

## 5. THE GARUDA AND OTHER FABULOUS GIANT-BIRDS.

The following correspondence appears in the *Academy* of March 27th and April 11th last:—

*Dedham, Essex,*  
*March 23, 1891.*

SIR,—Dr. K. Kohler, in the *Academy* for March 21 (p. 284), in reference to the Chaldæan story of “The Eagle and the Serpent,” sees some connexion between it and the old Persian legends relating to Simurgh. The Sîn-bird or Simurgh is the Avesta *Saena-meregha* (Skt. *çyena-mṛiga*), usually rendered by “eagle.” Dr. West, in his Pahlavi texts (“Sacred Books of the East,” vol. v. pt. i.), translates the Sîn-bird by “griffon.” In Bundahis xxiv. 11 we read that “first of all birds the *griffon* of three natures was created, not for this world.”

The Simurgh seems to have some connexion with the Hindu Garuḍa or Garuda, the great enemy of serpents and snakes. In the Chaldæan legend the eagle is clearly described as at deadly enmity with the serpent.

According to Hindu tradition, the Garuḍa, the bird of Vishnu, was the king of the Suparṇas, whose abode was said to be in the Simbalī forest. In Chinese Buddhist legends we find a reference to the Garuḍa as the devourer of the serpent-dragon, etc. The Great Rain asking Sūtra says:

“To the North of the great Ocean there is a large tree called Kūtasālmali; it is seven yojanas round at its root, and is embedded twenty yojanas in the ground. It grows one hundred yojanas high, and its branches spread fifty yojanas round.

“. . . The king of these Garuḍas, when he wishes to seize the dragons, flies up into the tree and looks down on the Ocean; then he flaps his wings and divides the waters to the distance of 1600 yojanas, on which he flies down and picks up the dragons just as he pleases and eats them” (Beal’s *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 50).

The Sîn-bird’s resting-place was also said to be on a sacred tree (see note to Bn. xxiv. 11, in “Sacred Books of the East,” vol. v. p. 89).

Gubernatis looks upon the mythological eagle of the Hindus as the winged solar horse; and he thinks that the first trace of the legendary and proverbial enmity between birds of prey and the serpent is to be found in the contest between Indra, as a çyena or hawk, and Ahi (*Zoological Mythology*, vol. ii. pp. 182, 183).

In the *Academy* for October 18, 1890 (pp. 344-5), I have suggested that the fabulous Garuḍa or Suparṇa was borrowed by the Hindus from a non-Aryan mythology, most probably from the Dravidians through the Babylonians. The Chaldæan story renders this supposition highly probable.

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*April 5th, 1891.*

SIR,—Having just treated the above subject with a certain amount of detail in a paper read before the philological section of the Congrès international des Savants Catholiques, now sitting in Paris, and entitled “Çyêna-Sîmurgh-Roc : un chapitre d'évolution philologique et mythologique,” I may perhaps be allowed to supplement Dr. R. Morris's letter in your last issue by a few remarks on several points touched upon by him.

Çyêna, as a name probably of the eagle, and the greatest and swiftest of all birds, is of frequent occurrence in the Vedas. Çyêne-mṛga, however, does not, I believe, occur; indeed, mṛga, as meaning “bird,” except with some epithet like “patarus,” is not, I suppose, Sanskrit. Neither does Çaêna-meregha occur in Avestic; but once, indeed, we have meregho çaênô with the identical meaning (Bahram Yesht, 41). Çaêna as a mystic bird is a well-known character in the Avesta; and while in the Vedas Çyêna is chiefly the natural, zoological creature, with but slight mythical characteristics (except in connexion with the Sôma plant), the Avestic Çaêna is almost purely mythical. Strictly speaking, there seem to have been more than one of these giant birds and Yesht xiii. 109, is generally inter-

preted as giving the names of two Çâênas, Amru and Camru. The latter has become in post-Avestic literature the bird Camrôsh, who has many features of grotesque exaggeration recalling the Hindu Garuða, but who is always distinctly put as second to Çâêna (Amru). This latter is the well-known Çînô mûrû, or Çîn bird, also called the "Çîn of three natures," of the Pehlevi sacred books. This curious epithet is, I think, doubtless a Volks-etymologie, as if "çî-mûrû=" "three-bird," çî being Pehlevi for "three." One of the characteristics of these Eranian gigantic birds is their wisdom. In my Paris paper I have ventured (I fear rather rashly) to compare the "wise eagle" of R.V. 322, 7, "Çyêna amûra," with the wise Çâêna Amru of the Avesta; and it is at least curious that, in the Mainyoi-Khard, the Pehlevi form of the name is Çinamru.

There is, of course, no doubt that the Persian Sîmurgh, e.g. of Firdusi, Sadi, etc., is a modernized form of this Pehlevi Çîno mûrû or Çîn amru. My own idea, too, is that the Perso-Arabian rukh (roc) is formed from the latter part of the name Sîmurgh, to which supposition the Uigur name for the eagle, simrukha, seems to add some likelihood.

The monstrous Hindu Garuða is brought into connexion with the Vedic Çyêna in this way. The Vedas are acquainted with a heavenly bird Garutmân, whose name certainly cannot be separated etymologically from the later Sanskrit Garuða, the bird of Vishnu. Now in the Râmâyana (vii. 6) this Garuða is made to be a grandchild of one Çyênî, which is nothing else than a feminine form of Çyêna. In Râmâyana iii. 162, Garuða carries off the amṛta (ambrosia) from heaven, just as the Vedic Çyêna does the sacred Sôma plant.

The Chinese Buddhist legend quoted by Dr. Morris after Dr. Beal is singularly like the description of Camrôsh (not Çîno mûrû) in the Bundelesh xix. 15, where that giant bird goes about picking up, "as a bird does corn," not dragons, but entire hostile non-Eranian districts! (*Zak-i . . an-Airân matâân cînît cigûn mûrûo dânak.*) Garuða's exploits are nowhere to this surely!

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