

References

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...If you call out for Insight...

No. 83
May 1980

You will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
Based on Proverbs 2:3-5

Noah and Human Etymology

by Bengt Sage*

As traditions of the universal flood spread around the world with the post-Ararat migrations, the venerable name of Noah traveled with them.¹ This seems especially evident by way of the ancient Sanskrit language and the name Manu. The Sanskrit term may in turn have come from an equivalent word in the so-called "Proto-Indo-European" language.

Manu was the name of the flood hero in the traditions of India. He, like Noah, is said to have built an ark in which eight people were saved. It is highly probable that Noah and Manu were thus the same individual. "Ma" is an ancient word for "water," so that Manu could mean "Noah of the waters." In the Hebrew Old Testament, the words "water" and "waters" are both translations of *mayim*, with the syllable *yim* being the standard Hebrew plural ending.

The "ma" prefix could well be the original form of *mar* and *mer* (Spanish and French for, "sea," both from the Latin *mare*) and thus of such English words as "marine."

In Sanskrit, the name Manu appropriately came to mean "man" or "mankind" (since Manu, or Noah, was the father of all post-flood mankind). The word is related to the Germanic *Mannus*,² the founder of the West Germanic peoples. *Mannus* was mentioned by the Roman historian Tacitus in his book *Germania*.³ *Mannus* is also the name of the Lithuanian Noah.⁴ Another Sanskrit form, *manusa* is closely related to the Swedish *manniska*,⁵ both words meaning "human being."

The same name may even be reflected in the Egyptian Menes (founder of the first dynasty of Egypt) and Minos (founder and first king of Crete). Minos was also said in Greek mythology to be the son of Zeus and ruler of the sea.⁶

The English word "man" is thus also related to the Sanskrit *manu*, as well as its equivalents in other Germanic languages. Gothic, the oldest known Germanic language, used the form *Manna*, and also *gaman* ("fellow man").

The name Anu appears in Sumerian as the god of the firmament, and the rainbow was called "the great bow of Anu,"⁷ which seems a clear reference to Noah (note Genesis 9:13). In Egyptian mythology Nu was the god of waters

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who sent an inundation to destroy mankind.⁸ Nu and his consort Nut were deities of the firmament and the rain. Nu was identified with the primeval watery mass of heaven, his name also meaning "sky."⁹

In Africa, the king of the Congo (the Congo Empire once included the entire Congo basin, now incorporating the territories of Angola, Zaire, Cabinda and the Congo Republic) was called Mani Congo. "Mani" was a noble rank given to great chiefs, ministers, governors, priests and the king himself. This empire, in fact, was once called the Manikongo Empire.¹⁰

In Europe, the prefix "ma" seems often to have taken the form da, which is an old word for "water" or "river." This led to the name "Don" in England and Russia and "Danube" in the Balkans. The first Greeks living in the coastal regions were called Danaoi, or "water people."¹¹ Variants of the name Danube have included Donau, Dunaj, Duna, Dunau, and Dunay. The root of all of these names is danu, which means "river" or "flowing."¹² The Latvian river Dvina was formerly called Duna, so it also is from the same Indo-European root word danu. The similarity of danu to manu is evident.¹³

From India, the Sanskrit "manu" also traveled east. In Japan, "manu" became "maru," a word which is included in the name of most Japanese ships. In ancient Chinese mythology, the god Hakudo Maru came down from heaven to teach people how to make ships. This name could well relate to Noah, the first shipbuilder.

The custom of including "maru" in the names of Japanese ships seems to have started between the 12th and 14th centuries. In the late 16th century, the warlord Hideyoshi built Japan's first really large ship, calling it "Nippon Maru." In Japanese "maru" also seems to mean a round enclosure, or circle of refuge, so that the circle is considered to be a sign of good fortune. Noah's ark, of course, had been the first great enclosure of refuge.

The aboriginals of Japan are called Ainu, a word which means "man."¹⁴ The word mai denotes "aboriginal man" in some of the Australian aboriginal languages. In Hawaii, mano is the word for "shark," as well as the name for the shark god. A hill on the island of Molokai is named Puu Mano ("hill of the shark god").¹⁵ The word for "mountain" is mauna, and it may also be that Hawaii's great volcanic mountains (Mauna Loa, for example, is the largest and most active volcano in the world) reminded its first settlers of Mount Ararat, also a great volcanic mountain, so that they named such mountains after the name of their ancestor Manu or Noah. Ararat, by the way, is the same as Armenia in the Bible. The prefix "Ar" means "Mountain," so that "Armenia" probably means "the mountain of Meni."

On the American continent, "manu" seems to have been modified into several forms. In the Sioux language, it took the form minne, meaning "water." Thus, Minneapolis means "city of water," Minnesota means "sky blue water," etc. In the Assiniboine language, "minnetoba" meant "water prairie." This name is preserved in the Canadian province of Manitoba. However, this word may also have been derived from the Cree and Ojibiva-Saulteaux languages, in which "manitoba" meant "the place of the Great Spirit." Manitou ("the Great Spirit") was the chief god among Algonquins.¹⁶

Even in South America can be found traces of the ancient name Manu. The name of Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, comes from the Nahuatl managuac, which means "surrounded by ponds."

Francisco Lopez de Gomara, secretary to the Conqueror Cortez, has given an account of the fabled city of Manoa, supposed to be the capital of El Dorado, the city of gold. Manoa (meaning "Noah's water") was said to be a dead city high in the Sierra Parina between Brazil and Venezuela.¹⁷ The Brazilian city Manaus on the Amazon River was named after the aboriginal Indian tribe Manau which once dominated the region. In Bolivia there is a town of Manoa and a river called Manu in Peru. In fact, several rivers include "manu" in their names—Muymanu, Tahuamanu, Pariamanu, Tacuatimanu, etc. In the Department of Madre de Dios, where all these rivers are located, "manu" is understood to mean "river" or "water." One of the provinces of this department is, in fact, named Manu and another Tahuamanu.

The Egyptian hieroglyph for "water" was written as a wavy line. When the alphabet was invented, this symbol became the letter "m," representing mayim, the Semitic word for "water." In the Phoenician of 1300-1000 B.C. it was called Mem, which was later called Mu in Greek and finally Em among the Romans.^{18,19}

Another reflection of the name Noah may have been the Assyrian word for "rain," zunnu.²⁰ Janus, the two-headed god (from which the name of our month of January is derived) was regarded by the earliest inhabitants of Italy as both the father of the world and the inventor of ships, later as the god of portals. All of these concepts would be appropriate for Noah. It is not impossible that the name Janus could originally have been a combination of "Jah" and "Noah," thus meaning "Noah's Lord."

In Norse mythology, Njord was the god of ships, living at Noatun, the harbor of ships. In this language, the syllable "noa" is related to the Icelandic nor, meaning "ship."²¹

Similarly the original Sanskrit word for "ship" is nau. This root has developed even in English into such words as "navy," "nautical," "nausea," etc.²² This word could very well be still another variant of "Noah," the first master shipbuilder. Further, there is Ino, a sea-goddess in Greek mythology, and the Greek word naiade, meaning "river nymph."²³ Many other examples might be cited.

Thus, Noah and the waters of the great Flood are not only recalled in the ancient traditions of all nations, but their names have also become incorporated in many and varied ways into the very languages of his descendants. The trails are tenuous and often almost obliterated, so that some of the inferred connections are speculative and possibly mistaken, but the correlations are too numerous to be only coincidental, thus adding yet one more evidence for the historicity of the worldwide Flood.