

Munhŭi's Dream within Ancient Oneiromancy

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This article is an analysis of the tale *Munhŭi who bought a dream* which has been reported, with few variants, both in *Samguk sagi* and *Samguk yusa*. As the tale narrates a very particular and old dream, in which a urine flood forecasts kingship and royalty, it has not been investigated here on the basis of a modern psycho-analytical approach, but within eastern and western ancient cultural patterns regarding humans' consideration for excreta and criteria of dreams interpretation. The research led the author to propose for Munhŭi's dream an archaic (and today lost) archetype of interpretation, whose origin is perhaps to be found in the Ancient Middle-East.

Key-words: Munhŭi's dream, Dreams interpretation, Oneiromancy, History of Silla, Samguk sagi, Samguk yusa, Urination dreams.

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Prologue

This article intends to investigate an episode which occurred, according to tradition, in the 7th century, during the delicate historical period of the unification of the Three Kingdoms of Korea under the Silla Dynasty, and the passage, in dynastic lineage, from the “sacred bones” (*sōnggol* 聖骨) to the “true bones” (*chingol* 眞骨). The episode I will deal with concerns a dream, forecasting power and kingship, “bought” by Munhŭi, the younger sister of the famous Kim Yusin 金庾信 (595-673). It is a pearl of the folklore of Korea, where it is known by the title *Munhŭi maemong sōrhwa* 文姬買夢說話, or “The Tale of Munhŭi Who Bought a Dream”. Not many studies have been dedicated to this particular episode, however, and the few existing papers have addressed (and explained) the topic mainly on the basis of modern psycho-analysis, drawing abundantly from Freud and Jung’s famous works on dream interpretation. This paper instead takes on the question from a cultural-anthropological stand-point within dream exegesis performed according to ancient divination concepts whose fundamental principles were more or less common across various geographical contexts. In doing so, this paper also takes into account differences in the perception of reality between ancient and modern times.

Munhŭi’s Dream and the Perception of “excreta” in Ancient Times

First of all, let us introduce the crucial passage containing the episode of Munhŭi’s dream as reported in the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事:

初文姬之姊寶姬 夢登西岳捨溺 瀾滿京城 旦與妹說夢 文姬聞之謂曰 我買此夢 姊曰 與何物乎 曰鬻錦裙可乎 姊曰諾 妹開襟受之 姊曰 疇昔之夢 傳付於汝 妹以錦裙酬之¹.

A certain night Pohŭi 寶姬, Munhŭi’s elder sister, dreamed of ascending to the West Peak and, once there, of urinating in such quantity to almost submerge the capital city below. When Pohŭi told the dream to her younger sister, the latter remarked: “I want to buy your dream”.

Pohŭi replied: “In exchange for what”?

Munhŭi said: “What about a silk skirt”?

¹ *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (Historical Chronicles of The Three Kingdoms). (Seoul, Ŭryu munhwasa, 1986), book 1.

“All right”, Pohŭi said.

Then, while the younger sister widened the collar of her dress, Pohŭi said: “I give you the dream I dreamed last night”! For her part, Munhŭi handed the skirt to her sister.²

Shortly after this episode, Munhŭi married Kim Ch'unch'u 金春秋 (604-661), the future King Muyŏl 武烈 (r. 654-661), who was a close friend of Kim Yusin. King Muyŏl was also the first king of the *chingol* aristocracy. This tale is also reported, without substantial differences, in other Korean classical texts,³ and it is highly probable that it influenced the episode of Chinŭi 辰義, the last-born daughter of Poyuk 寶育, with which we will deal later.

The dreams of urinating are called, with a Sino-Korean expression, *sŏnnyumong* 旋流夢. Indeed, to dream of excrement (or “physiological sludge”, if you prefer) is quite normal for any human, and despite contradictory interpretations of such dreams, in the course of history, the tradition in which they are generally considered auspicious and favourable has persisted until today. It is a phenomenon in which the coincidence of opposites (in this case, dirtiness and luck) generates perfectness and harmony, like *yin* and *yang*. In this regard, the most famous Chinese book of dream interpretations, the *Zhougong jiemeng* 周公解夢 (Duke Zhou's Interpretation of Dreams) clearly reports that in a dream, “the person dirty with feces and urine will enjoy great luck” (屎尿汚人大吉亨).⁴ This kind of explanation is not limited to China: in various parts of the world a dream of feces announces wealth and prosperity,⁵ but such beliefs are not limited to dreams: to involuntarily step on dung is considered (in Italy for instance) a lucky omen and in the Far East excrement represents an important part of fantasy literature (both oral and written) for children. In this regard, Korea is second to none: “dung

² All translations preceded by original texts are by the Author of this article.

³ See, for example, *Samguk sagi*, book 6. The differences between the *Samguk sagi* version and the *Samguk yusa* version are minimal: to just quote some of them, in *Samguk sagi* the West Peak (Sŏak 西岳) is substituted by Mt. Sŏhyŏng 西兄山, Munhŭi seems to ask her sister to sell the dream in jest, Pohŭi seems quite reluctant to sell her dream, and the particular of Munhŭi who widens the collar of her own dress is omitted. See Unch'ae Chŏng, “The Tales of Buying Urination-Dreams and Their Meaning as Literary Therapy.” *Kungmunak yŏn'gu* 國文研究 5 (2001): 287-288.

⁴ *Zhougong jiemeng quanshou* (Complete Books of Duke Zhou's Dreams Interpretation) (Kyŏngsŏng, Changgyo ʼabinsa, 1906). On dream interpretation and divination in China also see Jing Pei Fang and Juwen Zhang, *The Interpretation of Dreams in Chinese Culture* (Trumbull CT: Weatherhill, 2005) and Meiyang Chen, *The Art of Dream Divination in China* (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1995). For the rest, the *Zhougong jiemeng* also was a favorite text in classic Korea, together with “breviaries” such as *Kajŏng pogam* 家庭寶鑑 (Precious Mirror for Families). On the analysis of dreams reported by the latter, see Kwang'il Kim, “Psychoanalytic Study on the Primitive Dream Interpretation in Korea.” *Singyŏng kyŏngsin ūibak* 新境정신의학 新境정신의학 8, no. 2 (1969): 15-27.

⁵ See, for example, Angelo Brelich, *Tre vVariazioni rRomane sSul lTema dDelle oOrigini*. (Roma: Editori Riuniti University Press, 2010), p. 125.

tales” (both indigenous and imported) are legion and some of them have also become theatrical performances for children.⁶ This attitude represents an interesting case of anthropological archaism, as it derives from epochs during which excrement was far from being considered “waste”. On the contrary, in ancient cultures (and still in some parts of the world) excrement has been used as a building material, fuel for fires, and, above all, fertilizer.

Hence the association between excrement and fertility (and then prosperity) appears evident and it is not mere chance that in some ancient societies there were also deities of excrement. In Latin, the term *laetamen* (dung) shares its root with *laetitia* (happiness). In ancient Rome, Sterculius (also spelled Sterquilinus, Stercutus, etc. from Latin *stercus*, hence the Italian “sterco”) was the god of feces.⁷ Sometimes he is identified with Saturnus, the god of *Aurea Aetas* (Golden Age), who also is the god of regeneration and the god who taught men agriculture (and then civilization). Once again, we find the concept of excrement related to fertility, regeneration of crop sites, agriculture, and opulence. In other words, feces are not waste, but a creative element. “Sterculius” also was perhaps another name of Picumnus, a god of fertility, agriculture, marriage, and children, all elements of human happiness and prosperity.

Cloacina, a female deity of Etruscan origin, was connected with sewers and drains. The name is created from the noun *cloaca* (sewer) which derives from the verb *cluere* (to cleanse). What is important is that Cloacina was also the goddess of sexual intercourse and later became a manifestation of Venus.⁸ The association between sewers and sexual intercourse is particularly important here: the sewers, through the waters that flow inside them, serve to dispose of waste (including excrement: hence the idea of “cleansing”), whereas urine flows through those sexual organs that also are charged with reproduction. The idea of urine as a generative element begins to develop, and we

⁶ I will recall, only for recent years, pieces/musicals such as *Kang’aji ttong* 강아지 똥 (Doggy Poo: 2003) and *Nuga nae möri-e ttong ssassō?* 누가 내 머리에 똥 썼어? (Who shat on my head? 2005).

⁷ William Smith, *A Classical Dictionary of Biography, Mythology and Geography* (London: John Murray, 1858), p. 725. The author remarks that Sterculius was sometimes considered a surname of Saturnus. Sterculius seems to have been found in *Indicamenta* (a kind of list of gods and invocations originally reported in *Libri pontificales* and successively quoted by Varro in one of his lost works, perhaps the *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*). These names of ancient Roman deities have been preserved especially by early Christian authors, within their polemic scripts against paganism. With reference to Sterculius see, for example, Tertullianus (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus: ca. 155-230). *Apologia del Cristianesimo (Apologeticus adversus gentes)*. (Milano: Rizzoli, 2000), book 1: *Scilicet ista merces Romanis a diis pro gratia expensa est, Sterculius, et Mutunus, et Larentina provexit imperium!* (This means that we are to consider this reward as a sign of gratitude to the Romans by the gods: indeed, Sterculius and Mutinus and Larentina advanced the empire!) Also see Macrobius (Ambrosius Teodosius Macrobius): *I Saturnali (Saturnalia)* (Torino: UTET, 1977), books 1 and 2.

⁸ Robert Schilling, *La religion romaine de Vénus depuis les origines jusqu’au temps d’Auguste* (Paris: de Boccard, 1954), pp. 210-215.

will soon return to this topic.

The most famous god related to excrement, however, is Ba'al Zebub (Hebrew: לַעֲבֹב בְּיָדָא), the presumed lord of flies and dunghills in the ancient Near East among the Philistines/Canaanites, in particular. Even if often considered a depreciative term used by Jews to indicate the Philistine god Ba'al Zebul (Lord of Heavenly Place), it is possible that a true "Lord of Flies" may have existed (especially at Ekron) among Philistines. As inferred by a passage in the Bible this god could have had curative powers, expelling flies (and diseases) from dunghills and people.⁹

Urine has been used worldwide for medical purposes for millennia: the famous Greek physician Galenus (129-ca.201) used to treat his patients with urine and Pliny the Elder (23-79) recommended urine for the treatment of burns, animals' bites, scars, etc.¹⁰ Columella (4-70) maintains the utility of urine in the irrigation of some plants and in the treatment of ill animals.¹¹ The etymology of the term "urine" is not clear: perhaps it derives from Latin *aurum* ("gold", with an evident reference to its colour), perhaps from the Proto Indo-European root **ur* or **ub:r* connected with the concepts of "flow" or "water". Sometimes the term is associated with Latin *urere* (to burn)¹², in emphasizing its curative/alchemic power. It is not certain whether the Manchu word *ura* and the Japanese term *arau* (洗) share the same root of the Proto Indo-European linguistic family. As for the Korean Language, the term *ojum* 오줌 is believed to derive by a root "os/ot" (오/옴), linked to the concept of "water", completed by the suffix particle "um" 음.¹³ Urine was used in ancient times to whiten teeth,¹⁴ but because it

⁹ *Kings* (Books of). *1-2 Re*, a cura di M. Nobile (Roma: Paoline edizioni, 2010). On Ba'al Zebub as possible divinity see Francesco Saracino, "Ras Ibn Hani 78/20 and Some Old Testament Connections." *Vetus Testamentum* 32, no. 3 (1982): 338-343. The divinity known in Greek as Ζεὺς Μυιαγροῦς quoted in various classic texts (Pausanias (Παυσανίας; 2nd century A.D.) *Guida della Grecia* (Ἑλλάδος Περιήγησις: (10 vols). (Milano: Mondadori, 1990-2017), books 5 and 8, Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus: 23-79): *Storia naturale* (*Naturalis Historia*). 6 vol. (Torino: Einaudi, 1982-1988), book 10, Aelianus (Claudius Aelianus - Κλαύδιος Αἰλιανός. Ca. 165-235). *La natura degli animali* (*De natura animalium* - Περί ζῴων ἰδιότητος). (Milano: Rizzoli, 1998), books 5 and 10, etc.) could derive its name and functions from the Philistine god. It is noteworthy that Ba'al Zebub was later assimilated to Satan himself by Christians and such assimilation also was in some ways accepted, through Christians, by the Ashkenazi Jews.

¹⁰ Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus: 23-79): *Storia naturale* (*Naturalis Historia*). 6 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 1982-1988), book 20 *et passim*.

¹¹ Columella (Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella. 4-70): *L'arte dell'agricoltura e Libro sugli alberi* (*De re rustica. De arboribus*). (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), book 2.14, *et passim*.

¹² Julius Evola, *La tradizione ermetica*. Edizioni Mediterranee: Roma, 1996, pg. 140.

¹³ Sō, Chōngbōm 徐廷範. *Kugō ōvōn sajōn* 國語語源辭典 (*An Etymological Dictionary of Korean Language*). Seoul: Pogosa, 2000, p. 449. It is no sure whether this root also is at the basis of modern Mongol *us* (үс), meaning "water". The phonetic resemblance of the Korean root, however, could suggest a relation with the above quoted Indo-European roots, within a possible, common Proto-Boreal origin.

¹⁴ See for example Diodorus Siculus/Διόδωρος Συκελιώτης (ca. 90-27 a.C.): *Bibliotheca historica*, ed. I. Bekker, L. Dindorf, F. Vogel, C.T. Fischer, 6 voll. *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum*

contains ammonia it was also extensively used in the *fullonicae*, the laundries of ancient Rome, with the purpose of cleaning clothes, and Emperor Vespasianus even applied a tax (*vectigal urinae*) on the commercial of urine.¹⁵ Finally, urine has always represented an extreme means by which to survive the absence of drinkable water. We find evidence of this even in Korean sources: during the reign of Chinp'yŏng 眞平 (r. 579-632) Silla soldiers, besieged by Paekche's 百濟 army in the fortress of Kajam 楷岑, and was once they had run of water were forced to drink their own urine.¹⁶ Moreover, in the time of King Sŏngjong 成宗 (1469-1494) a certain Ch'oe Pu 崔浮, who had been shipwrecked near Cheju 濟州 island, drank his own urine in order to survive.¹⁷

In sum, in ancient times excrement played a significant part in daily-life activities, to the point of deserving representative divinities to be worshipped. Excrement also had a rich symbolism: it's no wonder, then, that its appearance in dreams existed in the oldest books of divination, and dreaming of excrement still excites today's collective imagination.

Dream Interpretation and Divination in Ancient Times

Dream interpretation has been practiced since antiquity. Better still; dreams have always played a key role in the collective imagination, starting with those today called "indigenous people". Among the aboriginal cultures of Australia, the "dreamtime" (variously called in different tribes: *tjukurpa* or *jugurrpa*, *ungud*, *nura*, *ngarrankarni*, etc.) is a mythical time whose meaning is extremely complex, but perhaps includes the epoch immediately preceding the creation of the world. This period represents an element of shamanism that many would like to attain, and for this reason dreams are considered an infallible guide to everyday decisions.¹⁸

The most ancient way of explaining dreams is to consider dreams themselves as a

Teubneriana, Leipzig 1888-1906, book 5.33. In particular, this use seems to have been common among Celtiberians.

¹⁵ Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus: ca. 69 –after 122). *Vite dei Cesari (De vita Caesarum)*. 2 vols (Milano: Rizzoli, 1982), Vesp., 23.: *Reprehendenti filio Tito, quod etiam urinae vectigal commentus esset, pecuniam ex prima pensione admovit ad nares, sciscitans num odore offenderetur; et illo negante: "Atqui," inquit, "e lotio est."* (When he was scolded by Titus, his son, for having applied a tax on urine, he [Vespasianus] held a coin from the first payment to his son's nose, asking whether its smell was disgusting or not. When Titus said "No," he replied, "Yet it comes from urine").

¹⁶ *Samguk sagi*, book 4.

¹⁷ *Taedong unbugunok* 大東韻府群玉 (*Gems Collected Among Rhymes of Korea*). 20 books. Compiled by Kwŏn Munhae 權文海 (1534-1591), completed in 1589. (Seoul, Minsogwŏn, 2003-2009), book 16.

¹⁸ On the aboriginal people of Australia see the old (but always useful) work by Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London and New York: MacMillan and Co, 1904).

kind of “message”, more or less clear, sent by supernatural beings.¹⁹ From the invention of writing, dream interpretation was codified and later evolved into oneirocriticism and Oneiromancy. Mesopotamian cultures were very interested in divination and the literature in this subject must have been very rich. In this regard, the most famous text surely is the *Ziqiqu*, an Akkadian word translatable more or less as “spirit” or “phantom”, whose Sumerian counterpart was the theonym Lil.²⁰ “Ziqīqu” was also a son of the Moon god Sin and therefore he was considered the god of dreams, if we are to believe the invocation representing the foreword of the divinatory text known by his name. This text was found in the so-called “Library of Assurbanipal” at Nineveh, but it appears to have been written for the first time in a much more ancient epoch, perhaps at the time of Sumerian Kings.²¹ The text is comprised of eleven tablets, many of which are fragmentary, and it was found in a kind of box also containing some *namburbū*, spells to protect against ominous dreams.²² Of course, professional dream interpreters existed in ancient Mesopotamia, and at least for a certain period, they were known as *šā’īlu*, or “the asking ones”. Also in Mesopotamia existed the practice of “incubation”, that is, the custom of sleeping in a sacred place or in a temple (or near a temple) to obtain a revealing dream from the god worshipped there. Indeed, this practice had diffused throughout the Greco-Roman world and even to China, where it was called *qimeng* 祈夢 (prayer for dream).²³

In any case, the methodology and criteria of interpretation used in *Ziqiqu* are anything but clear, as the interpretations themselves do not seem to have been formulated on the basis of a rational association of ideas. However, it is also true that we do not know much about the imaginary world of ancient Mesopotamia and this great lacuna could bias the exegesis of modern researchers.

¹⁹ Giordano Berti, *Storia della divinazione* (Milano: Mondadori, 2005), pp. 141 ff. Also see Jackson Steward Lincoln, *The Dream in Native American and Other Primitive Cultures* (London: Cresset Press, 1935).

²⁰ Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 81. Lil was a Sumerian god of winds.

²¹ Berti, *cit.*, p. 146.

²² A translated list of *namburbū* is reported in Richard Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburbu Texts: An Introduction* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1974).

²³ Richard J Smith, “Meditation, Divination and Dream Interpretation: Chan/Zen Buddhism, the *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*), and Other Chinese Devices for Jungian Self-Realization,” p. 11. On incubation, see also Gil H. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World* (2 vols) (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017). The practice of incubation still exists in the Chinese world, for example in the temple Zhinangong 指南宮 near Taipei 臺北. As for the West, incubation was largely practiced in classic antiquity (the cave of Trophonius at Lebadea was a famous place of incubation, personally experienced by Pausanias [book 9.37-39]), and, even if condemned by the Christian Church at first, it ended up being tolerated to the point that many believers used to sleep inside or near churches in order to get a propitious dream. In Italy it is practiced even today, for example at the Sanctuary of Saint Gabriel near Teramo (Berti, *cit.*, p. 162).

Egypt must have had a strong tradition of dream interpretation, but the remaining texts date to a relatively modern epoch. However, in the text titled *The Teaching for Merikare*, possibly dating to the Herakleopolitan Period (2160–2025 a.C.),²⁴ we find a passage that reads “(The god) *made for them magic as weapons to ward off what may happen and dreams by night as well as day*” (11.36–37) in order to communicate with humans. This is not concrete proof of divination through dreams, and we have to wait for the reign of Ramesses II to find the first true work concerning dream interpretation, in the papyrus Chester Beatty III (Brit. Mus. 10683), discovered in 1928 which is stored today at the British Museum of London²⁵. This script, probably the remaining part of a much larger text, reports a list of 139 auspicious dreams and 83 ominous dreams. Even in this case, the criteria for interpretation are unclear, but Szpakowska notices that, in Egypt, an initial positive vision of dreams is followed, especially from the Middle Kingdom onward, by a certain distrust and suspicion, as if the dreams themselves represented a kind of boundary between the world of humans and the world of ghosts, as something to be avoided and feared.²⁶ It seems, however, that ancient Egyptians believed that dreams originated from external forces such as spirits, demons or gods, rather than springing from a personal psychic condition,²⁷ but, in any case, in later epochs the Egyptian dream interpreters ended up being considered as masters in their field, thanks in part to the contribution of the Greeks in Egypt.²⁸

²⁴ That is to say, the periods of the reigns of the 9th and 10th dynasties. This date is evinced by some passages in the work, for example that related with the elimination of the post of vizier and that concern the political influence of Herakleopolitan Kings upon the South of Egypt. On the question see Arkadiy E. Demidchik, “The Date of *The Teaching for Merikare*.” *Cultural Heritage of Egypt and Christian Orient*, vol. 6: Egypt and Near Eastern Countries (III Mill. B.C. – I Mill. A.D.) (Moscow, Orleans, Rome, 2011), pp. 59. ff.

²⁵ Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, vol. I (London: British Museum, 1935), pp. 9–22.

²⁶ Kasia Szpakowska, Kasia. “Dream Interpretation in the Ramesside Age.” In *Ramesside Studies in Honour of K.A. Kitchen*, edited by Mark Collier and Steven Snape. Bolton: Rutherford Press, 2011, p. 509. Also useful is the work by Serge Sauneron, Serge. *Les Songes et leur interprétation: Égypte ancienne, Babylone, Hittites, Canaan, Israël, Islam, peuples altaïques, Persans, Kurdes, Inde, Cambodge, Chine, Japon*. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959).

²⁷ Nili Shupak, “A Fresh Look at the Dreams of the Officials and of Pharaoh in the Story of Joseph (Genesis 40–41) in the Light of Egyptian Dreams.” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 30 (2005), p. 106.

²⁸ In this regard see, among others, Luigi Prada, “Dreams, Bilingualism, and Oneiromancy in Ptolemaic Egypt: Remarks on a Recent Study.” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 184 (2013), Luigi Prada, “Oneirology Versus Oneiromancy in Early Christian Egypt: Contextualising P. Duke inv. 244 (= Duke Coptic MS. 25),”. In *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times*, Vol. II (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 247),. Early Christian Egypt: Contextualising P. Duke inv. 244 (=DUKE COPTIC MS. 25), edited by P. Buzi, A. Camplani, F. Contardi,. 1221–1236, (Leuven, Paris, Bristol, CT: Peeters. 2016), and Luigi Prada, “P. Oxy. XXXI 2607 rRe-edited: A Greek *Oneirocriticon* from Roman Egypt.” In *Proceedings of the 27th International Congress of Papyrology. Warsaw 29 July–3 August 2013*, edited by

In the Greek world, the sources on dreams quickly show a clear distinction between “true” dreams and “false” dreams, as reported in a passage of *Odyssey*. Here is what Penelope says to her husband Odysseus who, disguised as a beggar, has not yet been recognized by her:

ξεῖν', ἧ̃ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι
 γίγνοντ', οὐδέ τι πάντα τελείεται ἀνθρώποισι.
 δοιαί γάρ τε πύλαι ἀμενηνῶν εἰσὶν ὄνειρων·
 αἱ μὲν γὰρ κεράεσσι τετεύχεται, αἱ δ' ἔλέφαντι·
 τῶν οἱ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
 οἱ ῥ' ἔλεφαίρονται, ἔπε' ἀκράαντα φέροντες·
 οἱ δὲ διὰ ξεστῶν κεράων ἔλθωσι θύραζε,
 οἱ ῥ' ἔτυμα κραίνουσι, βροτῶν ὅτε κέν τις ἴδηται.

Dreams, o stranger, are really unexplainable and dim,
 And not always they forecast truth for humans.
 For two are the gates open to the shadows of dreams,
 One is made of horn, the other is made of ivory.
 And false are the dreams that pass through the gate of ivory,
 But the dreams that pass through the gate of horn
 Result to be true, whenever mortals see them.²⁹

In these verses, we begin to individuate the core of a concept that will persist throughout the centuries until today; that is to say, dreams are seen on the one hand as an occult manifestation of wishes (and then illusory), and on the other as premonitions of future events.

Greek philosophers did not remain indifferent to dreams and their interpretations. The field is divided into *ὑπᾶρ* (vigil) and *ὄναρ* (dream), and both have their positive and negative sides. The dimension of vigil has concreteness and continuity, but we can only meet a limited number of people and experiences. On the contrary, in the dimension of the dream, we can meet dead friends or relatives, gods, and demons. Dreams represent

T. Derda, A. Łajtar, J. Urbanik, 623–646. Warsaw: 2016.

²⁹ Homer (Ὅμηρος, Traditionally 8th century B.C.). *Odisea* (Ὀδύσσεια) (Torino: Einaudi, 2010), book 19, vv. 560-567. However, the model for Homer's tale could have been a Middle-Eastern one. In this regard see Christopher Metcalf, “Horn and Ivory: Dreams as Portents in Ancient Mesopotamia and Beyond.” In *Perchance to Dream: Dream Divination in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, edited by E.J. Hamori and J. Stökl (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), pp. 18 ff.

the only occasion to rid oneself of the tyranny of time and space.³⁰ Democritus saw dreams as images (...τοὺς ὄνειρους γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὰς τῶν εἰδώλων παραστάσεις),³¹ emanating both from living beings and inanimate objects, able to enter the human body through skin pores. In this way, dreams reproduce in humans the characteristic aspects of the entities that have generated them. Plato explained dreams on the basis of a substantial mysticism, in which dreams have a divine origin and represent truth for people practicing virtue,³² a theory which also was later accepted by early Christians, but Aristotle's point of view was much more rationalist. Aristotle thought that even animals could have dreams and then, by considering dreams as a purely physiological phenomenon, he denied their divine origin as well as Oneirology.³³

Aristotle's rational approach was not excessively welcomed by later thinkers. Nevertheless, there were several attempts at creating techniques and criteria for the explanation and/or divination of dreams by authors who were not necessarily philosophers. Posidonius of Apamea (ca. 135-50 B.C.), perhaps the greatest philosopher of his time and teacher of Cicero, divided dreams into three groups or categories. The first group is comprised of dreams that spring directly from the human souls that, having a divine origin, are able to autonomously produce prophecies. The dreams of the second group are provoked by "immortal souls (and then the "universal soul) which also can reveal the relations among various events. To the third group belong the dreams that are divine revelations:

Sed tribus modis censeo deorum adpulsu homines somnare: uno, quod provideat animus ipse per sese, quippe qui deorum cognatione teneatur; altero, quod plenus aer sit immortalium animorum, in quibus tamquam insignitae notae veritatis appareant; tertio, quod ipsi di cum dormientibus conloquantur.³⁴

In three ways, moreover, (Posidonius) believes that men dream by divine impulse: in the first, because the soul expects from itself, being united by kinship with the gods; in the second, because the air is full of immortal souls,

³⁰ Eric Dodds, *I Greci e l'irrazionale* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1959), p. 119.

³¹ Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1903), p. 396.

³² See, for example, Plato (Πλάτων: 427-347 B.C.): *La Repubblica* (Πολιτεία) (Milano: Bompiani, 2009), book 9.572 a-b.

³³ Aristotele (Αριστοτέλης: 384-322 a.C.). *Il sonno e i sogni* (*De somniis* - Περί ὄνυπνιων) (Venezia: Marsilio editore, 2003), chapter 459 *et passim*.

³⁴ Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero: 106-43 a.C.). *Della divinazione* (*De divinatione*) (Milano: Garzanti, 2006), book 1.64. The works of Posidonius only survive in scarce fragments, some of which are reported by Cicero, who was his pupil.

in which the signs of truth appear, so to speak, clearly impressed; in the third, because the gods themselves speak with the sleepers.

The most famous treatise of Oneiromancy arriving from the classical world, however, is by Artemidorus of Daldis, who flourished in the 2nd century A.D.³⁵ Its success has continued until today and in the Middle Ages it was even translated into Arabic by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (808-873).³⁶ Artemidorus distinguishes “prophetic dreams” (ὄνειρα) from “non-prophetic dreams” (ἐνύπνια), the former forecasting what will happen, and the latter being a projection of the actual psycho-physical condition of the sleeper.³⁷ Moreover, his methodology of interpretation consists of the pseudo-rational ability to (pretend to) understand oneiric allegories and take into account all the dream’s details and circumstances, including types of dress, food consumed, and work, etc. The age, gender, and social status of the dreamer are also considered and sometimes the dream is interpreted on the basis of linguistic puns such as charades and anagrams; and these elements are also found in Chinese standards of interpretation.

Artemidorus’ book is also precious because it reports important information about other dream interpreters whose works are now lost.³⁸ The impressive number of authors quoted by Artemidorus makes us aware of how widespread the “science” of dream interpretation was in ancient times,³⁹ but, in any case, throughout all Antiquity and Late Antiquity dreams remained a source of inspiration: it was said that Pliny the Elder’s work on Germanic wars⁴⁰ was inspired by a dream and Cassius Dio reported that a dream had persuaded him to write his treatise of History.⁴¹

The Christian faith originally opposed any form of dream interpretation and yet was forced to take note of the popularity of this “science” among commoners. The

³⁵ Artemidorus of Daldis (Ἀρτεμιδωρος ὁ Δαλδιανός, 2nd century A.D.): *Dell'interpretazione de' sogni* (Ὀνειροκρυψία). Milano: Rizzoli, 1976.

³⁶ Artémidore d'Éphèse. *Le livre des songes*. Traduit du grec en arabe par Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq. Edition critique avec introduction par Toufic Fahd, Damas, 1964.

³⁷ See, among others, Vered Lev Kenaan, “Artemidorus at the Dream Gates: Myth, Theory, and the Restoration of Liminality.” *American Journal of Philology* 137, no. 2 (2016), especially pp. 190 ff.

³⁸ See the list reported in Dario Del Corno, *Græcorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae*. Collegit Darius Del Corno (Milano: Cisalpino, 1969).

³⁹ Among others: Artemon Milesius, Panyasis Halicarnasseus, Apollonius Attaliensis, Nicostratus Ephesius, Geminus Tyrius, Aristander Telmessius, etc. Also see Gil H. Renberg, Gil H. “The Role of Dream-Interpreters in Greek and Roman Religion.” In *Artemidor von Daldis und die antike Traumdeutung: Texte – Kontexte – Lektüren*. (*Colloquia Augustana* 33), edited by G. Weber, 233-262. Berlin: 2015.

⁴⁰ Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus: ca. 62-113). *Epistolario (Epistulae)*. *Panegirico a Traiano*. 2 vols (Milano: Rizzoli, 1994), book 3.5-4.

⁴¹ Cassius Dio (Lucius Claudius Cassius Dio [Cocceianus]: 155-235). *Storia romana* (Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία, *Historia Romana*). 9 vols (Milano: Rizzoli, 1995-2018), book 73.23-2.

spiritual crisis of identity and human values of Late Antiquity, in fact, pushed all social classes towards many kinds of mysticism and irrationality. Eventually, Christianity struck a compromise, tolerating the term “interpretation” but banning, for obvious reasons, the term “divination”.⁴² And while the “good” dreams were said to be sent by God, the “bad” dreams were considered a consequence of demonic will. Nevertheless, it is a fact that even the future bishop Synesius of Cyrene (ca. 370-413) wrote an appreciative treatise on dreams, where he attested to the efficacy of provisions made on the basis of dreams themselves.⁴³ The fear of the Church’s reaction, however, led to a drastic reduction of works on dreams during the Middle Ages. Since the Renaissance, a more or less ‘scientific’ interest in dreams returned, but in the 19th century dreams were still considered a minor psychological phenomenon. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and his disciple Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) would have to face dreams with a different approach. Far from being simple ‘visions’, dreams were at the core of human mental activity and were an important element in the treatment of psychological maladies.⁴⁴ On the other hand, these two great scientists relegated all of the ancient theories on dreams to the status of mere superstition, on the basis of excessive self-confidence in scientific methodology. By denying and depreciating centuries of debate on the origin and interpretation of dreams their oversight produced misleading results and fortunately has been corrected in recent years.⁴⁵

In the Chinese world, the criteria for dream interpretation is also unclear, even while the literature on dreams is impressive. Narratives based on dreams is significant in China as well as in Korea, where this literary genre is called *mongyurok* 夢遊錄 (Accounts of dreamed events) and has as its masterpiece the novel *The Dream of Nine Clouds*

⁴² On the matter see, among others, Luigi Prada, “Oneirology Versus Oneiromancy... *cit.*” In *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times*. Vol. II (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 247). Early Christian Egypt: Contextualising P.Duke inv. 244 (=DUKE COPTIC MS. 25), edited by P. Buzi, A. Camplani, F. Contardi. 1221-1236 (Leuven, Paris, Bristol, CT: Peeters. 2016).

⁴³ Synesius (Συνέσιος) of Cyrene (ca. 370-413). *Il libro dei sogni* (Περὶ εὐσπνίων λόγος) (Milano, Archinto, 2010). Synesius’ philosophical background was a neo-platonic one (he had been a disciple of the woman philosopher Hypatia) and various aspects of his previous intellectual experiences flow into his new beliefs. Synesius’ work on dreams was the main source of the book *Somniorum Synesiorum* by Gerolamo Cardano (1501-1576). See Gerolamo Cardano, *Somniorum synesiorum libri quatuor* (Venezia: Olschki editore, 2008).

⁴⁴ Silvia Vegetti Finzi, *Storia della psicoanalisi* (Milano: Mondadori, 2008).

⁴⁵ In this regards a key-role has been played by James Hillman (1926-2011) whose deepening and developing Jung’s intuition of psychological “archetype”, has valorized the concept of “collective unconscious” (different from the Freudian “personal unconscious”), whose structures are shared among all humans and also emerge in the sphere of dreams, without any distinction of space or time. See James Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) and James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

(*Kuunmong* 九雲夢) by Kim Manjung 金萬重 (1637-1692).⁴⁶ What is clear is that the Chinese approach to dreams interpretation has always been pragmatic, starting with the famous episode of Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (Zhuangzi) and the Butterfly (*Zhuang Zhou mengdie* 莊周夢蝶) in which the very nature, dimension, identity and difference between reality and dream are questioned in a kind of existential doubt. Since days of old dream interpreters, known by titles such as *tai ren* 大人 (great person) or *gula o* 故老 (elders), existed in ancient China, but the pragmatism I refer to also derives from the strong cultural “contaminations” occurring in China in the course of her history primarily from Buddhism. It is no wonder, therefore, that together with a certain Confucian skepticism toward dreams we also find works like *Shanjianlü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 (Commentary on the Discipline that Sees Well),⁴⁷ where dreams are divided into four types, the first of which includes illusory dreams caused by everyday experience and the dreamer’s physiology, with the others more or less connected to the dreamer’s good or evil actions performed in previous lives.⁴⁸ Finally, the role of so-called “waking dreams” in Chinese culture (one could also say East Asian culture) should not be forgotten. This is a particular oneiric dimension referred to today by psycho-analysis in the case of oneiro-therapy.⁴⁹

In China, dreams are generally considered a consequence of daily-life events and troubles, and their truthfulness may change according to the time at which the dream occurred. As in the case of Artemidorus, however, the social status and the individual horoscope of the dreamer can affect the types and predictions of dreams. Often used in China as an interpretative methodology, Glyphomancy is a kind of verbal pun-making consisting in the dismantlement or disruption of characters (*chai zi* 拆字 or *che zi* 測字): *mutatis mutandis*, something similar to the punning used by Artemidorus. The Ming 明

⁴⁶ It is interesting, in this regard, the fact that, generally, in Eastern literature sleepers do not change their aspect after the dream, whereas in Western literature changes are often dramatic (see, for example, Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* (Köln: Anaconda Verlag, 2005), and Carlo Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2019).

⁴⁷ *Shanjianlü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 (Commentary on the Discipline that Sees Well). A partial translation of the Pāli text *Samantapāsādikā*, a commentary on the Vinaya by Buddhaghoṣa, realized by Saṃghabhadra (Chinese name: Sengjiabatuoluo 僧伽跋陀羅) at the temple Zhulin 竹林 in 488. References are to T. (*Taishō shinshū daijōkyō*) 24, no. 1462.

⁴⁸ Richard E. Strassberg, *Wandering Spirits: Chen Shiyuan's Encyclopedia of Dreams* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 14.

⁴⁹ On “waking dreams” in Chinese culture and oneiro-therapy see Rudy Vavril, “Rêve lucide et pensée chinoise: Étude de méthodes onirothérapeutiques.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Lyon: Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3, 2010. In any case, the condition of reality as dream (and *vice versa*) was not ignored by ancient western philosophers. See, for example, Plato (Πλάτων: 427-347 B.C.): *Teeteto* (Θεαιτητος). (Torino: Einaudi, 2018), chap. 158b.

dream encyclopedias *Mengzhan yizhi* 夢占逸旨 (A Guide to Dreams Interpretation)⁵⁰ and *Menglin xuanjie* 夢林玄解 (Explanations of the Depth of Dreams Forest)⁵¹ represent good examples of such a technique.⁵² In any case, the philosophical/religious debate over dreams in the Far East seems to have been less varied and harsh than in the West.

Urine as a Symbol of Kingship and Munhŭi's Legacy

Modern psycho-analysis provides two main explanations for dreams of urination or of the need to urinate. The first, “Freudian” way associates the need to urinate with unsatisfied sexual desire and the desire for ejaculation.⁵³ The other mainly refers to Jung’s interpretation of the need to urinate as symbolizing the desire to rid one’s self of psychological “waste”, or as representative of any ‘need’, ‘instinct’ or sensation which could be anxiety, expectations, or the inability to express repressed anger and excitement or some other aspect of the unconscious perceived of by dreamers.⁵⁴

In ancient times, though, dreams of urinating were explained in various, and often contradictory, ways. The extant portion of a Mesopotamian source known as the *Ziqiqu* provides a list of at least twenty different dreams of urination, whose interpretation can be either negative or positive. So, for example, we have:

If his urine expa [nds] in front of (his) penis and f [ills (?) all] the streets: his property will be robb [ed] and given to the city [...].

If he urinates over small reeds [he will (not) have sons].

⁵⁰ *Mengzhan yizhi* 夢占逸旨 (A Guide to Dreams Interpretation). A collection of 773 types of dreams. Written by Chen Shiyuan 陳士元 (1516-1597), completed in 1562 (Peking: Yiwenyin shuguan, 1965).

⁵¹ *Menglin xuanjie* 夢林玄解 (Explanations of the deepness of Dreams Forest). Sometimes attributed to Chen Shiyuan. The first available edition dates to 1636 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995).

⁵² Brigid E. Vance, “Deciphering Dreams: How Glyphomancy Worked in Late Ming Dream Encyclopedic Divination.” *The Chinese Historical Review* 24, no. 1 (2017): 5-20. On divination through Chinese characters also see Wōngyōng Sōng, “P’aja ko 破字攷” (“A Study on the Mantic Technique of “Broken Characters”). Part one. *Inmun kwahak nonch’ong* 人文科學論叢 18 (1986): 119-133 and Wōngyōng Sōng, “P’aja ko 破字攷” (A Study on the Mantic Technique of “Broken Characters”). Part two. *Inmun kwahak nonch’ong* 人文科學論叢 19 (1987): 127-139.

⁵³ See, for example, Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), p. 185.

⁵⁴ On the point of view of Jung see, among other, Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1965).

If he drinks the urine of his wife: he will enjoy abundance.⁵⁵

Here we can perceive one of the most ancient attributes of urine; that is to say a creative and generative power (the city is enriched by the urine flowing in its streets; a woman's urine generates abundance) in many ways similar to semen. Indeed, we have already seen that this attribute was more or less shared by many ancient cultures. In this regard, I can also provide a case from Indian religious literature in which the vital essence of a pious widow who had died without sons is transformed into a brahmān's urine that, once licked by a deer, will produce the birth of a girl whose posterity will be famous.⁵⁶

In Artemidorus, however, dreams of urinating do not carry a positive meaning. In book 4.44 of his work, he reports the case of a certain person who dreamed of urinating in a theatre in front of all the spectators. It was considered natural when the man later committed a crime, breaking laws in reality after having offended spectators in the dream. In *Zhougong jiemēn*, as we have seen, urine and feces usually have a positive meaning in dreams.

While part of the ancient association between urine and sexuality survives today in the Freudian approach to oneiric psycho-analysis, forecasts of kingship or royalty after a urination dream are completely absent in modern interpretations. Interestingly, though, the relation between urine and kingship was uncommon in antiquity as well, making Munhūi's dream a particularly precious account. In fact, the already quoted Mesopotamian text *Ziqīqu* includes among various interpretations of urine dreams the following:

If his urine expands in front of (his) penis [and] he does obeisance in front of his urine: he will beget a son and he (i.e., the son) will be king.⁵⁷

To our knowledge, such an interpretation is rare in old Mesopotamian Oneiromancy, as confirmed by other scholars who have analysed the historical reports of Herodotus and Ctesias (see *infra*).⁵⁸

In any case, here we find points of comparison with Munhūi's dream. The first is

⁵⁵ A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East. With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book". *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (New Series) 46, no. 3 (1956): 256-266.

⁵⁶ Édouard Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois*. Tome I (Paris: Ernest Leroux Éditeur, 1910), pp. 80-82.

⁵⁷ Oppenheim, *cit.*, p. 265.

⁵⁸ Dominique Lenfant, Dominique. *Ctésias de Cnide: La Perse, l'Inde, autres fragments*. (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2004).

that kingship is not forecast for the dreamer, but for their relative, in this case their son. In the case of Mandane, we will deal with later, the relation will be father to daughter. In the case of Munhŭi it is the relationship of elder to younger sister. In an anthropological context involving blood-lineage, urine is related to sexuality, flowing through genitalia. As for Munhŭi, her kingship is not explicitly forecast, but she seems aware of (or at least able to understand) the meaning of the dream, otherwise, she would not have bought it. Should we conclude, therefore, that the association between urine and kingship was in some way generally recognized in the Silla Kingdom? Perhaps it was not. If so, in fact, Pohŭi would not have sold her dream. In this regard, some scholars have seen the tale of Munhŭi as an allegory of the importance of teaching younger people, where the love of an elder sister for her younger sister prevails over hopes for personal success⁵⁹, but I disagree with this point of view. If Pohŭi had in fact wanted to perform an act of love towards her sister, she would not have accepted anything in return. Moreover, in the version reported in the *Samguk sagi*, Pohŭi appears perplexed in accepting Munhŭi's proposal. Personally, I see in Munhŭi's tale the broad theme of the final success of the last-born (or younger) son or daughter, perhaps as compensation for their minor role inside the familiar group. In Korea there are numerous examples: the main character in the Tale of Paridegi *바리데기* is a last-born princess, in the tale of Chinŭi, she is a last-born daughter, and in the tale of Hŭngbu *興夫* and Nolbu *怒夫* the younger brother gains the favor of heaven. As a matter of fact, contrary to her elder sister, Munhŭi suddenly becomes aware of the dream's meaning, whereas Pohŭi forfeits her dream in exchange for immediate gain. Munhŭi, therefore, turns out to have been smarter and wiser than her sister and for this reason, she (rather than the sister) deserves to become Queen. Indeed, the story of a younger brother or sister who is wiser than their elder is a *tópos* of fable narrative since ancient times: *mutatis mutandis*, the tale of Munhŭi recalls the biblical episode where Esau exchanges his birthright for a bowl of lentils.⁶⁰

The next passage is drawn from the Histories of Herodotus and regards Mandane, the Median Princess who became the mother of Cyrus the Great. We have to pay much attention to this passage, as it could have been the main source or model for Munhŭi's episode:

ἐκδέκεται δὲ Ἀστυάγης Κυαζάρω παῖς τὴν βασιληίην. καὶ οἱ ἐγένετο
θυγάτηρ τῇ οὐνομα ἔθετο Μανδάνην· τὴν ἐδόκεε Ἀστυάγης ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ
οὐρῆσαι τοσοῦτον ὥστε πλησῆαι μὲν τὴν ἐωυτοῦ πόλιν, ἐπικατακλύσαι δὲ

⁵⁹ See, for example, Yŏngyun No, "A Study on the Psychological Characteristics and Meanings of Urination Dream Trade in Tales," *Han'gukhak yŏn'gu* 한국학 연구 40 (2012): 39-62.

⁶⁰ *Genesis. Il libro della Genesi* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2015).

καὶ τὴν Ἀσίην πᾶσαν. ὑπερθέμενος δὲ τῶν Μάγων τοῖσι ὄνειροπόλοισι τὸ ἐνύπνιον, ἐφοβήθη παρ' αὐτῶν αὐτὰ ἕκαστα μαθῶν.

Astyages, son of Kyaxares, received the throne by his father. He then had a daughter who was called Mandane⁶¹; and in his sleep it seemed to him that she urinated so much as to fill his city and also to flood the whole of Asia. Regarding this dream, he then asked those Magian interpreters of dreams for advice, and, once he learned the precise truth from them, he was afraid.⁶²

And that is not all. In a successive dream, Astyages saw a vine that, coming out from Mandane's vulva, had covered the whole continent of Asia. Astyages had this dream in the first year of Mandane's marriage to Cambyses and he was told by dream-expert Magi that Mandane would have a son who would one day become a king and seize supreme power. These dreams once more attest to the symbiosis between the ideas of urine and sexual reproduction⁶³, although a plant springing forth from the human body forecasts death or disease according to Artemidorus' interpretation.⁶⁴

There is a variant of Mandane's tale, however. In a fragment of the Greek historian Ctesias, the very mother⁶⁵ of Cyrus informs her son of the urination dream⁶⁶. Some modern authors see Herodotus' account of Cyrus' birth as a narrative pattern echoing Greek myths and legends such as those of Oedipus and Atreus,⁶⁷ but some details, like the relationship between urination and royalty, seem to have nothing to do, originally,

⁶¹ Probably from the Old Persian *Mandana (cheerful, delighting). See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mandane>

⁶² Herodotus (Ἡρόδοτος, Ca. 484-430 B.C.). *Storie (Ἱστορίαι)*. 4 vols (Milano: Rizzoli, 1984).

⁶³ Christopher Pelling, "The Urine and the Vine: Astyages' Dreams at Herodotus 1.107-8". *The Classical Quarterly* (New Series) 46, no. 1 (1996), p. 69 considers the second dream the stronger one, with reference to power.

⁶⁴ Artemidorus, book 3.46 *et passim*. An exception is the passage of book 5.18, where it is told about a plant of olive sprang from a man's head, and that man successfully cultivated philosophy.

⁶⁵ Sources other than Herodotus (including Ctesias) say that the mother of Cyrus was Argoste, of humble origin, and Cyrus himself later married a daughter of Astyages named Amytis. On the question see also Antonio Panaino, "A Mesopotamian Omen in the Cycle of Cyrus the Great." In *Of f God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola*, edited by Mikko Luuko *et al.* (Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society, 2009), p. 393.

⁶⁶ Wilhelm Dindorf and Carl Muller, *Herodoti Halicarnassensis Historiarum Libri Novem – Ctesia Cnidii Fragmenta* (Paris: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1844). Also see Andrew Nichols, "The Complete Fragments of Ctesias of Cnidus: Translation and Commentary with an Introduction." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 2008, and Matt Waters, *Ctesias' Persica and Its Near Eastern Context* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), p. 67 ff.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Charles C. Chiasson, "Myth and Truth in Herodotus' Cyrus *Logos*". In *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*, edited by E. Baragwanath and M. De Bakker, 213-234 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 221-222.

with the Greek world and, therefore, the power meant and forecasted by Astyages' dreams should be seen as an interpretative act which was limited, in some ways, to the Middle-Eastern cultural area.

Despite the relative scarcity of sources, it is necessary to provide some sense to the episode recorded by Herodotus (after it had been re-proposed by Pompeius Trogus). The allegory of a vine springing from Mandane's vagina is understandable: it represents Mandane's offspring and the birth of rulers, as vines are often associated with power and, generally, full of rich symbolism. Vines produce wine, sacred to Dionysus/Bacchus, and to Christians (as the blood of Jesus Christ). A vine's method of growth symbolizes tenacity, regeneration, survival, expansion, and fertility, as vines can find their way in any grove. The vine also means to command: the stick used by ancient Roman centurions was made of vines, named *bacillum viteum*, and was an instrument of both authority and punishment.

The urine flood as a harbinger of kingship, however, has a more uncertain symbolism, and no explanation is provided in ancient sources about such a relationship. This reconstruction of similar symbolism, therefore, is purely hypothetical and will attempt to interpret meaning in Astyages' dream with analysis focused on two key elements: the urine and the quantity of urine.

Regarding the first element, apart from the already known generative power of urine, we must consider the primordial function of urine as a territorial marker. Many species of mammals mark their territory by discharging urine, and this motivation would have been understood by ancient humans as well. Covering a particular territory with urine, therefore, corresponds with control over that territory; hence the relationship between urine and kingship. As for the second element, I cannot rule out the connection between the urine flood and the great deluge, an episode first reported in Middle-Eastern texts. The Deluge is much more than a mere natural disaster: it is more or less a divine act aimed at wiping out the old order and installing a new world:⁶⁸ this is exactly what Cyrus the Great, King Muyōl 武烈, and T'aejo Wang Kōn 太祖王建 did. And that is not all. The sacredness of the deluge, in fact, is echoed by the initiation rite of baptism that once was performed through the total immersion of the believer in the water, to symbolize the beginning of a new religious awareness and then a new life.

It is a fact that the close resemblance between Mandane's tale and Munhūi's tale was not missed by Korean scholars,⁶⁹ but the similarity is not limited to mere urination.

⁶⁸ The "old order" I refer to is not necessarily a "Chaos" as hypothesized by some scholars (for example, Guiyu Piao, "A Study of the Mythological Aspects in the Tales of Urination." *Saegugō kyoyuk* 77 [(2007)]: 689-705). Simply, it is a cultural/political entity different from the new one.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Chin Yun, "Oracles and Dreams in the 1st Book of Herodotus' *History*." *Yōksa-
na tamnon* 역사와 담론 40 (2005): 203-220, and Chin Yun, "Oracles and Dreams as Literary Devices in

Astyages is not considered a particularly wise king,⁷⁰ and Mandane's dream also forecasts a change (from Medians to Persians) in dynastic lineage, for the instauration of a new moral and political order. This more or less, recalls the destiny of Munhŭi, who becomes the Queen of the first Silla King of *chingol* origin. We cannot know if the Munhŭi tale can be explained as a criticism of the old *sŏnggol* rulers and as praise for Kaya 伽倻's descendants, but what is sure is that the end of the *sŏnggol* was a definitive one, together with particular characters, such as the *kalmunwang* 葛文王, whose real function is still up for debate. In any case, we have to pay attention to this particular aspect of the dream: as a matter of fact, not only do the dreams in the tales of Mandane and Munhŭi forecast kingship, but they also announce the start of a new dynasty. This was also later true in the case of Chinŭi and the foundation of Koryŏ 高麗 dynasty. In each case, the vehicle for the instauration of a new dynasty is a woman (spouse and mother of a king) and this could be a dim remembrance of an epoch in which, at least in the Korean peninsula, women enjoyed high status, authority, and consideration.⁷¹ Moreover, in the dream of Munhŭi urination occurs on a particular mountain: that mountain Sŏhyŏng (another name for Mount Sŏndo 仙桃), which is strictly connected with the Divine Mother of West (Sŏwangmo 西王母) and her Korean counterpart, the Sŏndo Sŏngmo 仙桃聖母.⁷² Moreover, Mount Sŏndo is one of the five sacred mountains (*o'ak* 五嶽) of Silla, a symbol and guardian of that nation's territory, a 'holy' place for the instauration of a new 'holy' dynasty and a symbol of the new 'holiness' of its kings, a conception that will continue in the Koryŏ period.⁷³ For this reason, the woman urinating there becomes a new Holy Mother herself, reviving and recreating the myths of the past.

Urination as creation is also attested to in the Korean myth of Sŏlmundae halmang 설문대할망 and the creation of Cheju 濟州 island,⁷⁴ but the tale of Munhŭi

Herodotus' History." *Sŏyang kodaesa yŏn'gu* 서양고대사연구, 17 (2005), p. 44.

⁷⁰ See Adrian David Hugh Bivar, "The Allegory of Astyages." Available at: <http://m-hosseini.ir/mad-hakha/articles-1/19.pdf>

⁷¹ On the possible high consideration and dominating attitude of women in ancient Korea see Maurizio Riotto, "Oedipus in Korea: Echoes of Social Clashes in the Legends of Silla". *The Review of Korean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2017): 111-143.

⁷² On the connection between Silla and the Divine Mother see Sŏnju Kim, "The Formative Background of the Sŏndo Sŏngmo suhŭuibulsa and its Meaning," *Silla sabakpo* 新羅史學報, 43 (2018), pp. 37-66. The Divine Mother of Silla actually is Ar'yŏng 闕英, spouse and Queen of Pak Hyŏkkŏse and I want to emphasize here the fact that this feminine character becomes less and less important in the course of Korean History. This is another proof, in my opinion, of an original matriarchy/matrilinearity in Korea, later substituted by patriarchy.

⁷³ The "holiness" of Koryŏ Kings, also announced through dreams, is emphasized in Chŏngsu Han, "The Content and Meaning of the Dream Vision (Prognostic in a Dream) of Kings in the Koryŏ Dynasty," *Sungsil sabak* 崇實史學 35 (2015): 73-106, especially pp. 83 ff.

⁷⁴ In this regard see Hyegyŏng Ko, "A Reconstruction, through a symbolic interpretation, of the Image of the Cosmogonic Goddess Sŏlmundae halmang," *Kubi munhak yŏn'gu* 口碑文學研究 28 (2009): 1-22,

who bought a dream established an important precedent that was followed by Korean historiographers. The most relevant imitation of Munhŭi's episode regards the dream bought by Chinŭi, whose relation with Tang Emperor Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756-762) led to the birth of Chakchaegŏn 作帝建, the ancestor of Wang Kŏn, the founder of Koryŏ. This story is reported in more than one text and here it is presented as follows:

寶育性慈惠，出家，入智異山修道，還居平那山北岬，又徙摩訶岬。嘗夢登鵠嶺，向南便旋，瀾溢三韓山川，變成銀海。明日，以語其兄伊帝建，伊帝建曰，‘汝必生支天之柱。’以其女德周妻之。遂爲居士，仍於摩訶岬，構木菴。有新羅術士見之曰，‘居此，必大唐天子來作婿矣。’後生二女，季曰辰義，美而多才智。年甫笄，其姊夢登五冠山頂而旋，流溢天下。覺與辰義說，辰義曰，‘請以綾裙買之。’姊許之。辰義令更說夢，攬而懷之者三，既而身動若有得，心頗自負。⁷⁵

Poyuk 寶育 had a benevolent character and for this reason he abandoned his home and entered Mount Chiri 智異 in order to cultivate virtue. Successively, he stayed at Pukkap 北岬, on Mount P'yŏngna 平那 and eventually he moved to Maagap 摩訶岬. A certain night, he dreamed of climbing Peak Kok 鵠嶺 and, once there, of urinating southward in such a quantity that urine submerged the whole Three Han 三韓 as a kind of silver-coloured sea. The day after he told the dream to his elder brother Ijegŏn 伊帝建, who said to him: “Without doubt, you will have an eminent offspring, an authentic pillar able to sustain sky.” So, Ijegŏn gave Poyuk his own daughter Tŏkchu 德周 as wife.

Successively, Poyuk made a hermit life at Maagap, building a refuge made of tree branches. One day, a foreteller of Silla said to him: “As you live here, the Emperor of Tang will come and become your son in law.”

After this event, Poyuk had two daughters. The second daughter, Chinŭi, was particularly talented, beautiful and wise. When Chinŭi was 15 years old, her older sister dreamed of ascending Mount Ogwan 五冠 and urinating there

especially pp. 8 ff.

⁷⁵ *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 (*History of Koryŏ*). 139 books. Compiled by a team of scholars including Chŏng Inji 鄭麟趾 (1396-1478), Kim Chongsŏ 金宗瑞 (1383~1453) and others. First published in 1451. (Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn, 1992), *segye* section. The tale also is found in *Tongguk yŏji sŏngnam*: see *Sinjŏng tongguk yŏji sŏngnam*, 新增東國輿地勝覽 (New and Enlarged Geographical Treatise on Korea). 55 books. Completed around 1530 by Yi Haeng 李荇 (1478-1534) *et al.* (Seoul: Minjok munhwa ch'ujinhoe, 1969), book 12. On the tales related to the foundation of Koryŏ in *Koryŏ segye* see Sejŏng O, “A Study on the Narrative Structure of the Koryŏ Foundation Myths in *Koryŏ segye*,” *Kojŏn munhak yŏn'gu* 古典文學研究 49 (2016):71-97, and Taebok Pak, “The Literary Meaning and Character of the Ancestor Myths in *Koryŏ segye*,” *Ōmun yŏn'gu* 語文研究 39, no. 1 (2011): 137-167. The latter considers the tales of *Koryŏ segye* nothing but a eulogy of an ancestor rather than myths of the foundation of the Nation. I have some doubts apropos of this discrimination, as rulers and nations actually are the same thing, especially in the Eastern countries.

in such a quantity to inundate and submerge the whole world. She told this dream to the sister and Chinŭi proposed her to exchange that dream for a silk skirt. The elder sister agreed and then Chinŭi made her to tell the dream again. Chinŭi seized the dream and suddenly she felt for three times a particular sensation, as something was brooding inside her moving her body.

The tale is almost identical to that of Munhŭi, with the sole exception of Poyuk's urination.⁷⁶ The logic is evident: both tales forecast a change in political order, but if the date of the formation of Munhŭi's tale is unknown (and then we do not know whether the tale of Munhŭi has a precise political intent or is just a popular story), in the tale of Chinŭi, (which is definitely a script of propaganda for Koryŏ dynasty), we have more precise information. The texts of the Chosŏn period which report the tale, in fact, often refer to a now lost work of the Koryŏ period, the *P'yŏnnyŏn t'ongnok* 編年通錄 (*Comprehensive Historical Chronology*) written by a certain Kim Kwanŭi 金寬毅.⁷⁷ The span of Kim Kwanŭi's existence is unknown, but his life may reasonably be collocated in the Middle Koryŏ Period, and then to around the 12th century. This is the period of "systemization" of historiography in Korea, but also an epoch of internal disorder in which works of propaganda in favour of the ruling dynasty would have been welcomed at the court of Kaegyŏng 開京.⁷⁸

Munhŭi's "legacy" is also visible in the tale of lady Hwangbo 皇甫, the mother of Koryŏ King Hyŏnjong 顯宗 (r. 1010-1031), later recorded as queen Hyosuk 孝肅 or Hŏnjŏng 獻貞.⁷⁹ In this case, it is difficult to see an act of legitimation of the dynasty in the tale, and more probable that the story had been forged within the clan of lady Hwangbo for obvious reasons of familiar prestige.

However, the most unique aspect of Munhŭi's tale regards the "commercialization" of the dream. Buying or selling a dream, in fact, seems to be completely unknown to

⁷⁶ T'aehyo Kwŏn "The character of giants tales in urination dreams tales," *Kubi munhak yŏn'gu* 口碑文學研究 2 (1995): 175-200. Kwŏn sees the Korean dreams of urination of historiography as an extension of the tales of giants of folklore. In particular, he sees in the tale of Chinŭi the exaltation of the majesty of the Holy Mother of Mount Chiri, in a kind of parallelism with Munhŭi's dream.

⁷⁷ See the critical analysis of this work made in *Tongsa kangmok* 東史綱目 (*General Profile of Korean History*). 20 books (17 books plus 3 books of *addenda*). Written by An Chŏngbok 安鼎福 (1712-1791) during the reign of Chŏngjo 正祖 (r. 1776-1800) (Seoul, Minjok munhwa ch'ujinhoe, 1985), purok, book 1.

⁷⁸ It is not a mere chance that Kim Pusik 金富軾, the author of *Samguk sagi*, was the mortal enemy of monk Myoch'ŏng 妙清 the chief of a dramatic revolt in 1135. As for Kim Kwanŭi, he possibly flourished during the reign of King Ŭijong 毅宗 (r. 1146-1170). Apropos of the purpose of his main work, Inuk Hŏ, ("Silla-Successionism in the *P'yŏnnyŏn t'ongnok* and the Purpose of Its Compilation,"), *Sach'ong* 史叢 56 (2003), pp. 25 ff., Ho hypothesizes that of strengthening the role of capital Kaegyŏng against the aristocracy having sympathy for old Silla.

⁷⁹ *Tongguk yŏji sŏngnam*, *cit.*, book 31.

ancient Oneiromancy (at least in the west) and the reason is quite clear: dreams are sent by supernatural spirits to a single person or, in any case, dreams are an expression and result of an individual's state of mind. The tale of Munhŭi crushes and upsets this starting point for any traditional interpretation, making dreams something unconnected with the dreamer, which can become alienable predictions whose consequences are not limited to the original dreamer but to anyone who obtains it. Moreover, the episodes of Munhŭi and Chinŭi show that dreams are received in the body, perhaps because that was the part believed to be the dreams' origins. This last particular point makes the Munhŭi tale an anthropological masterpiece in the history of the world's Oneiromancy.⁸⁰

Conclusions

Urine as an announcement of royalty or kingship is today a completely lost interpretation, according to modern psycho-analysis. However, we have seen that the ancient ways of explaining dreams were extremely complex and not always understandable on the basis of today's intellectual instruments. Regarding the episode of Munhŭi (as well as Mandane's story), it is an ancient tale distant from our modern perception of the world: to pretend to offer a complete explanation is quite difficult, and researchers must approach the matter with this in mind. Therefore, after investigating approaches to dreams in Eurasia, my proposal for an interpretation of the episode of Munhŭi can be condensed in the following points:

1) The dream bought by Munhŭi refers to a very archaic cultural pattern where urine is considered a creative/fecundating power and a territorial marker, whose abnormal quantity symbolizes a deluge/baptism able to wipe out the old world in favour of a new political order.

2) The dynamics of Munhŭi's dream do not seem to belong to a Far Eastern cultural/anthropological context. In this regard, a Middle Eastern origin of urination as a harbinger of kingship cannot be excluded; indeed, the events reported by various Korean texts (i.e. the introduction of Buddhism to Korea by Indo-Iranic monks or the possible Middle-Eastern origin of the *Tale of Paridegi*) seem to strengthen the hypothesis of cultural "contaminations" which occurred in ancient times between the Korean peninsula and the west.⁸¹

⁸⁰ What is certain is that the tale of Munhŭi is much more than a mere familiar saga, as reductively prospected by Kyuhun Chŏng, "A Study of the Dreams Narrated in *Samguk yusa*, with Particular Reference to the Aspects Transmitted to the Classic Novel," *Kjemyŏng ōmunhak* 啓明語文學 5, no. 1 (1990), p.: 248.

⁸¹ See, for example, Maurizio Riotta, "A Possible Literary Prototype of *The Tale of Paridegi*," *Horizons, Seoul*

3) The tale of Munhŭi has strong symbolism and it should be read in an allegoric way. The act of urination in a holy place makes Munhŭi a new "Holy Mother" able to renovate the kingdom of Silla. Moreover, as a woman, Munhŭi again affirms the primitive, high status of women in Silla by becoming (under the inspiration of a dream, and then according to Heaven's will) the instrument of dynastic change.

4) The fact of "buying a dream" represents an interesting (and quite rare, as far as I know) element in the history of dream interpretation, since it presupposes that dreams' premonitions are not necessarily *ad personam*, but that the sleeper has the capacity and the faculty to transmit his or her oneiric experience, while the meaning and the force of the dream remains intact. In buying the dream, Munhŭi demonstrates more wisdom than her sister and proves to be more worthy of becoming Queen.

5) The "house" of dreams in the human body is probably the heart, for Munhŭi widens the collar of her dress to receive the dream from her elder sister. This could be an important hint in ascertaining the parts of the body able to perceive dreams in antiquity.

More than one thousand years divide Mandane from Munhŭi, but... *Dreams are like stars: just look up and they are always there* (Jim Morrison).

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