614.6 Origin of dark and light skin color. (Khmu)
- A1620 Distribution of tribes. (Thai)
- *A1620.1 God gives gourds containing tribes to culture heroes for distribution on earth. (Thai)

- A1621 Reasons for difference in population sizes in different areas. (Yao)
- *A2101 Origin of fish. (Thai)
- A2412.5.1 Markings on tortoise's back. (Yao)
- A2685 Origin of cereals. (Thai)
- *A2685.1.2 Origin of rice. (Thai)
- A2756 Why the bamboo has nodes. (Yao)
- A2785 Origin of shape of particular tree. (Khmu)
- *A2785.2 Origin of gnarled shape of olive tree. (Khmu)
- *B122.1.3 Bird advises primeval brother and sister to marry after escape from deluge. (Khmu)
- *B123.2 Tortoise advises primeval brother and sister to marry after escape from deluge. (Yao)
- *B437.1.2 Helpful bamboo rat. (Khmu)
- *B521.7 Animal warns of deluge. (Khmu)
- *D154.1.0.2 Transformation of god to cock. (Yao)
- D965.2 Magic calabash (gourd). (Yao)
- *F815.5.1 Gourd grows from god's tooth. (Yao)
- H1216 Mother sends son to find unknown father. (Sedang)
- M359.8 Deluge prophesied. (Khmu)
- *N349.4 Unbelieving son kills dog when informed that the dog is his father. (Sedang)
- *Q53.4 God rewards rescuer by helping him escape from deluge. (Yao)
- Q285.1 Cruelty to animals punished. (Thai)
- *Q552.19.7 Flood as punishment for promiscuity. (Sedang)
- T412 Mother-son incest. (Sedang)
- *T412.5 Mother-son marriage. (Sedang)
- T415 Brother-sister incest. (Khmu)
- T415.5 Brother-sister marriage. (Khmu)
- *T539.5 Conception when dog urinates on spot where woman has urinated. (Sedang)
- T555.1.1 Woman gives birth to pumpkin (gourd). (Khmu)
- *Z356.2 Only one woman and one dog survive world calamity. (Sedang)