

FRAZER JAMES GEORGE

THE GOLDEN BOUGH: A
STUDY IN COMPARATIVE
RELIGION (VOL. 1 OF 2)

James Frazer
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Comparative Religion (Vol. 1 of 2)**

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The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion (Vol. 1 of 2):*

Содержание

Preface	4
Chapter I. The King Of The Wood	10
§ 1. – The Arician Grove	11
§ 2. – Primitive man and the supernatural	18
§ 3. – Incarnate gods	46
§ 4. – Tree-worship	76
§ 5. – Tree-worship in antiquity	125
Chapter II. The Perils Of The Soul	136
§ 1. – Royal and priestly taboos	137
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	147

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Preface

For some time I have been preparing a general work on primitive superstition and religion. Among the problems which had attracted my attention was the hitherto unexplained rule of the Arician priesthood; and last spring it happened that in the course of my reading I came across some facts which, combined with others I had noted before, suggested an explanation of the rule in question. As the explanation, if correct, promised to throw light on some obscure features of primitive religion, I resolved to develop it fully, and, detaching it from my general work, to issue it as a separate study. This book is the result.

Now that the theory, which necessarily presented itself to me at first in outline, has been worked out in detail, I cannot but feel that in some places I may have pushed it too far. If this should prove to have been the case, I will readily acknowledge and retract my error as soon as it is brought home to me. Meantime

my essay may serve its purpose as a first attempt to solve a difficult problem, and to bring a variety of scattered facts into some sort of order and system.

A justification is perhaps needed of the length at which I have dwelt upon the popular festivals observed by European peasants in spring, at midsummer, and at harvest. It can hardly be too often repeated, since it is not yet generally recognised, that in spite of their fragmentary character the popular superstitions and customs of the peasantry are by far the fullest and most trustworthy evidence we possess as to the primitive religion of the Aryans. Indeed the primitive Aryan, in all that regards his mental fibre and texture, is not extinct. He is amongst us to this day. The great intellectual and moral forces which have revolutionised the educated world have scarcely affected the peasant. In his inmost beliefs he is what his forefathers were in the days when forest trees still grew and squirrels played on the ground where Rome and London now stand.

Hence every inquiry into the primitive religion of the Aryans should either start from the superstitious beliefs and observances of the peasantry, or should at least be constantly checked and controlled by reference to them. Compared with the evidence afforded by living tradition, the testimony of ancient books on the subject of early religion is worth very little. For literature accelerates the advance of thought at a rate which leaves the slow progress of opinion by word of mouth at an immeasurable distance behind. Two or three generations of literature may do

more to change thought than two or three thousand years of traditional life. But the mass of the people who do not read books remain unaffected by the mental revolution wrought by literature; and so it has come about that in Europe at the present day the superstitious beliefs and practices which have been handed down by word of mouth are generally of a far more archaic type than the religion depicted in the most ancient literature of the Aryan race.

It is on these grounds that, in discussing the meaning and origin of an ancient Italian priesthood, I have devoted so much attention to the popular customs and superstitions of modern Europe. In this part of my subject I have made great use of the works of the late W. Mannhardt, without which, indeed, my book could scarcely have been written. Fully recognising the truth of the principles which I have imperfectly stated, Mannhardt set himself systematically to collect, compare, and explain the living superstitions of the peasantry. Of this wide field the special department which he marked out for himself was the religion of the woodman and the farmer, in other words, the superstitious beliefs and rites connected with trees and cultivated plants. By oral inquiry, and by printed questions scattered broadcast over Europe, as well as by ransacking the literature of folk-lore, he collected a mass of evidence, part of which he published in a series of admirable works. But his health, always feeble, broke down before he could complete the comprehensive and really vast scheme which he had planned, and at his too early

death much of his precious materials remained unpublished. His manuscripts are now deposited in the University Library at Berlin, and in the interest of the study to which he devoted his life it is greatly to be desired that they should be examined, and that such portions of them as he has not utilised in his books should be given to the world.

Of his published works the most important are, first, two tracts, *Roggenwolf und Roggenhund*, Danzig 1865 (second edition, Danzig, 1866), and *Die Korndämonen*, Berlin, 1868. These little works were put forward by him tentatively, in the hope of exciting interest in his inquiries and thereby securing the help of others in pursuing them. But, except from a few learned societies, they met with very little attention. Undeterred by the cold reception accorded to his efforts he worked steadily on, and in 1875 published his chief work, *Der Baumkultus der Germanen und ihrer Nachbarstämme*. This was followed in 1877 by *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*. His *Mythologische Forschungen*, a posthumous work, appeared in 1884.¹

Much as I owe to Mannhardt, I owe still more to my friend Professor W. Robertson Smith. My interest in the early history of society was first excited by the works of Dr. E. B. Tylor, which opened up a mental vista undreamed of by me before. But it is a long step from a lively interest in a subject to a systematic study

¹ For the sake of brevity I have sometimes, in the notes, referred to Mannhardt's works respectively as *Roggenwolf* (the references are to the pages of the first edition), *Korndämonen*, *B. K.*, *A. W. F.*, and *M. F.*

of it; and that I took this step is due to the influence of my friend W. Robertson Smith. The debt which I owe to the vast stores of his knowledge, the abundance and fertility of his ideas, and his unwearied kindness, can scarcely be overestimated. Those who know his writings may form some, though a very inadequate, conception of the extent to which I have been influenced by him. The views of sacrifice set forth in his article "Sacrifice" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and further developed in his recent work, *The Religion of the Semites*, mark a new departure in the historical study of religion, and ample traces of them will be found in this book. Indeed the central idea of my essay – the conception of the slain god – is derived directly, I believe, from my friend. But it is due to him to add that he is in no way responsible for the general explanation which I have offered of the custom of slaying the god. He has read the greater part of the proofs in circumstances which enhanced the kindness, and has made many valuable suggestions which I have usually adopted; but except where he is cited by name, or where the views expressed coincide with those of his published works, he is not to be regarded as necessarily assenting to any of the theories propounded in this book.

The works of Professor G. A. Wilken of Leyden have been of great service in directing me to the best original authorities on the Dutch East Indies, a very important field to the ethnologist. To the courtesy of the Rev. Walter Gregor, M.A., of Pitsligo, I am indebted for some interesting communications which will

be found acknowledged in their proper places. Mr. Francis Darwin has kindly allowed me to consult him on some botanical questions. The manuscript authorities to which I occasionally refer are answers to a list of ethnological questions which I am circulating. Most of them will, I hope, be published in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*.

The drawing of the Golden Bough which adorns the cover is from the pencil of my friend Professor J. H. Middleton. The constant interest and sympathy which he has shown in the progress of the book have been a great help and encouragement to me in writing it.

The Index has been compiled by Mr. A. Rogers, of the University Library, Cambridge.

J. G. FRAZER.

Trinity College, Cambridge,

8th March 1890.

Chapter I. The King Of The Wood

“The still glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Aricia's trees —
Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain.”

Macaulay.

§ 1. – The Arician Grove

Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough? The scene, suffused with the golden glow of imagination in which the divine mind of Turner steeped and transfigured even the fairest natural landscape, is a dream-like vision of the little woodland lake of Nemi, "Diana's Mirror," as it was called by the ancients. No one who has seen that calm water, lapped in a green hollow of the Alban hills, can ever forget it. The two characteristic Italian villages which slumber on its banks, and the equally Italian palazzo whose terraced gardens descend steeply to the lake, hardly break the stillness and even the solitariness of the scene. Dian herself might still linger by this lonely shore, still haunt these woodlands wild.

In antiquity this sylvan landscape was the scene of a strange and recurring tragedy. On the northern shore of the lake, right under the precipitous cliffs on which the modern village of Nemi is perched, stood the sacred grove and sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis, or Diana of the Wood.² The lake and the grove were sometimes known as the lake and grove of Aricia.³ But the town

² The site was excavated in 1885 by Sir John Savile Lumley, English ambassador at Rome. For a general description of the site and excavations, see the *Athenaeum*, 10th October 1885. For details of the finds see *Bulletino dell' Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica*, 1885, pp. 149 *sqq.*, 225 *sqq.*

³ Ovid, *Fasti*, vi. 756; Cato quoted by Priscian, see Peter's *Historic. Roman. Fragmenta*, p. 52 (lat. ed.); Statius, *Sylv.* iii. 1, 56.

of Aricia (the modern La Riccia) was situated about three miles off, at the foot of the Alban Mount, and separated by a steep descent from the lake, which lies in a small crater-like hollow on the mountain side. In this sacred grove there grew a certain tree round which at any time of the day and probably far into the night a strange figure might be seen to prowl. In his hand he carried a drawn sword, and he kept peering warily about him as if every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy.⁴ He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead. Such was the rule of the sanctuary. A candidate for the priesthood could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and having slain him he held office till he was himself slain by a stronger or a craftier.

This strange rule has no parallel in classical antiquity, and cannot be explained from it. To find an explanation we must go farther afield. No one will probably deny that such a custom savours of a barbarous age and, surviving into imperial times, stands out in striking isolation from the polished Italian society of the day, like a primeval rock rising from a smooth-shaven lawn. It is the very rudeness and barbarity of the custom which allow us a hope of explaining it. For recent researches into the early history of man have revealed the essential similarity with which, under many superficial differences, the human mind

⁴ Ξιφήρης οὖν ἔστιν ἀεὶ, περισκοπῶν τὰς ἐπιθέσεις, ἕτοιμος ἀμύνεσθαι, is Strabo's description (v. 3, 12), who may have seen him "pacing there alone."

has elaborated its first crude philosophy of life. Accordingly if we can show that a barbarous custom, like that of the priesthood of Nemi, has existed elsewhere; if we can detect the motives which led to its institution; if we can prove that these motives have operated widely, perhaps universally, in human society, producing in varied circumstances a variety of institutions specifically different but generically alike; if we can show, lastly, that these very motives, with some of their derivative institutions, were actually at work in classical antiquity; then we may fairly infer that at a remoter age the same motives gave birth to the priesthood of Nemi. Such an inference, in default of direct evidence as to how the priesthood did actually arise, can never amount to demonstration. But it will be more or less probable according to the degree of completeness with which it fulfils the conditions indicated above. The object of this book is, by meeting these conditions, to offer a fairly probable explanation of the priesthood of Nemi.

I begin by setting forth the few facts and legends which have come down to us on the subject. According to one story the worship of Diana at Nemi was instituted by Orestes, who, after killing Thoas, King of the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea), fled with his sister to Italy, bringing with him the image of the Tauric Diana. The bloody ritual which legend ascribed to that goddess is familiar to classical readers; it is said that every stranger who landed on the shore was sacrificed on her altar. But transported to Italy, the rite assumed a milder form. Within the sanctuary at

Nemi grew a certain tree of which no branch might be broken. Only a runaway slave was allowed to break off, if he could, one of its boughs. Success in the attempt entitled him to fight the priest in single combat, and if he slew him he reigned in his stead with the title of King of the Wood (*Rex Nemorensis*). Tradition averred that the fateful branch was that Golden Bough which, at the Sibyl's bidding, Aeneas plucked before he essayed the perilous journey to the world of the dead. The flight of the slave represented, it was said, the flight of Orestes; his combat with the priest was a reminiscence of the human sacrifices once offered to the Tauric Diana. This rule of succession by the sword was observed down to imperial times; for amongst his other freaks Caligula, thinking that the priest of Nemi had held office too long, hired a more stalwart ruffian to slay him.⁵

Of the worship of Diana at Nemi two leading features can still be made out. First, from the votive-offerings found in modern times on the site, it appears that she was especially worshipped by women desirous of children or of an easy delivery.⁶ Second,

⁵ Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 136 *sqq.*; Servius, *ad l.*; Strabo, v. 3, 12; Pausanias, ii. 27; Solinus, ii. 11; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35. For the title "King of the Wood," see Suetonius, *l. c.*; and compare Statius, *Sylv.* iii. 1, 55 *sq.*—"Jamque dies aderat, profugis cum regibus aptum Fumat Aricinum Triviae nemus;" Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 271, "Regna tenent fortesque manu, pedibusque fugaces;" *id.* *Ars am.* i. 259 *sq.*—"Ecce suburbanæ templum nemorale Dianæ, Partaque per gladios regna nocente manu."

⁶ *Bulletino dell' Istituto*, 1885, p. 153 *sq.*; *Athenaeum*, 10th October 1885; Preller, *Römische Mythologie*,³ i. 317. Of these votive offerings some represent women with children in their arms; one represents a delivery, etc.

fire seems to have played a foremost part in her ritual. For during her annual festival, celebrated at the hottest time of the year, her grove was lit up by a multitude of torches, whose ruddy glare was reflected by the waters of the lake; and throughout the length and breadth of Italy the day was kept with holy rites at every domestic hearth.⁷ Moreover, women whose prayers had been heard by the goddess brought lighted torches to the grove in fulfilment of their vows.⁸ Lastly, the title of Vesta borne by the Arician Diana⁹ points almost certainly to the maintenance of a perpetual holy fire in her sanctuary.

At her annual festival all young people went through a purificatory ceremony in her honour; dogs were crowned; and the feast consisted of a young kid, wine, and cakes, served up piping hot on platters of leaves.¹⁰

But Diana did not reign alone in her grove at Nemi. Two lesser divinities shared her forest sanctuary. One was Egeria, the nymph of the clear water which, bubbling from the basaltic rocks, used to fall in graceful cascades into the lake at the place called Le Mole.¹¹ According to one story the grove was first consecrated to

⁷ Statius, *Sylv.* iii. 1, 52 *sqq.* From Martial, xii. 67, it has been inferred that the Arician festival fell on the 13th of August. The inference, however, does not seem conclusive. Statius's expression is: —“*Tempus erat, caeli cum ardentissimus axis Incumbit terris, ictusque Hyperione multo Acer anhelantes incendit Sirius agros.*”

⁸ Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 269; Propertius, iii. 24 (30), 9 *sq.* ed. Paley.

⁹ *Inscript. Lat.* ed. Orelli, No. 1455.

¹⁰ Statius, *l. c.*; Grattius Faliscus, v. 483 *sqq.*

¹¹ *Athenaeum*, 10th October 1885. The water was diverted a few years ago to supply

Diana by a Manius Egerius, who was the ancestor of a long and distinguished line. Hence the proverb “There are many Manii at Ariciae.” Others explained the proverb very differently. They said it meant that there were a great many ugly and deformed people, and they referred to the word *Mania* which meant a bogey or bugbear to frighten children.¹²

The other of these minor deities was Virbius. Legend had it that Virbius was the youthful Greek hero Hippolytus, who had been killed by his horses on the sea-shore of the Saronic Gulf. Him, to please Diana, the leech Aesculapius brought to life again by his simples. But Jupiter, indignant that a mortal man should return from the gates of death, thrust down the meddling leech himself to Hades; and Diana, for the love she bore Hippolytus, carried him away to Italy and hid him from the angry god in the dells of Nemi, where he reigned a forest king under the name of Virbius. Horses were excluded from the grove and sanctuary, because horses had killed Hippolytus.¹³ Some thought that Virbius was the sun. It was unlawful to touch his image.¹⁴ His worship was cared for by a special priest, the Flamen Virbialis.¹⁵

Albano. For Egeria, compare Strabo, v. 3, 12; Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 273 *sqq.*; *id. Met.* xv. 487 *sqq.*

¹² Festus, p. 145, ed. Müller; Schol. on Persius, vi. 56 *ap.* Jahn on Macrobius, i. 7, 35.

¹³ Virgil, *Aen.* vii. 761 *sqq.*; Servius, *ad l.*; Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 265 *sq.*; *id. Met.* xv. 497 *sqq.*; Pausanias, ii. 27.

¹⁴ Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* vii. 776.

¹⁵ *Inscript. Lat.* ed. Orelli, Nos. 2212, 4022. The inscription No. 1457 (Orelli) is said to be spurious.

Such then are the facts and theories bequeathed to us by antiquity on the subject of the priesthood of Nemi. From materials so slight and scanty it is impossible to extract a solution of the problem. It remains to try whether the survey of a wider field may not yield us the clue we seek. The questions to be answered are two: first, why had the priest to slay his predecessor? and second, why, before he slew him, had he to pluck the Golden Bough? The rest of this book will be an attempt to answer these questions.

§ 2. – Primitive man and the supernatural

The first point on which we fasten is the priest's title. Why was he called the King of the Wood? why was his office spoken of as a Kingdom?¹⁶

The union of a royal title with priestly duties was common in ancient Italy and Greece. At Rome and in other Italian cities there was a priest called the Sacrificial King or King of the Sacred Rites (*Rex Sacrificulus* or *Rex Sacrorum*), and his wife bore the title of Queen of the Sacred Rites.¹⁷ In republican Athens the second magistrate of the state was called the King, and his wife the Queen; the functions of both were religious.¹⁸ Many other Greek democracies had titular kings, whose duties, so far as they are known, seem to have been priestly.¹⁹ At Rome the tradition was that the Sacrificial King had been appointed after the expulsion of the kings in order to offer the sacrifices which had been previously offered by the kings.²⁰ In Greece a similar view appears to have prevailed as to the origin of the priestly kings.²¹ In itself the view is not improbable, and it is

¹⁶ See above, p. 4, note 1.

¹⁷ Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, iii.² 321 *sqq.*

¹⁸ G. Gilbert, *Handbuch der griechischen Staatsalterthümer*, i. 241 *sq.*

¹⁹ Gilbert, *op. cit.* ii. 323 *sq.*

²⁰ Livy, ii. 2, 1; Dionysius Halic. iv. 74, 4.

²¹ Demosthenes, *contra Neacr.* § 74, p. 1370. Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 63.

borne out by the example of Sparta, the only purely Greek state which retained the kingly form of government in historical times. For in Sparta all state sacrifices were offered by the kings as descendants of the god.²² This combination of priestly functions with royal authority is familiar to every one. Asia Minor, for example, was the seat of various great religious capitals peopled by thousands of "sacred slaves," and ruled by pontiffs who wielded at once temporal and spiritual authority, like the popes of mediaeval Rome. Such priest-ridden cities were Zela and Pessinus.²³ Teutonic kings, again, in the old heathen days seem to have stood in the position, and exercised the powers of high priests.²⁴ The Emperors of China offer public sacrifices, the details of which are regulated by the ritual books.²⁵ It is needless, however, to multiply examples of what is the rule rather than the exception in the early history of the kingship.

But when we have said that the ancient kings were commonly priests also, we are far from having exhausted the religious aspect of their office. In those days the divinity that hedges a king was no empty form of speech but the expression of a sober belief. Kings were revered, in many cases not merely as priests, that is, as intercessors between man and god, but as themselves

²² Xenophon, *Repub. Lac.* c. 15, cp. *id.* 13; Aristotle, *Pol.* iii. 14, 3.

²³ Strabo, xii. 3, 37. 5, 3; cp. xi. 4, 7. xii. 2, 3. 2, 6. 3, 31 *sq.* 3, 34. 8, 9. 8, 14. But see *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Priest," xix. 729.

²⁴ Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, p. 243.

²⁵ See the *Lî-Kî* (Legge's translation), *passim*.

gods, able to bestow upon their subjects and worshippers those blessings which are commonly supposed to be beyond the reach of man, and are sought, if at all, only by prayer and sacrifice offered to superhuman and invisible beings. Thus kings are often expected to give rain and sunshine in due season, to make the crops grow, and so on. Strange as this expectation appears to us, it is quite of a piece with early modes of thought. A savage hardly conceives the distinction commonly drawn by more advanced peoples between the natural and the supernatural. To him the world is mostly worked by supernatural agents, that is, by personal beings acting on impulses and motives like his own, liable like him to be moved by appeals to their pity, their fears, and their hopes. In a world so conceived he sees no limit to his power of influencing the course of nature to his own advantage. Prayers, promises, or threats may secure him fine weather and an abundant crop from the gods; and if a god should happen, as he sometimes believes, to become incarnate in his own person, then he need appeal to no higher power; he, the savage, possesses in himself all the supernatural powers necessary to further his own well-being and that of his fellow men.

This is one way in which the idea of a man-god is reached. But there is another. Side by side with the view of the world as pervaded by spiritual forces, primitive man has another conception in which we may detect a germ of the modern notion of natural law or the view of nature as a series of events occurring in an invariable order without the intervention

of personal agency. The germ of which I speak is involved in that sympathetic magic, as it may be called, which plays a large part in most systems of superstition. One of the principles of sympathetic magic is that any effect may be produced by imitating it. To take a few instances. If it is wished to kill a person an image of him is made and then destroyed; and it is believed that through a certain physical sympathy between the person and his image, the man feels the injuries done to the image as if they were done to his own body, and that when it is destroyed he must simultaneously perish. Again, in Morocco a fowl or a pigeon may sometimes be seen with a little red bundle tied to its foot. The bundle contains a charm, and it is believed that as the charm is kept in constant motion by the bird a corresponding restlessness is kept up in the mind of him or her against whom the charm is directed.²⁶ In Nias when a wild pig has fallen into the pit prepared for it, it is taken out and its back is rubbed with nine fallen leaves, in the belief that this will make nine more wild pigs fall into the pit just as the nine leaves fell from the tree.²⁷ When a Cambodian hunter has set his nets and taken nothing, he strips himself naked, goes some way off, then strolls up to the net as if he did not see it, lets himself be caught in it and cries, "Hillo! what's this? I'm afraid I'm caught." After that the net is

²⁶ A. Leared, *Morocco and the Moors*, p. 272.

²⁷ J. W. Thomas, "De jacht op het eiland Nias," in *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-Land- en Volkenkunde*, xxvi. 277.

sure to catch game.²⁸ In Thüringen the man who sows flax carries the seed in a long bag which reaches from his shoulders to his knees, and he walks with long strides, so that the bag sways to and fro on his back. It is believed that this will cause the flax crop to wave in the wind.²⁹ In the interior of Sumatra the rice is sown by women who, in sowing, let their hair hang loose down their back, in order that the rice may grow luxuriantly and have long stalks.³⁰ Again, magic sympathy is supposed to exist between a man and any severed portion of his person, as his hair or nails; so that whoever gets possession of hair or nails may work his will, at any distance, upon the person from whom they were cut. This superstition is world-wide. Further, the sympathy in question exists between friends and relations, especially at critical times. Hence, for example, the elaborate code of rules which regulates the conduct of persons left at home while a party of their friends is out fishing or hunting or on the war-path. It is thought that if the persons left at home broke these rules their absent friends would suffer an injury, corresponding in its nature to the breach of the rule. Thus when a Dyak is out head-hunting, his wife or, if he is unmarried, his sister, must wear a sword day and night in order that he may always be thinking of his weapons; and she

²⁸ E. Aymonier, "Notes sur les coutumes et croyances superstitieuses des Cambodgiens," in *Cochinchine Française, Excursions et Reconnaissances*, No. 16, p. 157.

²⁹ Witzschel, *Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Thüringen*, p. 218, No. 36.

³⁰ Van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Midden-Sumatra*, p. 323.

may not sleep during the day nor go to bed before two in the morning, lest her husband or brother should thereby be surprised in his sleep by an enemy.³¹ In Laos when an elephant hunter is setting out for the chase he warns his wife not to cut her hair or oil her body in his absence; for if she cut her hair the elephant would burst the toils, if she oiled herself it would slip through them.³²

In all these cases (and similar instances might be multiplied indefinitely) an action is performed or avoided, because its performance is believed to entail good or bad consequences of a sort resembling the act itself. Sometimes the magic sympathy takes effect not so much through an act as through a supposed resemblance of qualities. Thus some Bechuanas wear a ferret as a charm because, being very tenacious of life, it will make them difficult to kill.³³ Others wear a certain insect, mutilated but living, for a similar purpose.³⁴ Other Bechuana warriors wear the hair of an ox among their own hair and the skin of a frog on their mantle, because a frog is slippery and the ox from which the hair has been taken has no horns and is therefore hard to catch; so the warrior who is provided with these charms believes that he will be as hard to hold as the ox and the frog.³⁵

³¹ J. C. E. Tromp, "De Rambai en Sebroeang Dajaks," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-Land- en Volkenkunde*, xxv. 118.

³² E. Aymonier, *Notes sur le Laos*, p. 25 sq.

³³ J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa* (second journey), ii. 206; Barnabas Shaw, *Memorials of South Africa*, p. 66.

³⁴ Casalis, *The Basutos*, p. 271 sq.

³⁵ Casalis, *The Basutos*, p. 272.

Thus we see that in sympathetic magic one event is supposed to be followed necessarily and invariably by another, without the intervention of any spiritual or personal agency. This is, in fact, the modern conception of physical causation; the conception, indeed, is misapplied, but it is there none the less. Here, then, we have another mode in which primitive man seeks to bend nature to his wishes. There is, perhaps, hardly a savage who does not fancy himself possessed of this power of influencing the course of nature by sympathetic magic; a man-god, on this view, is only an individual who is believed to enjoy this common power in an unusually high degree. Thus, whereas a man-god of the former or inspired type derives his divinity from a deity who has taken up his abode in a tabernacle of flesh, a man-god of the latter type draws his supernatural power from a certain physical sympathy with nature. He is not merely the receptacle of a divine spirit. His whole being, body and soul, is so delicately attuned to the harmony of the world that a touch of his hand or a turn of his head may send a thrill vibrating through the universal framework of things; and conversely his divine organism is acutely sensitive to such slight changes of environment as would leave ordinary mortals wholly unaffected. But the line between these two types of man-god, however sharply we may draw it in theory, is seldom to be traced with precision in practice, and in what follows I shall not insist on it.

To readers long familiarised with the conception of natural law, the belief of primitive man that he can rule the elements

must be so foreign that it may be well to illustrate it by examples. When we have seen that in early society men who make no pretence at all of being gods do nevertheless commonly believe themselves to be invested with supernatural powers, we shall have the less difficulty in comprehending the extraordinary range of powers ascribed to individuals who are actually regarded as divine.

Of all natural phenomena there are perhaps none which civilised man feels himself more powerless to influence than the rain, the sun, and the wind. Yet all these are commonly supposed by savages to be in some degree under their control.

To begin with rain-making. In a village near Dorpat in Russia, when rain was much wanted, three men used to climb up the fir-trees of an old sacred grove. One of them drummed with a hammer on a kettle or small cask to imitate thunder; the second knocked two fire-brands together and made the sparks fly, to imitate lightning; and the third, who was called “the rain-maker,” had a bunch of twigs with which he sprinkled water from a vessel on all sides.³⁶ This is an example of sympathetic magic; the desired event is supposed to be produced by imitating it. Rain is often thus made by imitation. In Halmahera (Gilolo), a large island to the west of New Guinea, a wizard makes rain by dipping a branch of a particular kind of tree in water and sprinkling the ground with it.³⁷ In Ceram it is enough to dedicate the bark of a

³⁶ W. Mannhardt, *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*, p. 342, note.

³⁷ C. F. H. Campen “De Godsdienstbegrippen der Halmaherasche Alfoeren,” in

certain tree to the spirits and lay it in water.³⁸ In New Britain the rain-maker wraps some leaves of a red and green striped creeper in a banana-leaf, moistens the bundle with water and buries it in the ground; then he imitates with his mouth the plashing of rain.³⁹ Amongst the Omaha Indians of North America, when the corn is withering for want of rain, the members of the sacred Buffalo Society fill a large vessel with water and dance four times round it. One of them drinks some of the water and spirts it into the air, making a fine spray in imitation of a mist or drizzling rain. Then he upsets the vessel, spilling the water on the ground; whereupon the dancers fall down and drink up the water, getting mud all over their faces. Lastly they spirt the water into the air, making a fine mist. This saves the corn.⁴⁰ Amongst the Australian Wotjobaluk the rain-maker dipped a bunch of his own hair in water, sucked out the water and squirted it westward, or he twirled the ball round his head making a spray like rain.⁴¹ Squirted water from the mouth is also a West African way of making rain.⁴² Another mode is to dip a particular stone in water or sprinkle water on it.

Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde, xxvii. 447.

³⁸ Riedel, *De sluik-en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*, p. 114.

³⁹ R. Parkinson, *Im Bismarck Archipel*, p. 143.

⁴⁰ J. Owen Dorsey, "Omaha Sociology," in *Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington), p. 347. Cp. Charlevoix, *Voyage dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, ii. 187.

⁴¹ *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xvi. 35. Cp. Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. 98.

⁴² Labat, *Relation historique de l'Ethiopie occidentale*, ii. 180.

In a Samoan village a certain stone was carefully housed as the representative of the rain-making god; and in time of drought his priests carried the stone in procession, and dipped it in a stream.⁴³ In the Ta-ta-thi tribe of New South Wales the rain-maker breaks off a piece of quartz crystal and spits it towards the sky; the rest of the crystal he wraps in emu feathers, soaks both crystal and feathers in water, and carefully hides them.⁴⁴ In the Keramin tribe of New South Wales the wizard retires to the bed of a creek, drops water on a round flat stone, then covers up and conceals it.⁴⁵ The Fountain of Baranton, of romantic fame, in the forest of Brécilien, used to be resorted to by peasants when they needed rain; they caught some of the water in a tankard and threw it on a slab near the spring.⁴⁶ When some of the Apache Indians wish for rain, they take water from a certain spring and throw it on a particular point high up on a rock; the clouds then soon gather and rain begins to fall.⁴⁷ There is a lonely tarn on Snowdon called Dulyn or the Black Lake, lying “in a dismal dingle surrounded by high and dangerous rocks.” A row of stepping stones runs out into the lake; and if any one steps on the stones and throws water so as to wet the farthest stone, which is called the Red Altar, “it is

⁴³ Turner, *Samoa*, p. 145.

⁴⁴ *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.* xiv. 362.

⁴⁵ *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.* l. c. Cp. Curr, *The Australian Race*, ii. 377.

⁴⁶ Rhys, *Celtic Heathendom*, p. 184; Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*⁴ i. 494. Cp. San-Marte, *Die Arthur Sage*, pp. 105 sq., 153 sqq.

⁴⁷ *The American Antiquarian*, viii. 339.

but a chance that you do not get rain before night, even when it is hot weather.”⁴⁸ In these cases it is probable that, as in Samoa, the stone is regarded as in some sort divine. This appears from the custom sometimes observed of dipping the cross in the Fountain of Baranton, to procure rain; for this is plainly a substitute for the older way of throwing the water on the stone.⁴⁹ In Mingrelia, to get rain they dip a holy image in water daily till it rains.⁵⁰ In Navarre the image of St. Peter was taken to a river, where some prayed to him for rain, but others called out to duck him in the water.⁵¹ Here the dipping in the water is used as a threat; but originally it was probably a sympathetic charm, as in the following instance. In New Caledonia the rain-makers blackened themselves all over, dug up a dead body, took the bones to a cave, jointed them, and hung the skeleton over some taro leaves. Water was poured over the skeleton to run down on the leaves. “They supposed that the soul of the departed took up the water, made rain of it, and showered it down again.”⁵² The same motive comes clearly out in a mode of making rain which is practised by various peoples of South Eastern Europe. In time of drought

⁴⁸ Rhys, *Celtic Heathendom*, p. 185 sq.

⁴⁹ *Ib.* p. 187. So at the fountain of Sainte Anne, near Gevezé, in Brittany. Sébillot, *Traditions et Superstitions de la Haute Bretagne*, i. 72.

⁵⁰ Lamberti, “Relation de la Colchide ou Mingrêlie,” *Voyages au Nord*, vii. 174 (Amsterdam, 1725).

⁵¹ Le Brun, *Histoire critique des pratiques superstitieuses* (Amsterdam, 1733), i. 245 sq.

⁵² Turner, *Samoa*, p. 345 sq.

the Servians strip a girl, clothe her from head to foot in grass, herbs, and flowers, even her face being hidden with them. Thus disguised she is called the Dodola, and goes through the village with a troop of girls. They stop before every house; the Dodola dances, while the other girls form a ring round her singing one of the Dodola songs, and the housewife pours a pail of water over her.

One of the songs they sing runs thus —

“We go through the village;
The clouds go in the sky;
We go faster,
Faster go the clouds;
They have overtaken us,
And wetted the corn and the vine.”

A similar custom is observed by the Greeks, Bulgarians, and Roumanians.⁵³ In such customs the leaf-dressed girl represents the spirit of vegetation, and drenching her with water is an imitation of rain. In Russia, in the Government of Kursk, when rain is much wanted, the women seize a passing stranger and throw him into the river, or souse him from head to foot.⁵⁴ Later on we shall see that a passing stranger is often, as here, taken for a

⁵³ Mannhardt, *Baumkultus*, p. 329 *sqq.*; Grimm, D. M.⁴ i. 493 *sq.*; W. Schmidt, *Das Jahr und seine Tage in Meinung und Brauch der Rumänen Siebenbürgens*, p. 17; E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest*, ii. 13.

⁵⁴ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 331.

god or spirit. Amongst the Minahassa of North Celebes the priest bathes as a rain-charm.⁵⁵ In the Caucasian Province of Georgia, when a drought has lasted long, marriageable girls are yoked in couples with an ox-yoke on their shoulders, a priest holds the reins, and thus harnessed they wade through rivers, puddles, and marshes, praying, screaming, weeping, and laughing.⁵⁶ In a district of Transylvania, when the ground is parched with drought, some girls strip themselves naked, and, led by an older woman, who is also naked, they steal a harrow and carry it across the field to a brook, where they set it afloat. Next they sit on the harrow and keep a tiny flame burning on each corner of it for an hour. Then they leave the harrow in the water and go home.⁵⁷ A similar rain-charm is resorted to in India; naked women drag a plough across the field by night.⁵⁸ It is not said that they plunge the plough into a stream or sprinkle it with water. But the charm would hardly be complete without it.

Sometimes the charm works through an animal. To procure rain the Peruvians used to set a black sheep in a field, poured *chica* over it, and gave it nothing to eat till rain fell.⁵⁹ In a district of Sumatra all the women of the village, scantily clad, go to the

⁵⁵ J. G. F. Riedel, "De Minahassa in 1825," *Tijdschrift v. Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xviii. 524.

⁵⁶ J. Reinegg, *Beschreibung des Kaukasus*, ii. 114.

⁵⁷ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 553; Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest*, ii. 40.

⁵⁸ *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii. Nos. 173, 513.

⁵⁹ Acosta, *History of the Indies*, bk. v. ch. 28.

river, wade into it, and splash each other with the water. A black cat is thrown into the water and made to swim about for a while, then allowed to escape to the bank, pursued by the splashing of the women.⁶⁰ In these cases the colour of the animal is part of the charm; being black it will darken the sky with rain-clouds. So the Bechuanas burn the stomach of an ox at evening, because they say, "the black smoke will gather the clouds, and cause the rain to come."⁶¹ The Timorese sacrifice a black pig for rain, a white or red one for sunshine.⁶² The Garos offer a black goat on the top of a very high mountain in time of drought.⁶³

Sometimes people try to coerce the rain-god into giving rain. In China a huge dragon made of paper or wood, representing the rain-god, is carried about in procession; but if no rain follows, it is cursed and torn in pieces.⁶⁴ In the like circumstances the Feloupes of Senegambia throw down their fetishes and drag them about the fields, cursing them till rain falls.⁶⁵ Some Indians of the Orinoco worshipped toads and kept them in vessels in order to obtain from them rain or sunshine as might be required; when

⁶⁰ A. L. van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Midden-Sumatra*, p. 320 sq.

⁶¹ *South African Folk-lore Journal*, i. 34.

⁶² J. S. G. Gramberg, "Eene maand in de binnenlanden van Timor," in *Verhandelingen van het Bataviansch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, xxxvi. 209.

⁶³ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 88.

⁶⁴ Huc, *L'empire chinois*, i. 241.

⁶⁵ Bérenger-Féraud, *Les peuplades de la Sénégambie*, p. 291.

their prayers were not answered they beat the toads.⁶⁶ Killing a frog is a European rain-charm.⁶⁷ When the spirits withhold rain or sunshine, the Comanches whip a slave; if the gods prove obstinate, the victim is almost flayed alive.⁶⁸ Here the human being may represent the god, like the leaf-clad Dodola. When the rice-crop is endangered by long drought, the governor of Battambang, a province of Siam, goes in great state to a certain pagoda and prays to Buddha for rain. Then accompanied by his suite and followed by an enormous crowd he adjourns to a plain behind the pagoda. Here a dummy figure has been made up, dressed in bright colours, and placed in the middle of the plain. A wild music begins to play; maddened by the din of drums and cymbals and crackers, and goaded on by their drivers, the elephants charge down on the dummy and trample it to pieces. After this, Buddha will soon give rain.⁶⁹

Another way of constraining the rain-god is to disturb him in his haunts. This seems the reason why rain is supposed to be the consequence of troubling a sacred spring. The Dards believe that if a cowskin or anything impure is placed in certain springs,

⁶⁶ *Colombia, being a geographical etc. account of that country*, i. 642 sq.; A. Bastian, *Die Culturlander des alten Amerika*, ii. 216.

⁶⁷ A. Kuhn, *Sagen, Gebräuche und Märchen aus Westfalen*, ii. p. 80; Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest*, ii. 13.

⁶⁸ Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States*, i. 520.

⁶⁹ Brien, "Aperçu sur la province de Battambang," in *Cochinchine française, Excursions et Reconnaissances*, No. 25, p. 6 sq.

storms will follow.⁷⁰ Gervasius mentions a spring into which if a stone or a stick were thrown, rain would at once issue from it and drench the thrower.⁷¹ There was a fountain in Munster such that if it were touched or even looked at by a human being, it would at once flood the whole province with rain.⁷² Sometimes an appeal is made to the pity of the gods. When their corn is being burnt up by the sun, the Zulus look out for a “heaven-bird,” kill it, and throw it into a pool. Then the heaven melts with tenderness for the death of the bird; “it wails for it by raining, wailing a funeral wail.”⁷³ In times of drought the Guanches of Teneriffe led their sheep to sacred ground, and there they separated the lambs from their dams, that their plaintive bleating might touch the heart of the god.⁷⁴ A peculiar mode of making rain was adopted by the heathen Arabs. They tied two sorts of bushes to the tails and hind-legs of their cattle, and setting fire to the bushes drove the cattle to the top of a mountain, praying for rain.⁷⁵ This may be, as Wellhausen suggests,⁷⁶ an imitation of lightning on the horizon. But it may also be a way of threatening the sky; as some West African rain-makers put a pot of inflammable materials on the

⁷⁰ Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 95.

⁷¹ Gervasius von Tilburg, ed. Liebrecht, p. 41 sq.

⁷² Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topography of Ireland*, ch. 7. Cp. Mannhardt, *A. W. F.* p. 341 note.

⁷³ Callaway, *Religious System of the Amazulu*, p. 407 sq.

⁷⁴ Reclus, *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle*, xii. 100.

⁷⁵ Rasmussen, *Additamenta ad historiam Arabum ante Islamismum*, p. 67 sq.

⁷⁶ *Reste arabischen Heidentumes*, p. 157.

fire and blow up the flames, threatening that if heaven does not soon give rain they will send up a flame which will set the sky on fire.⁷⁷ The Dieyerie of South Australia have a way of their own of making rain. A hole is dug about twelve feet long and eight or ten broad, and over this hole a hut of logs and branches is made. Two men, supposed to have received a special inspiration from Mooramoorra (the Good Spirit), are bled by an old and influential man with a sharp flint inside the arm; the blood is made to flow on the other men of the tribe who sit huddled together. At the same time the two bleeding men throw handfuls of down, some of which adheres to the blood, while the rest floats in the air. The blood is thought to represent the rain, and the down the clouds. During the ceremony two large stones are placed in the middle of the hut; they stand for gathering clouds and presage rain. Then the men who were bled carry away the stones for about fifteen miles and place them as high as they can in the tallest tree. Meanwhile, the other men gather gypsum, pound it fine, and throw it into a water-hole. This the Mooramoorra is supposed to see, and at once he causes the clouds to appear in the sky. Lastly, the men surround the hut, butt at it with their heads, force their way in, and reappear on the other side, repeating this till the hut is wrecked. In doing this they are forbidden to use their hands or arms; but when the heavy logs alone remain, they are allowed to pull them out with their hands. "The piercing of the hut with their heads symbolises the piercing of the clouds; the

⁷⁷ Labat, *Relation historique de l'Ethiopie occidentale*, ii. 180.

fall of the hut, the fall of rain.”⁷⁸ Another Australian mode of rain-making is to burn human hair.⁷⁹

Like other peoples the Greeks and Romans sought to procure rain by magic, when prayers and processions⁸⁰ had proved ineffectual. For example, in Arcadia, when the corn and trees were parched with drought, the priest of Zeus dipped an oak branch into a certain spring on Mount Lycaeus. Thus troubled, the water sent up a misty cloud, from which rain soon fell upon the land.⁸¹ A similar mode of making rain is still practised, as we have seen, in Halmahera near New Guinea. The people of Crannon in Thessaly had a bronze chariot which they kept in a temple. When they desired a shower they shook the chariot and the shower fell.⁸² Probably the rattling of the chariot was meant to imitate thunder; we have already seen that in Russia mock thunder and lightning form part of a rain-charm. The mythical Salmoneus of Thessaly made mock thunder by dragging bronze kettles behind his chariot or by driving over a bronze bridge, while he hurled blazing torches in imitation of lightning. It was his impious wish to mimic the thundering car of Zeus as it rolled

⁷⁸ S. Gason, “The Dieyerie tribe,” in *Native Tribes of S. Australia*, p. 276 sqq.

⁷⁹ W. Stanbridge, “On the Aborigines of Victoria,” in *Trans. Ethnol. Soc. of London*, i. 300.

⁸⁰ Marcus Antoninus, v. 7; Petronius, 44; Tertullian, *Apolog.* 40; cp. *id.* 22 and 23.

⁸¹ Pausanias, viii. 38, 4.

⁸² Antigonos, *Histor. Mirab.* 15 (*Script. mirab. Graeci*, ed. Westermann, p. 65).

across the vault of heaven.⁸³ Near a temple of Mars, outside the walls of Rome, there was kept a certain stone known as the *lapis manalis*. In time of drought the stone was dragged into Rome and this was supposed to bring down rain immediately.⁸⁴ There were Etruscan wizards who made rain or discovered springs of water, it is not certain which. They were thought to bring the rain or the water out of their bellies.⁸⁵ The legendary Telchines in Rhodes are described as magicians who could change their shape and bring clouds, rain, and snow.⁸⁶

Again, primitive man fancies he can make the sun to shine, and can hasten or stay its going down. At an eclipse the Ojebways used to think that the sun was being extinguished. So they shot fire-tipped arrows in the air, hoping thus to rekindle his expiring light.⁸⁷ Conversely during an eclipse of the moon some Indian tribes of the Orinoco used to bury lighted brands in the ground; because, said they, if the moon were to be extinguished, all fire on earth would be extinguished with her, except such as was

⁸³ Apollodorus, *Bibl.* i. 9, 7; Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 585 *sqq.*; Servius on Virgil, *l. c.*

⁸⁴ Festus, *svv. aquaelicium and manalem lapidem*, pp. 2, 128, ed. Müller; Nonius Marcellus, *sv. trullum*, p. 637, ed. Quicherat; Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* iii. 175; Fulgentius, *Expos. serm. antiq.*, *sv. manales lapides*, *Mythogr. Lat.* ed. Staveren, p. 769 *sq.*

⁸⁵ Nonius Marcellus, *sv. aquilex*, p. 69, ed. Quicherat. In favour of taking *aquilex* as rain-maker is the use of *aquaelicium* in the sense of rain-making. Cp. K. O. Müller, *Die Etrusker*, ed. W. Deecke, ii. 318 *sq.*

⁸⁶ Diodorus, v. 55.

⁸⁷ Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians*, p. 84.

hidden from her sight.⁸⁸ In New Caledonia when a wizard desires to make sunshine, he takes some plants and corals to the burial-ground, and makes them into a bundle, adding two locks of hair cut from a living child (his own child if possible), also two teeth or an entire jawbone from the skeleton of an ancestor. He then climbs a high mountain whose top catches the first rays of the morning sun. Here he deposits three sorts of plants on a flat stone, places a branch of dry coral beside them, and hangs the bundle of charms over the stone. Next morning he returns to this rude altar, and at the moment when the sun rises from the sea he kindles a fire on the altar. As the smoke rises, he rubs the stone with the dry coral, invokes his ancestors and says: "Sun! I do this that you may be burning hot, and eat up all the clouds in the sky." The same ceremony is repeated at sunset.⁸⁹ When the sun rises behind clouds – a rare event in the bright sky of Southern Africa – the Sun clan of the Bechuanas say that he is grieving their heart. All work stands still, and all the food of the previous day is given to matrons or old women. They may eat it and may share it with the children they are nursing, but no one else may taste it. The people go down to the river and wash themselves all over. Each man throws into the river a stone taken from his domestic hearth, and replaces it with one picked up in the bed of the river. On their return to the village the chief

⁸⁸ Gumilla, *Histoire de l'Orénoque*, iii. 243 sq.

⁸⁹ Glaumont, "Usages, mœurs et coutumes des Néo-Calédoniens," in *Revue d'Ethnographie*, vi. 116.

kindles a fire in his hut, and all his subjects come and get a light from it. A general dance follows.⁹⁰ In these cases it seems that the lighting of the flame on earth is supposed to rekindle the solar fire. Such a belief comes naturally to people who, like the Sun clan of the Bechuanas, deem themselves the veritable kinsmen of the sun. The Melanesians make sunshine by means of a mock sun. A round stone is wound about with red braid and stuck with owl's feathers to represent rays; it is then hung on a high tree. Or the stone is laid on the ground with white rods radiating from it to imitate sunbeams.⁹¹ Sometimes the mode of making sunshine is the converse of that of making rain. Thus we have seen that a white or red pig is sacrificed for sunshine, as a black one is sacrificed for rain.⁹² Some of the New Caledonians drench a skeleton to make rain, but burn it to make sunshine.⁹³

In a pass of the Peruvian Andes stand two ruined towers on opposite hills. Iron hooks are clamped into their walls for the purpose of stretching a net from one tower to the other. The net is intended to catch the sun.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Arrousset et Daumas, *Voyage d'exploration au Nord-est de la Colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérance*, p. 350 sq. For the kinship with the sacred object (tchem) from which the clan takes its name, see *ib.* pp. 350, 422, 424. Other people have claimed kindred with the sun, as the Natchez of North America (*Voyages au Nord*, v. 24) and the Incas of Peru.

⁹¹ Codrington, in *Journ. Anthropol. Instit.* x. 278.

⁹² Above, p. [18](#).

⁹³ Turner, *Samoa*, p. 346. See above, p. [16](#).

⁹⁴ Bastian, *Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, iv. 174. The name of the place is

On the top of a small hill in Fiji grew a patch of reeds, and travellers who feared to be belated used to tie the tops of a handful of reeds together to detain the sun from going down.⁹⁵ The intention perhaps was to entangle the sun in the reeds, just as the Peruvians try to catch him in the net. Stories of men who have caught the sun in a noose are widely spread.⁹⁶ Jerome of Prague, travelling among the heathen Lithuanians early in the fifteenth century, found a tribe who worshipped the sun and venerated a large iron hammer. The priests told him that once the sun had been invisible for several months, because a powerful king had shut it up in a strong tower; but the signs of the zodiac had broken open the tower with this very hammer and released the sun. Therefore they adored the hammer.⁹⁷ When an Australian blackfellow wishes to stay the sun from going down till he gets home, he places a sod in the fork of a tree, exactly facing the setting sun.⁹⁸ For the same purpose an Indian of Yucatan, journeying westward, places a stone in a tree or pulls out some of his eyelashes and blows them towards the sun.⁹⁹ South African natives, in travelling, will put a stone in a branch of a tree or place some grass on the path with a stone over it, believing that this will

Andahuayllas.

⁹⁵ Th. Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, i. 250.

⁹⁶ Schoolcraft, *The American Indians*, p. 97 *sqq.*; Gill, *Myths and Songs of the South Pacific*, p. 61 *sq.*; Turner, *Samoa*, p. 200 *sq.*

⁹⁷ Aeneas Sylvius, *Opera* (Bâle, 1571), p. 418.

⁹⁸ Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, ii. 334; Curr, *The Australian Race*, i. 50.

⁹⁹ Fancourt, *History of Yucatan*, p. 118.

cause their friends to keep the meal waiting till their arrival.¹⁰⁰ In these, as in previous examples, the purpose apparently is to retard the sun. But why should the act of putting a stone or a sod in a tree be supposed to effect this? A partial explanation is suggested by another Australian custom. In their journeys the natives are accustomed to place stones in trees at different heights from the ground in order to indicate the height of the sun in the sky at the moment when they passed the particular tree. Those who follow are thus made aware of the time of day when their friends in advance passed the spot.¹⁰¹ Possibly the natives, thus accustomed to mark the sun's progress, may have slipped into the confusion of imagining that to mark the sun's progress was to arrest it at the point marked. On the other hand, to make it go down faster, the Australians throw sand into the air and blow with their mouths towards the sun.¹⁰²

Once more, the savage thinks he can make the wind to blow or to be still. When the day is hot and a Yakut has a long way to go, he takes a stone which he has chanced to find in an animal or fish, winds a horse-hair several times round it, and ties it to a stick. He then waves the stick about, uttering a spell. Soon a cool breeze begins to blow.¹⁰³ The Wind clan of the Omahas flap their blankets to start a breeze which will drive away the

¹⁰⁰ *South African Folk-lore Journal*, i. 34.

¹⁰¹ E. J. Eyre, *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia*, ii. 365.

¹⁰² Curr, *The Australian Race*, iii. 145.

¹⁰³ Gmelin, *Reise durch Sibirien*, ii. 510.

mosquitoes.¹⁰⁴ When a Haida Indian wishes to obtain a fair wind, he fasts, shoots a raven, singes it in the fire, and then going to the edge of the sea sweeps it over the surface of the water four times in the direction in which he wishes the wind to blow. He then throws the raven behind him, but afterwards picks it up and sets it in a sitting posture at the foot of a spruce-tree, facing towards the required wind. Propping its beak open with a stick, he requests a fair wind for a certain number of days; then going away he lies covered up in his mantle till another Indian asks him for how many days he has desired the wind, which question he answers.¹⁰⁵ When a sorcerer in New Britain wishes to make a wind blow in a certain direction, he throws burnt lime in the air, chanting a song all the time. Then he waves sprigs of ginger and other plants about, throws them up and catches them. Next he makes a small fire with these sprigs on the spot where the lime has fallen thickest, and walks round the fire chanting. Lastly, he takes the ashes and throws them on the water.¹⁰⁶ On the altar of Fladda's chapel, in the island of Fladdahuan (one of the Hebrides), lay a round bluish stone which was always moist. Windbound fishermen walked sunwise round the chapel and then poured water on the stone, whereupon a favourable

¹⁰⁴ *Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington), p. 241.

¹⁰⁵ G. M. Dawson, "On the Haida Indians of the Queen Charlotte Islands," *Geological Survey of Canada, Report of progress for 1878-1879*, p. 124 B.

¹⁰⁶ W. Powell, *Wanderings in a Wild Country*, p. 169.

breeze was sure to spring up.¹⁰⁷ In Finnland wizards used to sell wind to storm-staid mariners. The wind was enclosed in three knots; if they undid the first knot, a moderate wind sprang up; if the second, it blew half a gale; if the third, a hurricane.¹⁰⁸ The same thing is said to have been done by wizards and witches in Lappland, in the island of Lewis, and in the Isle of Man.¹⁰⁹ A Norwegian witch has boasted of sinking a ship by opening a bag in which she had shut up a wind.¹¹⁰ Ulysses received the winds in a leather bag from Aeolus, King of the Winds.¹¹¹ So Perdoytus, the Lithuanian wind-god, keeps the winds enclosed in a leather bag; when they escape from it he pursues them, beats them, and shuts them up again.¹¹² The Motumotu in New Guinea think that storms are sent by an Oiabu sorcerer; for each wind he has a bamboo which he opens at pleasure.¹¹³ But here we have passed from custom (with which alone we are at present concerned) into mythology. Shetland seamen still buy winds from old women who claim to rule the storms. There are now in Lerwick old

¹⁰⁷ Miss C. F. Gordon Cumming, *In the Hebrides*, p. 166 *sq.*; Martin, "Description of the Western Islands of Scotland," in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, iii. 627.

¹⁰⁸ Olaus Magnus, *Gentium Septentr. Hist.* iii. 15.

¹⁰⁹ Scheffer, *Laponia*, p. 144; Gordon Cumming, *In the Hebrides*, p. 254 *sq.*; Train, *Account of the Isle of Man*, ii. 166.

¹¹⁰ C. Leemius, *De Lapponibus Finmarchiae etc. commentatio*, p. 454.

¹¹¹ *Odysey*, x. 19 *sqq.*

¹¹² E. Veckenstedt, *Die Mythen, Sagen, und Legenden der Zamaiten (Litauer)*, i. 153.

¹¹³ J. Chalmers, *Pioneering in New Guinea*, p. 177.

women who live by selling wind.¹¹⁴ When the Hottentots wish to make the wind drop, they take one of their fattest skins and hang it on the end of a pole, believing that by blowing the skin down the wind will lose all its force and must itself fall.¹¹⁵ In some parts of Austria, during a heavy storm, it is customary to open the window and throw out a handful of meal, chaff, or feathers, saying to the wind, "There, that's for you, stop!"¹¹⁶ Once when north-westerly winds had kept the ice long on the coast, and food was getting scarce, the Eskimos of Alaska performed a ceremony to make a calm. A fire was kindled on the shore and the men gathered round it and chanted. An old man then stepped up to the fire and in a coaxing voice invited the demon of the wind to come under the fire and warm himself. When he was supposed to have arrived, a vessel of water, to which each man present had contributed, was thrown on the fire by an old man, and immediately a flight of arrows sped towards the spot where the fire had been. They thought that the demon would not stay where he had been so badly treated. To complete the effect, guns were discharged in various directions, and the captain of a European vessel was asked to fire on the wind with cannon.¹¹⁷ When the wind blows down their huts, the Payaguas in South

¹¹⁴ Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland*, iii. 220; Sir W. Scott, *Pirate*, note to ch. vii.; Shaks. *Macbeth*, Act i. Sc. 3, l. 11.

¹¹⁵ Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686), p. 389.

¹¹⁶ A. Peter, *Volksthümliches aus Oesterreichisch Schlesien*, ii. 259.

¹¹⁷ *Arctic Papers for the Expedition of 1875* (R. Geogr. Soc.), p. 274.

America snatch up firebrands and run against the wind menacing it with the blazing brands, while others beat the air with their fists to frighten the storm.¹¹⁸ When the Guaycurus are threatened by a severe storm the men go out armed, and the women and children scream their loudest to intimidate the demon.¹¹⁹ During a tempest the inhabitants of a Batta village in Sumatra have been seen to rush from their houses armed with sword and lance. The Raja placed himself at their head, and with shouts and yells they hewed and hacked at the invisible foe. An old woman was observed to be especially active in defending her house, slashing the air right and left with a long sabre.¹²⁰

In the light of these examples a story told by Herodotus, which his modern critics have treated as a fable, is perfectly credible. He says, without however vouching for the truth of the tale, that once in the land of the Psylli, the modern Tripoli, the wind blowing from the Sahara had dried up all the water-tanks. So the people took counsel and marched in a body to make war on the south wind. But when they entered the desert, the simoom swept down on them and buried them to a man.¹²¹ The story may well have been told by one who watched them disappearing, in battle array, with drums and cymbals beating, into the red cloud of whirling

¹¹⁸ Azara, *Voyages dans l'Amérique Méridionale*, ii. 137.

¹¹⁹ Charlevoix, *Histoire du Paraguay*, i. 74.

¹²⁰ W. A. Henry, "Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Bataklanden," in *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xvii. 23 sq.

¹²¹ Herodotus, iv. 173; Aulus Gellius, xvi. 11.

sand. It is still said of the Bedouins of Eastern Africa that “no whirlwind ever sweeps across the path without being pursued by a dozen savages with drawn creeses, who stab into the centre of the dusty column in order to drive away the evil spirit that is believed to be riding on the blast.”¹²² So in Australia the huge columns of red sand that move rapidly across a desert tract are thought by the blackfellows to be spirits passing along. Once an athletic young black ran after one of these moving columns to kill it with boomerangs. He was away two or three hours and came back very weary, saying he had killed Koochee (the demon), but that Koochee had growled at him and he must die.¹²³ Even where these dust columns are not attacked they are still regarded with awe. In some parts of India they are supposed to be *bhuts* going to bathe in the Ganges.¹²⁴ Californian Indians think that they are happy souls ascending to the heavenly land.¹²⁵

When a gust lifts the hay in the meadow, the Breton peasant throws a knife or a fork at it to prevent the devil from carrying off the hay.¹²⁶ German peasants throw a knife or a hat at a whirlwind because there is a witch or a wizard in it.¹²⁷

¹²² Harris, *Highlands of Ethiopia*, i. 352.

¹²³ Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, i. 457 sq.; cp. *id.* ii. 270; *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.* xiii. p. 194 note.

¹²⁴ Denzil C. J. Ibbetson, *Settlement Report of the Panipat Tahsil and Karnal Parganah of the Karnal District*, p. 154.

¹²⁵ Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California*, p. 328.

¹²⁶ Sébillot, *Coutumes populaires de la Haute-Bretagne*, p. 302 sq.

¹²⁷ Mannhardt, *A. W. F.* p. 85.

§ 3. – Incarnate gods

These examples, drawn from the beliefs and practices of rude peoples all over the world, may suffice to prove that the savage, whether European or otherwise, fails to recognise those limitations to his power over nature which seem so obvious to us. In a society where every man is supposed to be endowed more or less with powers which we should call supernatural, it is plain that the distinction between gods and men is somewhat blurred, or rather has scarcely emerged. The conception of gods as supernatural beings entirely distinct from and superior to man, and wielding powers to which he possesses nothing comparable in degree and hardly even in kind, has been slowly evolved in the course of history. At first the supernatural agents are not regarded as greatly, if at all, superior to man; for they may be frightened and coerced by him into doing his will. At this stage of thought the world is viewed as a great democracy; all beings in it, whether natural or supernatural, are supposed to stand on a footing of tolerable equality. But with the growth of his knowledge man learns to realise more clearly the vastness of nature and his own littleness and feebleness in presence of it. The recognition of his own helplessness does not, however, carry with it a corresponding belief in the impotence of those supernatural beings with which his imagination peoples the universe. On the contrary it enhances his conception of their power. For

the idea of the world as a system of impersonal forces acting in accordance with fixed and invariable laws has not yet fully dawned or darkened upon him. The germ of the idea he certainly has, and he acts upon it, not only in magic art, but in much of the business of daily life. But the idea remains undeveloped, and so far as he attempts consciously to explain the world he lives in, he pictures it as the manifestation of conscious will and personal agency. If then he feels himself to be so frail and slight, how vast and powerful must he deem the beings who control the gigantic machinery of nature! Thus as his old sense of equality with the gods slowly vanishes, he resigns at the same time the hope of directing the course of nature by his own unaided resources, that is, by magic, and looks more and more to the gods as the sole repositories of those supernatural powers which he once claimed to share with them. With the first advance of knowledge, therefore, prayer and sacrifice assume the leading place in religious ritual; and magic, which once ranked with them as a legitimate equal, is gradually relegated to the background and sinks to the level of a black art. It is now regarded as an encroachment, at once vain and impious, on the domain of the gods, and as such encounters the steady opposition of the priests, whose reputation and influence gain or lose with those of their gods. Hence, when at a late period the distinction between religion and superstition has emerged, we find that sacrifice and prayer are the resource of the pious and enlightened portion of the community, while magic is the

refuge of the superstitious and ignorant. But when, still later, the conception of the elemental forces as personal agents is giving way to the recognition of natural law; then magic, based as it implicitly is on the idea of a necessary and invariable sequence of cause and effect, independent of personal will, reappears from the obscurity and discredit into which it had fallen, and by investigating the causal sequences in nature, directly prepares the way for science. Alchemy leads up to chemistry.

The notion of a man-god or of a human being endowed with divine or supernatural powers, belongs essentially to that earlier period of religious history in which gods and men are still viewed as beings of much the same order, and before they are divided by the impassable gulf which, to later thought, opens out between them. Strange, therefore, as may seem to us the idea of a god incarnate in human form, it has nothing very startling for early man, who sees in a man-god or a god-man only a higher degree of the same supernatural powers which he arrogates in perfect good faith to himself. Such incarnate gods are common in rude society. The incarnation may be temporary or permanent. In the former case, the incarnation – commonly known as inspiration or possession – reveals itself in supernatural knowledge rather than in supernatural power. In other words, its usual manifestations are divination and prophesy rather than miracles. On the other hand, when the incarnation is not merely temporary, when the divine spirit has permanently taken up its abode in a human body, the god-man is usually expected to vindicate his character by

working miracles. Only we have to remember that by men at this stage of thought miracles are not considered as breaches of natural law. Not conceiving the existence of natural law, primitive man cannot conceive a breach of it. A miracle is to him merely an unusually striking manifestation of a common power.

The belief in temporary incarnation or inspiration is world-wide. Certain persons are supposed to be possessed from time to time by a spirit or deity; while the possession lasts, their own personality lies in abeyance, the presence of the spirit is revealed by convulsive shiverings and shakings of the man's whole body, by wild gestures and excited looks, all of which are referred, not to the man himself, but to the spirit which has entered into him; and in this abnormal state all his utterances are accepted as the voice of the god or spirit dwelling in him and speaking through him. In Mangaia the priests in whom the gods took up their abode from time to time were called "god-boxes" or, for shortness, "gods." Before giving oracles as gods, they drank an intoxicating liquor, and in the frenzy thus produced their wild words were received as the voice of the god.¹²⁸ But examples of such temporary inspiration are so common in every part of the world and are now so familiar through books on ethnology, that it is needless to cite illustrations of the general principle.¹²⁹ It may be well, however, to refer to two particular modes of producing temporary inspiration, because they are perhaps less

¹²⁸ Gill, *Myths and Songs of the South Pacific*, p. 35.

¹²⁹ See for examples E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*,² ii. 131 *sqq.*

known than some others, and because we shall have occasion to refer to them later on. One of these modes of producing inspiration is by sucking the fresh blood of a sacrificed victim. In the temple of Apollo Diradiotes at Argos, a lamb was sacrificed by night once a month; a woman, who had to observe a rule of chastity, tasted the blood of the lamb, and thus being inspired by the god she prophesied or divined.¹³⁰ At Aegira in Achaëa the priestess of Earth drank the fresh blood of a bull before she descended into the cave to prophesy.¹³¹ In Southern India a devil-dancer “drinks the blood of the sacrifice, putting the throat of the decapitated goat to his mouth. Then, as if he had acquired new life, he begins to brandish his staff of bells, and to dance with a quick but wild unsteady step. Suddenly the afflatus descends. There is no mistaking that glare, or those frantic leaps. He snorts, he stares, he gyrates. The demon has now taken bodily possession of him; and, though he retains the power of utterance and of motion, both are under the demon's control, and his separate consciousness is in abeyance... The devil-dancer is now worshipped as a present deity, and every bystander consults him respecting his disease, his wants, the welfare of his absent relatives, the offerings to be made for the accomplishment of his wishes, and, in short, respecting everything for which

¹³⁰ Pausanias, ii. 24, 1. *κάτοχος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γίνεται* is the expression.

¹³¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 147. Pausanias (vii. 25, 13) mentions the draught of bull's blood as an ordeal to test the chastity of the priestess. Doubtless it was thought to serve both purposes.

superhuman knowledge is supposed to be available.”¹³² At a festival of the Minahassa in northern Celebes, after a pig has been killed, the priest rushes furiously at it, thrusts his head into the carcass and drinks of the blood. Then he is dragged away from it by force and set on a chair, whereupon he begins to prophesy how the rice crop will turn out that year. A second time he runs at the carcass and drinks of the blood; a second time he is forced into the chair and continues his predictions. It is thought there is a spirit in him which possesses the power of prophecy.¹³³ At Rhetra, a great religious capital of the Western Slavs, the priest tasted the blood of the sacrificed oxen and sheep in order the better to prophesy.¹³⁴ The true test of a Dainyal or diviner among some of the Hindoo Koosh tribes is to suck the blood from the neck of a decapitated goat.¹³⁵ The other mode of producing temporary inspiration, to which I shall here refer, is by means of a branch or leaves of a sacred tree. Thus in the Hindoo Koosh a fire

¹³² Caldwell, “On demonolatry in Southern India,” *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, i. 101 sq.

¹³³ J. G. F. Riedel, “De Minahasa in 1825,” *Tijdschrift v. Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xviii. 517 sq. Cp. N. Graafland, *De Minahassa*, i. 122; Dumont D'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de La Perouse*, v. 443.

¹³⁴ F. J. Mone, *Geschichte des Heidenthums im nördlichen Europa*, i. 188.

¹³⁵ Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 96. For other instances of priests or representatives of the deity drinking the warm blood of the victim, cp. *Tijdschrift v. Nederlandsch Indië*, 1849, p. 395; Oldfield, *Sketches from Nipal*, ii. 296 sq.; *Asiatic Researches*, iv. 40, 41, 50, 52 (8vo. ed.); Paul Soleillet, *L'Afrique Occidentale*, p. 123 sq. To snuff up the savour of the sacrifice was similarly supposed to produce inspiration. Tertullian, *Apologet.* 23.

is kindled with twigs of the sacred cedar; and the Dainyal or sibyl, with a cloth over her head, inhales the thick pungent smoke till she is seized with convulsions and falls senseless to the ground. Soon she rises and raises a shrill chant, which is caught up and loudly repeated by her audience.¹³⁶ So Apollo's prophetess ate the sacred laurel before she prophesied.¹³⁷ It is worth observing that many peoples expect the victim as well as the priest or prophet to give signs of inspiration by convulsive movements of the body; and if the animal remains obstinately steady, they esteem it unfit for sacrifice. Thus when the Yakuts sacrifice to an evil spirit, the beast must bellow and roll about, which is considered a token that the evil spirit has entered into it.¹³⁸ Apollo's prophetess could give no oracles unless the victim to be sacrificed trembled in every limb when the wine was poured on its head. But for ordinary Greek sacrifices it was enough that the victim should shake its head; to make it do so, water was poured on it.¹³⁹ Many other peoples (Tonquinese, Hindoos, Chuwash, etc.) have adopted the same test of a suitable victim; they pour water or wine on its head; if the animal shakes its head it is accepted for sacrifice; if it does not, it is rejected.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 97.

¹³⁷ Lucian, *Bis accus.*, I; Tzetzes, *Schol. ad Lycophr.*, 6.

¹³⁸ Vambéry, *Das Türkenvolk*, p. 158.

¹³⁹ Plutarch, *De defect. oracul.* 46, 49.

¹⁴⁰ D. Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, ii. 37; *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, xvi. 230 sq.; *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii. No. 721; *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, i. 103; S. Mateer, *The Land of Charity*, 216; *id.*,

The person temporarily inspired is believed to acquire, not merely divine knowledge, but also, at least occasionally, divine power. In Cambodia, when an epidemic breaks out, the inhabitants of several villages unite and go with a band of music at their head to look for the man whom the local god is believed to have chosen for his temporary incarnation. When found, the man is taken to the altar of the god, where the mystery of incarnation takes place. Then the man becomes an object of veneration to his fellows, who implore him to protect the village against the plague.¹⁴¹ The image of Apollo at Hylæ in Phocis was believed to impart superhuman strength. Sacred men, inspired by it, leaped down precipices, tore up huge trees by the roots, and carried them on their backs along the narrowest defiles.¹⁴² The feats performed by inspired dervishes belong to the same class.

Thus far we have seen that the savage, failing to discern the limits of his ability to control nature, ascribes to himself and to all men certain powers which we should now call supernatural. Further, we have seen that over and above this general supernaturalism, some persons are supposed to be

Native Life in Travancore, p. 94; A. C. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, p. 14; Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 131; Pallas, *Reisen in verschiedenen Provinzen des russischen Reiches*, i. 91; Vambéry, *Das Türkenvolk*, p. 485; Erman, *Archiv für wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland*, i. 377. When the Rao of Kachh sacrifices a buffalo, water is sprinkled between its horns; if it shakes its head, it is unsuitable; if it nods its head, it is sacrificed. *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. No. 911. This is probably a modern misinterpretation of the old custom.

¹⁴¹ Moura, *Le Royaume du Cambodge*, i. 177 sq.

¹⁴² Pausanias, x. 32, 6.

inspired for short periods by a divine spirit, and thus temporarily to enjoy the knowledge and power of the indwelling deity. From beliefs like these it is an easy step to the conviction that certain men are permanently possessed by a deity, or in some other undefined way are endued with so high a degree of supernatural powers as to be ranked as gods and to receive the homage of prayer and sacrifice. Sometimes these human gods are restricted to purely supernatural or spiritual functions. Sometimes they exercise supreme political power in addition. In the latter case they are kings as well as gods, and the government is a theocracy. I shall give examples of both.

In the Marquesas Islands there was a class of men who were deified in their life-time. They were supposed to wield a supernatural power over the elements; they could give abundant harvests or smite the ground with barrenness; and they could inflict disease or death. Human sacrifices were offered to them to avert their wrath. There were not many of them, at the most one or two in each island. They lived in mystic seclusion. Their powers were sometimes, but not always, hereditary. A missionary has described one of these human gods from personal observation. The god was a very old man who lived in a large house within an enclosure. In the house was a kind of altar, and on the beams of the house and on the trees round it were hung human skeletons, head down. No one entered the enclosure, except the persons dedicated to the service of the god; only on days when human victims were sacrificed might ordinary

people penetrate into the precinct. This human god received more sacrifices than all the other gods; often he would sit on a sort of scaffold in front of his house and call for two or three human victims at a time. They were always brought, for the terror he inspired was extreme. He was invoked all over the island, and offerings were sent to him from every side.¹⁴³ Again, of the South Sea Islands in general we are told that each island had a man who represented or personified the divinity. Such men were called gods, and their substance was confounded with that of the deity. The man-god was sometimes the king himself; oftener he was a priest or subordinate chief.¹⁴⁴ Tanatoa, King of Raiatea, was deified by a certain ceremony performed at the chief temple. "As one of the divinities of his subjects, therefore, the king was worshipped, consulted as an oracle and had sacrifices and prayers offered to him."¹⁴⁵ This was not an exceptional case. The kings of the island regularly enjoyed divine honours, being deified at the time of their accession.¹⁴⁶ At his inauguration the king of Tahiti received a sacred girdle of red and yellow feathers, "which not only raised him to the highest earthly station, but identified him with their gods."¹⁴⁷ The gods of Samoa generally appeared

¹⁴³ Vincendon-Dumoulin et Desgraz, *Iles Marquises*, pp. 226, 240 *sq.*

¹⁴⁴ Moerenhout, *Voyages aux Iles du Grand Océan*, i. 479; Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, iii. 94.

¹⁴⁵ Tyerman and Bennet, *Journal of Voyages and Travels in the South Sea Islands, China, India, etc.*, i. 524; cp. p. 529 *sq.*

¹⁴⁶ Tyerman and Bennet, *op. cit.* i. 529 *sq.*

¹⁴⁷ Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, iii. 108.

in animal form, but sometimes they were permanently incarnate in men, who gave oracles, received offerings (occasionally of human flesh), healed the sick, answered prayers, and so on.¹⁴⁸ In regard to the old religion of the Fijians, and especially of the inhabitants of Somo-somo, it is said that “there appears to be no certain line of demarcation between departed spirits and gods, nor between gods and living men, for many of the priests and old chiefs are considered as sacred persons, and not a few of them will also claim to themselves the right of divinity. ‘I am a god,’ Tuikilakila would say; and he believed it too.”¹⁴⁹ In the Pelew Islands it is believed that every god can take possession of a man and speak through him. The possession may be either temporary or permanent; in the latter case the chosen person is called a *korong*. The god is free in his choice, so the position of *korong* is not hereditary. After the death of a *korong* the god is for some time unrepresented, until he suddenly makes his appearance in a new Avatar. The person thus chosen gives signs of the divine presence by behaving in a strange way; he gapes, runs about, and performs a number of senseless acts. At first people laugh at him, but his sacred mission is in time recognised, and he is invited to assume his proper position in the state. Generally this position is a distinguished one and confers on him a powerful influence over the whole community. In some of the islands

¹⁴⁸ Turner, *Samoa*, pp. 37, 48, 57, 58, 59, 73.

¹⁴⁹ Hazlewood in Erskine's *Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific*, p. 246 sq. Cp. Wilkes's *Narrative of the U. S. Exploring Expedition*, iii. 87.

the god is political sovereign of the land; and hence his new incarnation, however humble his origin, is raised to the same high rank, and rules, as god and king, over all the other chiefs.¹⁵⁰ In time of public calamity, as during war or pestilence, some of the Molucca Islanders used to celebrate a festival of heaven. If no good result followed, they bought a slave, took him at the next festival to the place of sacrifice, and set him on a raised place under a certain bamboo-tree. This tree represented heaven and had been honoured as its image at previous festivals. The portion of the sacrifice which had previously been offered to heaven was now given to the slave, who ate and drank it in the name and stead of heaven. Henceforth the slave was well treated, kept for the festivals of heaven, and employed to represent heaven and receive the offerings in its name.¹⁵¹ In Tonquin every village chooses its guardian spirit, often in the form of an animal, as a dog, tiger, cat, or serpent. Sometimes a living person is selected as patron-divinity. Thus a beggar persuaded the people of a village that he was their guardian spirit; so they loaded him with honours and entertained him with their best.¹⁵² In India “every king is regarded as little short of a present god.”¹⁵³ The Indian law-book of Manu goes farther and says that “even an infant king must

¹⁵⁰ Kubary, “Die Religion der Pelauer,” in Bastian's *Allerlei aus Volks- und Menschenkunde*, i. 30 sqq.

¹⁵¹ F. Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën*, iii. 7 sq.

¹⁵² Bastian, *Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, iv. 383.

¹⁵³ Monier Williams, *Religious Life and Thought in India*, p. 259.

not be despised from an idea that he is a mere mortal; for he is a great deity in human form.”¹⁵⁴ There is said to be a sect in Orissa who worship the Queen of England as their chief divinity. And to this day in India all living persons remarkable for great strength or valour or for supposed miraculous powers run the risk of being worshipped as gods. Thus, a sect in the Punjaub worshipped a deity whom they called Nikkal Sen. This Nikkal Sen was no other than the redoubted General Nicholson, and nothing that the general could do or say damped the enthusiasm of his adorers. The more he punished them, the greater grew the religious awe with which they worshipped him.¹⁵⁵ Amongst the Todas, a pastoral people of the Neilgherry Hills of Southern India, the dairy is a sanctuary, and the milkman (*pâlâl*) who attends to it is a god. On being asked whether the Todas salute the sun, one of these divine milkmen replied, “Those poor fellows do so, but I,” tapping his chest, “I, a god! why should I salute the sun?” Every one, even his own father, prostrates himself before the milkman, and no one would dare to refuse him anything. No human being, except another milkman, may touch him; and he gives oracles to all who consult him, speaking with the voice of a god.¹⁵⁶

The King of Iddah told the English officers of the Niger

¹⁵⁴ *The Laws of Manu*, vii. 8, trans. by G. Bühler.

¹⁵⁵ Monier Williams, *op. cit.* p. 259 sq.

¹⁵⁶ Marshall, *Travels among the Todas*, pp. 136, 137; cp. pp. 141, 142; Metz, *Tribes of the Neilgherry Hills*, p. 19 sqq.

Expedition, "God made me after his own image; I am all the same as God; and He appointed me a king."¹⁵⁷

Sometimes, at the death of the human incarnation, the divine spirit transmigrates into another man. In the kingdom of Kaffa, in Eastern Africa, the heathen part of the people worship a spirit called *Deòce*, to whom they offer prayer and sacrifice, and whom they invoke on all important occasions. This spirit is incarnate in the grand magician or pope, a person of great wealth and influence, ranking almost with the king, and wielding the spiritual, as the king wields the temporal, power. It happened that, shortly before the arrival of a Christian missionary in the kingdom, this African pope died, and the priests, fearing that the missionary would assume the position vacated by the deceased pope, declared that the *Deòce* had passed into the king, who henceforth, uniting the spiritual with the temporal power, reigned as god and king.¹⁵⁸ Before beginning to work at the salt-pans in a Laosian village, the workmen offer sacrifice to a local divinity. This divinity is incarnate in a woman and transmigrates at her death into another woman.¹⁵⁹ In Bhotan the spiritual head of the government is a person called the Dhurma Raja, who is supposed to be a perpetual incarnation of the deity. At his death the new incarnate god shows himself in an infant by the refusal

¹⁵⁷ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger in 1841*, i. 288.

¹⁵⁸ G. Massaja, *I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell' alta Etiopia* (Rome and Milan, 1888), v. 53 sq.

¹⁵⁹ E. Aymonier, *Notes sur le Laos*, p. 141 sq.

of his mother's milk and a preference for that of a cow.¹⁶⁰ The Buddhist Tartars believe in a great number of living Buddhas, who officiate as Grand Lamas at the head of the most important monasteries. When one of these Grand Lamas dies his disciples do not sorrow, for they know that he will soon reappear, being born in the form of an infant. Their only anxiety is to discover the place of his birth. If at this time they see a rainbow they take it as a sign sent them by the departed Lama to guide them to his cradle. Sometimes the divine infant himself reveals his identity. "I am the Grand Lama," he says, "the living Buddha of such and such a temple. Take me to my old monastery. I am its immortal head." In whatever way the birthplace of the Buddha is revealed, whether by the Buddha's own avowal or by the sign in the sky, tents are struck, and the joyful pilgrims, often headed by the king or one of the most illustrious of the royal family, set forth to find and bring home the infant god. Generally he is born in Tibet, the holy land, and to reach him the caravan has often to traverse the most frightful deserts. When at last they find the child they fall down and worship him. Before, however, he is acknowledged as the Grand Lama whom they seek he must satisfy them of his identity. He is asked the name of the monastery of which he claims to be the head, how far off it is, and how many monks live in it; he must also describe the habits of the deceased Grand Lama and the manner of his death. Then various articles, as prayer-books, tea-pots, and cups, are placed

¹⁶⁰ Robinson, *Descriptive Account of Assam*, p. 342 sq.; *Asiatic Researches*, xv. 146.

before him, and he has to point out those used by himself in his previous life. If he does so without a mistake his claims are admitted, and he is conducted in triumph to the monastery.¹⁶¹ At the head of all the Lamas is the Dalai Lama of Lhasa, the Rome of Tibet. He is regarded as a living god and at death his divine and immortal spirit is born again in a child. According to some accounts the mode of discovering the Dalai Lama is similar to the method, already described, of discovering an ordinary Grand Lama. Other accounts speak of an election by lot. Wherever he is born, the trees and plants, it is said, put forth green leaves; at his bidding flowers bloom and springs of water rise; and his presence diffuses heavenly blessings. His palace stands on a commanding height; its gilded cupolas are seen sparkling in the sunlight for miles.¹⁶²

Issuing from the sultry valleys upon the lofty plateau of the Colombian Andes, the Spanish conquerors were astonished to find, in contrast to the savage hordes they had left in the sweltering jungles below, a people enjoying a fair degree of civilisation, practising agriculture, and living under a government which Humboldt has compared to the theocracies of Tibet and

¹⁶¹ Huc, *Souvenirs d'un Voyage dans la Tartarie et le Thibet*, i. 279 *sqq.* ed. 12mo.

¹⁶² Huc, *op. cit.* ii. 279, 347 *sq.*; Meiners, *Geschichte der Religionen*, i. 335 *sq.*; Georgi, *Beschreibung aller Nationen des Russischen Reichs*, p. 415; A. Erman, *Travels in Siberia*, ii. 303 *sqq.*; *Journal of the Roy. Geogr. Soc.*, xxxviii. (1868), 168, 169; *Proceedings of the Roy. Geogr. Soc.* N.S. vii. (1885) 67. In the *Journal Roy. Geogr. Soc.*, l. c., the Lama in question is called the Lama Gûrû; but the context shows that he is the great Lama of Lhasa.

Japan. These were the Chibchas, Muyscas, or Mozcas, divided into two kingdoms, with capitals at Bogota and Tunja, but united apparently in spiritual allegiance to the high pontiff of Sogamozo or Iraca. By a long and ascetic novitiate, this ghostly ruler was reputed to have acquired such sanctity that the waters and the rain obeyed him, and the weather depended on his will.¹⁶³ Weather kings are common in Africa. Thus the Waganda of Central Africa believe in a god of Lake Nyanza, who sometimes takes up his abode in a man or woman. The incarnate god is much feared by all the people, including the king and the chiefs. He is consulted as an oracle; by his word he can inflict or heal sickness, withhold rain, and cause famine. Large presents are made him when his advice is sought.¹⁶⁴ Often the king himself is supposed to control the weather. The king of Loango is honoured by his people “as though he were a god; and he is called Sambee and Pango, which mean god. They believe that he can let them have rain when he likes; and once a year, in December, which is the time they want rain, the people come to beg of him to grant it to them.” On this occasion the king, standing on his throne, shoots

¹⁶³ Alex. von. Humboldt, *Researches concerning the Institutions and Monuments of the Ancient Inhabitants of America*, ii. 106 sq.; Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, iv. 352 sq.; J. G. Müller, *Geschichte der Amerikanischen Urreligionen*, p. 430 sq.; Martius, *Zur Ethnographie Amerikas*, p. 455; Bastian, *Die Culturländer des alten Amerika*, ii. 204 sq.

¹⁶⁴ R. W. Felkin, “Notes on the Waganda Tribe of Central Africa,” in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, xiii. 762; C. T. Wilson and R. W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan*, i. 206.

an arrow into the air, which is supposed to bring on rain.¹⁶⁵ Much the same is said of the king of Mombaza.¹⁶⁶ The king of Quiteva, in Eastern Africa, ranks with the deity; “indeed, the Caffres acknowledge no other gods than their monarch, and to him they address those prayers which other nations are wont to prefer to heaven... Hence these unfortunate beings, under the persuasion that their king is a deity, exhaust their utmost means and ruin themselves in gifts to obtain with more facility what they need. Thus, prostrate at his feet, they implore of him, when the weather long continues dry, to intercede with heaven that they may have rain; and when too much rain has fallen, that they may have fair weather; thus, also, in case of winds, storms, and everything, they would either deprecate or implore.”¹⁶⁷ Amongst the Barotse, a tribe on the upper Zambesi, “there is an old, but waning belief, that a chief is a demigod, and in heavy thunderstorms the Barotse flock to the chief's yard for protection from the lightning. I have been greatly distressed at seeing them fall on their knees before the chief, entreating him to open the water-pots of heaven and send rain upon their gardens... The king's servants declare themselves to be invincible, because they are the servants of

¹⁶⁵ “The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battel,” in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 330; Proyart, “History of Loango, Kakongo, and other Kingdoms in Africa,” in Pinkerton, xvi. 577; Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, p. 335.

¹⁶⁶ Ogilby, *Africa*, p. 615; Dapper, *op. cit.* p. 400.

¹⁶⁷ Dos Santos, “History of Eastern Ethiopia,” in Pinkerton, *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 682, 687 sq.

God (meaning *the king*).”¹⁶⁸ The chief of Mowat, New Guinea, is believed to have the power of affecting the growth of crops for good or ill, and of coaxing the *dugong* and turtle to come from all parts and allow themselves to be taken.¹⁶⁹

Amongst the Antaymours of Madagascar the king is responsible for the growth of the crops and for every misfortune that befalls the people.¹⁷⁰ In many places the king is punished if rain does not fall and the crops do not turn out well. Thus, in some parts of West Africa, when prayers and offerings presented to the king have failed to procure rain, his subjects bind him with ropes and take him by force to the grave of his forefathers, that he may obtain from them the needed rain.¹⁷¹ It appears that the Scythians also, when food was scarce, put their king in bonds.¹⁷² The Banjars in West Africa ascribe to their king the power of causing rain or fine weather. So long as the weather is fine they load him with presents of grain and cattle. But if long drought or rain threatens to spoil the crops, they insult and beat him till

¹⁶⁸ F. S. Arnot, *Garenganze; or, Seven Years' Pioneer Mission Work in Central Africa*, London, N.D. (preface dated March 1889), p. 78.

¹⁶⁹ MS. notes by E. Beardmore.

¹⁷⁰ Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, ii. 439.

¹⁷¹ Labat, *Relation historique de l'Ethiopie Occidentale*, ii. 172-176.

¹⁷² Schol. on Apollonius Rhod. ii. 1248. καὶ Ἡρόδωρος ξένως περὶ τῶν δεσμῶν τοῦ Προμηθέως ταῦτα. εἶναι γὰρ αὐτὸν Σκυθῶν βασιλέα φησί; καὶ μὴ δυνάμενον παρέχειν τοῖς ὑπηκόοις τὰ ἐπιτήδεια, διὰ τὸν καλούμενον Ἀετὸν ποταμὸν ἐπικλύζειν τὰ πεδία, δεθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν Σκυθῶν.

the weather changes.¹⁷³ When the harvest fails or the surf on the coast is too heavy to allow of fishing, the people of Loango accuse their king of a “bad heart” and depose him.¹⁷⁴ On the Pepper Coast the high priest or Bodio is responsible for the health of the community, the fertility of the earth, and the abundance of fish in the sea and rivers; and if the country suffers in any of these respects the Bodio is deposed from his office.¹⁷⁵ So the Burgundians of old deposed their king if the crops failed.¹⁷⁶ Some peoples have gone further and killed their kings in times of scarcity. Thus, in the time of the Swedish king Domalde a mighty famine broke out, which lasted several years, and could be stayed by the blood neither of beasts nor of men. So, in a great popular assembly held at Upsala, the chiefs decided that king Domalde himself was the cause of the scarcity and must be sacrificed for good seasons. So they slew him and smeared with his blood the altars of the gods. Again, we are told that the Swedes always attributed good or bad crops to their kings as the cause. Now, in the reign of King Olaf, there came dear times and famine, and the people thought that the fault was the king's, because he was sparing in his sacrifices. So, mustering an army, they marched against him, surrounded his dwelling, and burned

¹⁷³ H. Hecquard, *Reise an der Küste und in das Innere von West Afrika*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁴ Bastian, *Die Deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, i. 354, ii. 230.

¹⁷⁵ J. Leighton Wilson, *West Afrika*, p. 93 (German translation).

¹⁷⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxviii. 5, 14.

him in it, "giving him to Odin as a sacrifice for good crops."¹⁷⁷ In 1814, a pestilence having broken out among the reindeer of the Chukch, the Shamans declared that the beloved chief Koch must be sacrificed to the angry gods; so the chief's own son stabbed him with a dagger.¹⁷⁸ On the coral island of Niuē, or Savage Island, in the South Pacific, there formerly reigned a line of kings. But as the kings were also high priests, and were supposed to make the food grow, the people became angry with them in times of scarcity and killed them; till at last, as one after another was killed, no one would be king, and the monarchy came to an end.¹⁷⁹ As in these cases the divine kings, so in ancient Egypt the divine beasts, were responsible for the course of nature. When pestilence and other calamities had fallen on the land, in consequence of a long and severe drought, the priests took the sacred animals secretly by night, and threatened them, but if the evil did not abate they slew the beasts.¹⁸⁰

From this survey of the religious position occupied by the king in rude societies we may infer that the claim to divine and supernatural powers put forward by the monarchs of great historical empires like those of Egypt, Mexico, and Peru, was not the simple outcome of inflated vanity or the empty expression

¹⁷⁷ Snorro Starleson, *Chronicle of the Kings of Norway* (trans. by S. Laing), saga i. chs. 18, 47. Cp. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 7; Scheffer, *Upsalia*, p. 137.

¹⁷⁸ C. Russwurm, "Aberglaube in Russland," in *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Mythologie und Sittenkunde*, iv. 162; Liebrecht, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁹ Turner, *Samoa*, p. 304 sq.

¹⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 73.

of a grovelling adulation; it was merely a survival and extension of the old savage apotheosis of living kings. Thus, for example, as children of the Sun the Incas of Peru were revered like gods; they could do no wrong, and no one dreamed of offending against the person, honour, or property of the monarch or of any of the royal race. Hence, too, the Incas did not, like most people, look on sickness as an evil. They considered it a messenger sent from their father the Sun to call his son to come and rest with him in heaven. Therefore the usual words in which an Inca announced his approaching end were these: "My father calls me to come and rest with him." They would not oppose their father's will by offering sacrifice for recovery, but openly declared that he had called them to his rest.¹⁸¹ The Mexican kings at their accession took an oath that they would make the sun to shine, the clouds to give rain, the rivers to flow, and the earth to bring forth fruits in abundance.¹⁸² By Chinese custom the emperor is deemed responsible if the drought be at all severe, and many are the self-condemnatory edicts on this subject published in the pages of the *Peking Gazette*. However it is rather as a high priest than as a god that the Chinese emperor bears the blame; for in extreme cases he seeks to remedy the evil by personally offering prayers and sacrifices to heaven.¹⁸³ The Parthian monarchs of the Arsacid

¹⁸¹ Garcilasso de la Vega, *First Part of the Royal Commentaries of the Yncas*, bk. ii. chs. 8 and 15 (vol. i. pp. 131, 155, Markham's Trans.)

¹⁸² Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States*, ii. 146.

¹⁸³ Dennys, *Folk-lore of China*, p. 125.

house styled themselves brothers of the sun and moon and were worshipped as deities. It was esteemed sacrilege to strike even a private member of the Arsacid family in a brawl.¹⁸⁴ The kings of Egypt were deified in their lifetime, and their worship was celebrated in special temples and by special priests. Indeed the worship of the kings sometimes cast that of the gods into the shade. Thus in the reign of Merenra a high official declared that he had built many holy places in order that the spirits of the king, the ever-living Merenra, might be invoked “more than all the gods.”¹⁸⁵ The King of Egypt seems to have shared with the sacred animals the blame of any failure of the crops.¹⁸⁶ He was addressed as “Lord of heaven, lord of earth, sun, life of the whole world, lord of time, measurer of the sun's course, Tum for men, lord of well-being, creator of the harvest, maker and fashioner of mortals, bestower of breath upon all men, giver of life to all the host of gods, pillar of heaven, threshold of the earth, weigher of the equipoise of both worlds, lord of rich gifts, increaser of the corn” etc.¹⁸⁷ Yet, as we should expect, the exalted powers thus ascribed to the king differed in degree rather than in kind from those which every Egyptian claimed for himself. Tiele observes

¹⁸⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiii. 6, § 5 and 6.

¹⁸⁵ C. P. Tiele, *History of the Egyptian Religion*, p. 103 sq. On the worship of the kings see also E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, i. § 52; A. Erman, *Aegypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum*, p. 91 sqq.; V. von Strauss und Carnen, *Die altägyptischen Götter und Göttersagen*, p. 467 sqq.

¹⁸⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxviii. 5, 14; Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 73.

¹⁸⁷ V. von Strauss und Carnen, *op. cit.* p. 470.

that “as every good man at his death became Osiris, as every one in danger or need could by the use of magic sentences assume the form of a deity, it is quite comprehensible how the king, not only after death, but already during his life, was placed on a level with the deity.”¹⁸⁸

Thus it appears that the same union of sacred functions with a royal title which meets us in the King of the Wood at Nemi, the Sacrificial King at Rome and the King Archon at Athens, occurs frequently outside the limits of classical antiquity and is a common feature of societies at all stages from barbarism to civilisation. Further, it appears that the royal priest is often a king in fact as well as in name, swaying the sceptre as well as the crosier. All this confirms the tradition of the origin of the titular and priestly kings in the republics of ancient Greece and Italy. At least by showing that the combination of spiritual and temporal power, of which Graeco-Italian tradition preserved the memory, has actually existed in many places, we have obviated any suspicion of improbability that might have attached to the tradition. Therefore we may now fairly ask, May not the King of the Wood have had an origin like that which a probable tradition assigns to the Sacrificial King of Rome and the King Archon of Athens? In other words, may not his predecessors in office have

¹⁸⁸ Tiele, *History of the Egyptian Religion*, p. 105. The Babylonian and Assyrian kings seem also to have been regarded as gods; at least the oldest names of the kings on the monuments are preceded by a star, the mark for “god.” But there is no trace in Babylon and Assyria of temples and priests for the worship of the kings. See Tiele, *Babylonisch-Assyrische Geschichte*, p. 492 sq.

been a line of kings whom a republican revolution stripped of their political power, leaving them only their religious functions and the shadow of a crown? There are at least two reasons for answering this question in the negative. One reason is drawn from the abode of the priest of Nemi; the other from his title, the King of the Wood. If his predecessors had been kings in the ordinary sense, he would surely have been found residing, like the fallen kings of Rome and Athens, in the city of which the sceptre had passed from him. This city must have been Aricia, for there was none nearer. But Aricia, as we have seen, was three miles off from his forest sanctuary by the lake shore. If he reigned, it was not in the city, but in the greenwood. Again his title, King of the Wood, hardly allows us to suppose that he had ever been a king in the common sense of the word. More likely he was a king of nature, and of a special side of nature, namely, the woods from which he took his title. If we could find instances of what we may call departmental kings of nature, that is of persons supposed to rule over particular elements or aspects of nature, they would probably present a closer analogy to the King of the Wood than the divine kings we have been hitherto considering, whose control of nature is general rather than special. Instances of such departmental kings are not wanting.

On a hill at Bomma (the mouth of the Congo) dwells Namvulu Vumu, King of the Rain and Storm.¹⁸⁹ Of some of the tribes on the Upper Nile we are told that they have no kings in the

¹⁸⁹ Bastian, *Die Deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, ii. 230.

common sense; the only persons whom they acknowledge as such are the Kings of the Rain, *Mata Kodou*, who are credited with the power of giving rain at the proper time, that is in the rainy season. Before the rains begin to fall at the end of March the country is a parched and arid desert; and the cattle, which form the people's chief wealth, perish for lack of grass. So, when the end of March draws on, each householder betakes himself to the King of the Rain and offers him a cow that he may make the rain to fall soon. If no shower falls, the people assemble and demand that the king shall give them rain; and if the sky still continues cloudless, they rip up his belly in which he is believed to keep the storms. Amongst the Bari tribe one of these Rain Kings made rain by sprinkling water on the ground out of a hand-bell.¹⁹⁰

Among tribes on the outskirts of Abyssinia a similar office exists and has been thus described by an observer. "The priesthood of the Alfai, as he is called by the Barea and Kunáma, is a remarkable one; he is believed to be able to make rain. This office formerly existed among the Algeds and appears to be still common to the Nuba negroes. The Alfai of the Bareas, who is also consulted by the northern Kunáma, lives near Tembádere on a mountain alone with his family. The people bring him tribute in the form of clothes and fruits, and cultivate for him a large field of his own. He is a kind of king, and his office passes by inheritance to his brother or sister's son. He is supposed

¹⁹⁰ "Excursion de M. Brun-Rollet dans la région supérieure du Nil," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, Paris, 1852, pt. ii. p. 421 *sqq.*

to conjure down rain and to drive away the locusts. But if he disappoints the people's expectation and a great drought arises in the land, the Alfai is stoned to death, and his nearest relations are obliged to cast the first stone at him. When we passed through the country, the office of Alfai was still held by an old man; but I heard that rain-making had proved too dangerous for him and that he had renounced his office.”¹⁹¹

In the backwoods of Cambodia live two mysterious sovereigns known as the King of the Fire and the King of the Water. Their fame is spread all over the south of the great Indo-Chinese peninsula; but only a faint echo of it has reached the West. No European, so far as is known, has ever seen them; and their very existence might have passed for a fable, were it not that till a few years ago communications were regularly maintained between them and the King of Cambodia, who year by year exchanged presents with them. The Cambodian gifts were passed from tribe to tribe till they reached their destination; for no Cambodian would essay the long and perilous journey. The tribe amongst whom the Kings of Fire and Water reside is the Chréais or Jaray, a race with European features but a sallow complexion, inhabiting the forest-clad mountains and high plateaux which separate Cambodia from Annam. Their royal functions are of a purely mystic or spiritual order; they have no political authority; they are simple peasants, living by the sweat of their brow and the offerings of the faithful. According to one account they live

¹⁹¹ W. Munzinger, *Ostafrikanische Studien*, p. 474 (Schaffhausen, 1864).

in absolute solitude, never meeting each other and never seeing a human face. They inhabit successively seven towers perched upon seven mountains, and every year they pass from one tower to another. People come furtively and cast within their reach what is needful for their subsistence. The kingship lasts seven years, the time necessary to inhabit all the towers successively; but many die before their time is out. The offices are hereditary in one or (according to others) two royal families, who enjoy high consideration, have revenues assigned to them, and are exempt from the necessity of tilling the ground. But naturally the dignity is not coveted, and when a vacancy occurs, all eligible men (they must be strong and have children) flee and hide themselves. Another account, admitting the reluctance of the hereditary candidates to accept the crown, does not countenance the report of their hermit-like seclusion in the seven towers. For it represents the people as prostrating themselves before the mystic kings whenever they appear in public, it being thought that a terrible hurricane would burst over the country if this mark of homage were omitted.

The same report says that the Fire King, the more important of the two, and whose supernatural powers have never been questioned, officiates at marriages, festivals, and sacrifices in honour of the Yan. On these occasions a special place is set apart for him; and the path by which he approaches is spread with white cotton cloths. A reason for confining the royal dignity to the same family is that this family is in possession of certain

famous talismans which would lose their virtue or disappear if they passed out of the family. These talismans are three: the fruit of a creeper called *Cui*, gathered ages ago but still fresh and green; a rattan, also very old and still not dry; lastly a sword containing a Yan or spirit, who guards it constantly and works miracles with it. To this wondrous brand sacrifices of buffaloes, pigs, fowls, and ducks are offered for rain. It is kept swathed in cotton and silk; and amongst the annual presents sent by the King of Cambodia were rich stuffs to wrap the sacred sword.

In return the Kings of Fire and Water sent him a huge wax candle and two calabashes, one full of rice and the other of sesame. The candle bore the impress of the Fire King's middle finger. Probably the candle was thought to contain the seed of fire, which the Cambodian monarch thus received once a year fresh from the Fire King himself. The holy candle was kept for sacred uses. On reaching the capital of Cambodia it was entrusted to the Brahmans, who laid it up beside the regalia, and with the wax made tapers which were burned on the altars on solemn days. As the candle was the special gift of the Fire King, we may conjecture that the rice and sesame were the special gift of the Water King. The latter was doubtless king of rain as well as of water, and the fruits of the earth were boons conferred by him on men. In times of calamity, as during plague, floods, and war, a little of this sacred rice and sesame was scattered on the ground "to appease the wrath of the maleficent spirits."¹⁹²

¹⁹² J. Moura, *Le Royaume du Cambodge*, i. 432-436; Aymonier, "Notes sur les

These, then, are examples of what I have called departmental kings of nature. But it is a far cry to Italy from the forests of Cambodia and the sources of the Nile. And though Kings of Rain, Water and Fire have been found, we have still to discover a King of the Wood to match the Arician priest who bore that title. Perhaps we shall find him nearer home.

coutumes et croyances superstitieuses des Cambodgiens,” in *Cochinchine Française, Excursions et Reconnaissances*, No. 16, p. 172 *sq.*; *id.*, *Notes sur le Laos*, p. 60.

§ 4. – Tree-worship

In the religious history of the Aryan race in Europe the worship of trees has played an important part. Nothing could be more natural. For at the dawn of history Europe was covered with immense primeval forests, in which the scattered clearings must have appeared like islets in an ocean of green. Down to the first century before our era the Hercynian forest stretched eastward from the Rhine for a distance at once vast and unknown; Germans whom Caesar questioned had travelled for two months through it without reaching the end.¹⁹³ In our own country the wealds of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex are remnants of the great forest of Anderida, which once clothed the whole of the south eastern portion of the island. Westward it seems to have stretched till it joined another forest that extended from Hampshire to Devon. In the reign of Henry II the citizens of London still hunted the wild bull and the boar in the forest of Hampstead. Even under the later Plantagenets the royal forests were sixty-eight in number. In the forest of Arden it was said that down to modern times a squirrel might leap from tree to tree for nearly the whole length of Warwickshire.¹⁹⁴ The excavation of prehistoric pile-villages in the valley of the Po has shown that long before the rise and probably the foundation of Rome the north of Italy was

¹⁹³ Caesar, *Bell. Gall.* vi. 25.

¹⁹⁴ Elton, *Origins of English History*, pp. 3, 106 *sq.*, 224.

covered with dense forests of elms, chestnuts, and especially of oaks.¹⁹⁵ Archaeology is here confirmed by history; for classical writers contain many references to Italian forests which have now disappeared.¹⁹⁶ In Greece the woods of the present day are a mere fraction of those which clothed great tracts in antiquity, and which at a more remote epoch may have spanned the Greek peninsula from sea to sea.¹⁹⁷

From an examination of the Teutonic words for “temple” Grimm has made it probable that amongst the Germans the oldest sanctuaries were natural woods.¹⁹⁸ However this may be, tree-worship is well attested for all the great European families of the Aryan stock. Amongst the Celts the oak-worship of the Druids is familiar to every one.¹⁹⁹ Sacred groves were common among the ancient Germans, and tree-worship is hardly extinct amongst their descendants at the present day.²⁰⁰ At Upsala, the old religious capital of Sweden, there was a sacred grove in which every tree was regarded as divine.²⁰¹ Amongst the ancient Prussians (a Slavonian people) the central feature of religion was the reverence for the sacred oaks, of which the chief stood at

¹⁹⁵ W. Helbig, *Die Italiker in der Poebene*, p. 25 sq.

¹⁹⁶ H. Nissen, *Italische Landeskunde*, p. 431 sqq.

¹⁹⁷ Neumann und Partsch, *Physikalische Geographie von Griechenland*, p. 357 sqq.

¹⁹⁸ Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴ i. 53 sqq.

¹⁹⁹ The *locus classicus* is Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xvi. § 249 sqq.

²⁰⁰ Grimm, *D. M.* i. 56 sqq.

²⁰¹ Adam of Bremen, *Descriptio Insul. Aquil.* p. 27.

Romove, tended by a hierarchy of priests who kept up a perpetual fire of oak-wood in the holy grove.²⁰² The Lithuanians were not converted to Christianity till towards the close of the fourteenth century, and amongst them at the date of their conversion the worship of trees was prominent.²⁰³ Proofs of the prevalence of tree-worship in ancient Greece and Italy are abundant.²⁰⁴ Nowhere, perhaps, in the ancient world was this antique form of religion better preserved than in the heart of the great metropolis itself. In the Forum, the busy centre of Roman life, the sacred fig-tree of Romulus was worshipped down to the days of the empire, and the withering of its trunk was enough to spread consternation through the city.²⁰⁵ Again, on the slope of the Palatine Hill grew a cornel-tree which was esteemed one of the most sacred objects in Rome. Whenever the tree appeared to a passer-by to be drooping, he set up a hue and cry which was echoed by the people in the street, and soon a crowd might be seen running from all sides with buckets of water, as if (says Plutarch) they were hastening to put out a fire.²⁰⁶

²⁰² "Prisca antiquorum Prutenorum religio," in *Respublica sive Status Regni Poloniae, Lituaniae, Prussiae, Livoniae*, etc. (Elzevir, 1627), p. 321 *sq.*; Dusburg, *Chronicon Prussiae*, ed. Hartknoch, p. 79; Hartknoch, *Alt- und Neues Preussen*, p. 116 *sqq.*

²⁰³ Mathias Michov, "De Sarmatia Asiana atque Europea," in *Novus Orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum* (Paris, 1532), pp. 455 *sq.* 456 [wrongly numbered 445, 446]; Martin Cromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum* (Basel, 1568), p. 241.

²⁰⁴ See Bötticher, *Der Baumkultus der Hellenen*.

²⁰⁵ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xv. § 77; Tacitus, *Ann.* xiii. 58.

²⁰⁶ Plutarch, *Romulus*, 20.

But it is necessary to examine in some detail the notions on which tree-worship is based. To the savage the world in general is animate, and trees are no exception to the rule. He thinks that they have souls like his own and he treats them accordingly. Thus the Wanika in Eastern Africa fancy that every tree and especially every cocoa-nut tree has its spirit: "the destruction of a cocoa-nut tree is regarded as equivalent to matricide, because that tree gives them life and nourishment, as a mother does her child."²⁰⁷ Siamese monks, believing that there are souls everywhere and that to destroy anything whatever is forcibly to dispossess a soul, will not break a branch of a tree "as they will not break the arm of an innocent person."²⁰⁸ These monks, of course, are Buddhists. But Buddhist animism is not a philosophical theory. It is simply a common savage dogma incorporated in the system of an historical religion. To suppose with Benfey and others that the theories of animism and transmigration current among rude peoples of Asia are derived from Buddhism is to reverse the facts. Buddhism in this respect borrowed from savagery, not savagery from Buddhism. Again, the Dyaks ascribe souls to trees and do not dare to cut down an old tree. In some places, when an old tree has been blown down, they set it up, smear it with blood, and deck it with flags "to appease the soul of the tree."²⁰⁹ People

²⁰⁷ J. L. Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*, p. 198.

²⁰⁸ Loubere, *Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, p. 126.

²⁰⁹ Hupe "Over de godsdienst, zeden, enz. der Dajakker's" in *Tijdschrift voor*

in Congo place calabashes of palm-wine at the foot of certain trees for the trees to drink when they are thirsty.²¹⁰ In India shrubs and trees are formally married to each other or to idols.²¹¹ In the North West Provinces of India a marriage ceremony is performed in honour of a newly-planted orchard; a man holding the Salagram represents the bridegroom, and another holding the sacred Tulsi (*Ocymum sanctum*) represents the bride.²¹² On Christmas Eve German peasants used to tie fruit-trees together with straw ropes to make them bear fruit, saying that the trees were thus married.²¹³

In the Moluccas when the clove-trees are in blossom they are treated like pregnant women. No noise must be made near them; no light or fire must be carried past them at night; no one must approach them with his hat on, but must uncover his head. These precautions are observed lest the tree should be frightened and bear no fruit, or should drop its fruit too soon, like the untimely delivery of a woman who has been frightened in her pregnancy.²¹⁴

Neêrland's Indië, 1846, dl. iii. 158.

²¹⁰ Merolla, "Voyage to Congo," in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 236.

²¹¹ Monier Williams, *Religious Life and Thought in India*, p. 334 sq.

²¹² Sir Henry M. Elliot and J. Beames, *Memoirs on the History etc. of the Races of the North Western Provinces of India*, i. 233.

²¹³ *Die gestriegelte Rockenphilosophie* (Chemnitz, 1759), p. 239 sq.; U. Jahn, *Die deutsche Opfergebräuche bei Ackerbau und Viehzucht*, p. 214 sqq.

²¹⁴ Van Schmid, "Aanteekeningen, nopens de zeden, gewoonten en gebruiken, etc., der bevolking van de eilanden Saparoea, etc." in *Tijdschrift v. Neêrland's Indië*, 1843, dl. ii. 605; Bastian, *Indonesien*, i. 156.

So when the paddy (rice) is in bloom the Javanese say it is pregnant and make no noises (fire no guns, etc.) near the field, fearing that if they did so the crop would be all straw and no grain.²¹⁵ In Orissa, also, growing rice is “considered as a pregnant woman, and the same ceremonies are observed with regard to it as in the case of human females.”²¹⁶

Conceived as animate, trees are necessarily supposed to feel injuries done to them. When an oak is being felled “it gives a kind of shriekes or groanes, that may be heard a mile off, as if it were the genius of the oake lamenting. E. Wyld, Esq., hath heard it severall times.”²¹⁷ The Ojebways “very seldom cut down green or living trees, from the idea that it puts them to pain, and some of their medicine-men profess to have heard the wailing of the trees under the axe.”²¹⁸ Old peasants in some parts of Austria still believe that forest-trees are animate, and will not allow an incision to be made in the bark without special cause; they have heard from their fathers that the tree feels the cut not less than a wounded man his hurt. In felling a tree they beg its pardon.²¹⁹ So in Jarkino the woodman craves pardon of the tree he cuts down.²²⁰ Again, when a tree is cut it is thought to bleed.

²¹⁵ Van Hoëvell, *Ambon en meer bepaaldelijk de Oeliasers*, p. 62.

²¹⁶ *The Indian Antiquary*, i. 170.

²¹⁷ J. Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme*, p. 247.

²¹⁸ Peter Jones's *History of the Ojebway Indians*, p. 104.

²¹⁹ A. Peter, *Volksthümliches aus Österreichisch-Schlesien*, ii. 30.

²²⁰ Bastian, *Indonesien*, i. 154; cp. *id.*, *Die Völker des estlichen Asien*, ii. 457 sq., iii.

Some Indians dare not cut a certain plant, because there comes out a red juice which they take for the blood of the plant.²²¹ In Samoa there was a grove of trees which no one dared cut. Once some strangers tried to do so, but blood flowed from the tree, and the sacrilegious strangers fell ill and died.²²² Till 1855 there was a sacred larch-tree at Nauders, in the Tyrol, which was thought to bleed whenever it was cut; moreover the steel was supposed to penetrate the woodman's body to the same depth that it penetrated the tree, and the wound on the tree and on the man's body healed together.²²³

Sometimes it is the souls of the dead which are believed to animate the trees. The Dieyerie tribe of South Australia regard as very sacred certain trees, which are supposed to be their fathers transformed; hence they will not cut the trees down, and protest against the settlers doing so.²²⁴ Some of the Philippine Islanders believe that the souls of their forefathers are in certain trees, which they therefore spare. If obliged to fell one of these trees they excuse themselves to it by saying that it was the priest who made them fell it.²²⁵ In an Annamite story an old fisherman

²²¹ *sq.*, iv. 42 *sq.*

²²¹ Loubere, *Siam*, p. 126.

²²² Turner, *Samoa*, p. 63.

²²³ Mannhardt, *Baumkultus*, p. 35 *sq.*

²²⁴ *Native Tribes of South Australia*, p. 280.

²²⁵ Blumentritt, "Der Ahnencultus und die religiösen Anschauungen der Malaïen des Philippinen-Archipels," in *Mittheilungen der Wiener Geogr. Gesellschaft*, 1882, p. 165 *sq.*

makes an incision in the trunk of a tree which has drifted ashore; but blood flows from the cut, and it appears that an empress with her three daughters, who had been cast into the sea, are embodied in the tree.²²⁶ The story of Polydorus will occur to readers of Virgil.

In these cases the spirit is viewed as incorporate in the tree; it animates the tree and must suffer and die with it. But, according to another and no doubt later view, the tree is not the body, but merely the abode of the tree-spirit, which can quit the injured tree as men quit a dilapidated house. Thus when the Pelew Islanders are felling a tree, they conjure the spirit of the tree to leave it and settle on another.²²⁷ The Pádams of Assam think that when a child is lost it has been stolen by the spirits of the wood. So they retaliate on the spirits by cutting down trees till they find the child. The spirits, fearing to be left without a tree in which to lodge, give up the child, and it is found in the fork of a tree.²²⁸ Before the Katodis fell a forest-tree, they choose a tree of the same kind and worship it by presenting a cocoa-nut, burning incense, applying a red pigment, and begging it to bless the undertaking.²²⁹ The intention, perhaps, is to induce the spirit of the former tree to shift its quarters to the latter. In clearing a

²²⁶ Landes, "Contes et légendes annamites," No. 9, in *Cochinchine Française, Excursions et Reconnaissances*, No. 20, p. 310.

²²⁷ Kubary in Bastian's *Allerlei aus Mensch-und Volkenkunde*, i. 52.

²²⁸ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 25; Bastian, *Volkerstämme am Brahmaputra*, p. 37.

²²⁹ *Journal R. Asiatic Society*, vii. (1843) 29.

wood, a Galeleze must not cut down the last tree till the spirit in it has been induced to go away.²³⁰ The Mundaris have sacred groves which were left standing when the land was cleared, lest the sylvan gods, disquieted at the felling of the trees, should abandon the place.²³¹ The Miris in Assam are unwilling to break up new land for cultivation so long as there is fallow land available; for they fear to offend the spirits of the woods by cutting down trees unnecessarily.²³²

In Sumatra, so soon as a tree is felled, a young tree is planted on the stump; and some betel and a few small coins are also placed on it.²³³ Here the purpose is unmistakable. The spirit of the tree is offered a new home in the young tree planted on the stump of the old one, and the offering of betel and money is meant to compensate him for the disturbance he has suffered. So in the island of Chedooba, on felling a large tree, one of the woodmen was always ready with a green sprig, which he ran and placed on the middle of the stump the instant the tree fell.²³⁴ For the same purpose German woodmen make a cross upon the stump while the tree is falling, in the belief that this enables the

²³⁰ Bastian, *Indonesien*, i. 17.

²³¹ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, pp. 186, 188; cp. Bastian, *Volkerstämme am Brahmaputra*, p. 9.

²³² Dalton, *op. cit.* p. 33; Bastian, *op. cit.* p. 16. Cp. W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, i. 125.

²³³ Van Hasselt, *Volksbeschrijving van Midden-Sumatra*, p. 156.

²³⁴ *Handbook of Folk-lore*, p. 19 (proof).

spirit of the tree to live upon the stump.²³⁵

Thus the tree is regarded, sometimes as the body, sometimes as merely the house of the tree-spirit; and when we read of sacred trees which may not be cut down because they are the seat of spirits, it is not always possible to say with certainty in which way the presence of the spirit in the tree is conceived. In the following cases, perhaps, the trees are conceived as the dwelling-place of the spirits rather than as their bodies. The old Prussians, it is said, believed that gods inhabited high trees, such as oaks, from which they gave audible answers to inquirers; hence these trees were not felled, but worshipped as the homes of divinities.²³⁶ The great oak at Romove was the especial dwelling-place of the god; it was veiled with a cloth, which was, however, removed to allow worshippers to see the sacred tree.²³⁷ The Battas of Sumatra have been known to refuse to cut down certain trees because they were the abode of mighty spirits which would resent the injury.²³⁸ The Curka Coles of India believe that the tops of trees are inhabited

²³⁵ Mannhardt, *Baumkultus*, p. 83.

²³⁶ Erasmus Stella, "De Borussiae antiquitatibus," in *Novus Orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum*, p. 510; Lasiczki (Lasicus), "De diis Samagitarum caeterorumque Sarmatarum," in *Respublica sive Status Regni Poloniae, Lituaniae, Prussiae, Livoniae*, etc. (Elzevir, 1627), p. 299 *sq.* There is a good and cheap reprint of Lasiczki's work by W. Mannhardt in *Magazin herausgegeben von der Lettisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft*, xiv. 82 *sqq.* (Mitau, 1868).

²³⁷ Simon Grünau, *Preussische Chronik*, ed. Perlbach (Leipzig 1876), p. 89; "Prisca antiquorum Prutenorum religio," in *Respublica sive Status Regni Poloniae etc.*, p. 321.

²³⁸ B. Hagen, "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Battareligion," in *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xxviii. 530 *note*.

by spirits which are disturbed by the cutting down of the trees and will take vengeance.²³⁹ The Samogitians thought that if any one ventured to injure certain groves, or the birds or beasts in them, the spirits would make his hands or feet crooked.²⁴⁰

Even where no mention is made of wood-spirits, we may generally assume that when a grove is sacred and inviolable, it is so because it is believed to be either inhabited or animated by sylvan deities. In Livonia there is a sacred grove in which, if any man fells a tree or breaks a branch, he will die within the year.²⁴¹ The Wotjaks have sacred groves. A Russian who ventured to hew a tree in one of them fell sick and died next day.²⁴² Sacrifices offered at cutting down trees are doubtless meant to appease the wood-spirits. In Gilgit it is usual to sprinkle goat's blood on a tree of any kind before cutting it down.²⁴³ Before thinning a grove a Roman farmer had to sacrifice a pig to the god or goddess of the grove.²⁴⁴ The priestly college of the Arval Brothers at Rome had to make expiation when a rotten bough fell to the ground in the sacred grove, or when an old tree was blown down by a storm or dragged down by a weight of snow on its branches.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Bastian, *Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, i. 134.

²⁴⁰ Matthias Michov, in *Novus Orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum*, p. 457.

²⁴¹ Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴, i. 497; cp. ii. 540, 541.

²⁴² Max Buch, *Die Wotjaken*, p. 124.

²⁴³ Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 116.

²⁴⁴ Cato, *De agri cultura*, 139.

²⁴⁵ Henzen, *Acta fratrum arvalium* (Berlin, 1874), p. 138.

When a tree comes to be viewed, no longer as the body of the tree-spirit, but simply as its dwelling-place which it can quit at pleasure, an important advance has been made in religious thought. Animism is passing into polytheism. In other words, instead of regarding each tree as a living and conscious being, man now sees in it merely a lifeless, inert mass, tenanted for a longer or shorter time by a supernatural being who, as he can pass freely from tree to tree, thereby enjoys a certain right of possession or lordship over the trees, and, ceasing to be a tree-soul, becomes a forest god. As soon as the tree-spirit is thus in a measure disengaged from each particular tree, he begins to change his shape and assume the body of a man, in virtue of a general tendency of early thought to clothe all abstract spiritual beings in concrete human form. Hence in classical art the sylvan deities are depicted in human shape, their woodland character being denoted by a branch or some equally obvious symbol.²⁴⁶ But this change of shape does not affect the essential character of the tree-spirit. The powers which he exercised as a tree-soul incorporate in a tree, he still continues to wield as a god of trees. This I shall now prove in detail. I shall show, first, that trees considered as animate beings are credited with the power of making the rain to fall, the sun to shine, flocks and herds

²⁴⁶ On the representations of Silvanus, the Roman wood-god, see Jordan in Preller's *Römische Mythologie*,³ i. 393 note; Baumeister, *Denkmäler des classischen Altertums*, iii. 1665 sq. A good representation of Silvanus bearing a pine branch is given in the Sale Catalogue of H. Hoffmann, Paris, 1888, pt. ii.

to multiply, and women to bring forth easily; and, second, that the very same powers are attributed to tree-gods conceived as anthropomorphic beings or as actually incarnate in living men.

First, then, trees or tree-spirits are believed to give rain and sunshine. When the missionary Jerome of Prague was persuading the heathen Lithuanians to fell their sacred groves, a multitude of women besought the Prince of Lithuania to stop him, saying that with the woods he was destroying the house of god from which they had been wont to get rain and sunshine.²⁴⁷ The Mundaris in Assam think if a tree in the sacred grove is felled, the sylvan gods evince their displeasure by withholding rain.²⁴⁸ In Cambodia each village or province has its sacred tree, the abode of a spirit. If the rains are late, the people sacrifice to the tree.²⁴⁹ To extort rain from the tree-spirit a branch is sometimes dipped in water, as we have seen above.²⁵⁰ In such cases the spirit is doubtless supposed to be immanent in the branch, and the water thus applied to the spirit produces rain by a sort of sympathetic magic, exactly as we saw that in New Caledonia the rain-makers pour water on a skeleton, believing that the soul of the deceased will convert the water into rain.²⁵¹ There is hardly room to doubt that Mannhardt

²⁴⁷ Aeneas Sylvius, *Opera* (Bâle, 1571), p. 418 [wrongly numbered 420]; cp. Erasmus Stella, "De Borussiae antiquitatibus," in *Novus Orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum*, p. 510.

²⁴⁸ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 186.

²⁴⁹ Aymonier in *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, No. 16, p. 175 sq.

²⁵⁰ See above, pp. [13](#), [21](#).

²⁵¹ Above, p. [16](#).

is right in explaining as a rain-charm the European custom of drenching with water the trees which are cut at certain popular festivals, as midsummer, Whitsuntide, and harvest.²⁵²

Again, tree-spirits make the crops to grow. Amongst the Mundaris every village has its sacred grove, and “the grove deities are held responsible for the crops, and are especially honoured at all the great agricultural festivals.”²⁵³ The negroes of the Gold Coast are in the habit of sacrificing at the foot of certain tall trees, and they think that if one of these trees were felled, all the fruits of the earth would perish.²⁵⁴ Swedish peasants stick a leafy branch in each furrow of their corn-fields, believing that this will ensure an abundant crop.²⁵⁵ The same idea comes out in the German and French custom of the Harvest-May. This is a large branch or a whole tree, which is decked with ears of corn, brought home on the last waggon from the harvest-field, and fastened on the roof of the farmhouse or of the barn, where it remains for a year. Mannhardt has proved that this branch or tree embodies the tree-spirit conceived as the spirit of vegetation in general, whose vivifying and fructifying influence is thus brought to bear upon the corn in particular. Hence in Swabia the Harvest-May is fastened amongst the last stalks of

²⁵² Mannhardt, *B. K.* pp. 158, 159, 170, 197, 214, 351, 514.

²⁵³ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 188.

²⁵⁴ Labat, *Voyage du Chevalier des Marchais en Guinée, Isles voisines, et à Cayenne* (Paris, 1730), i. 338.

²⁵⁵ L. Lloyd, *Peasant Life in Sweden*, p. 266.

corn left standing on the field; in other places it is planted on the cornfield and the last sheaf cut is fastened to its trunk.²⁵⁶ The Harvest-May of Germany has its counterpart in the *eiresione* of ancient Greece.²⁵⁷ The *eiresione* was a branch of olive or laurel, bound about with ribbons and hung with a variety of fruits. This branch was carried in procession at a harvest festival and was fastened over the door of the house, where it remained for a year. The object of preserving the Harvest-May or the *eiresione* for a year is that the life-giving virtue of the bough may foster the growth of the crops throughout the year. By the end of the year the virtue of the bough is supposed to be exhausted and it is replaced by a new one. Following a similar train of thought some of the Dyaks of Sarawak are careful at the rice harvest to take up the roots of a certain bulbous plant, which bears a beautiful crown of white and fragrant flowers. These roots are preserved with the rice in the granary and are planted again with the seed-rice in the following season; for the Dyaks say that the rice will not grow unless a plant of this sort be in the field.²⁵⁸

Customs like that of the Harvest-May appear to exist in India and Africa. At a harvest festival of the Lhoosai of S. E. India the chief goes with his people into the forest and fells a large tree, which is then carried into the village and set up in the midst. Sacrifice is offered, and spirits and rice are poured over

²⁵⁶ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 190 *sqq.*

²⁵⁷ Mannhardt, *A. W. F.* p. 212 *sqq.*

²⁵⁸ H. Low, *Sarawak*, p. 274.

the tree. The ceremony closes with a feast and a dance, at which the unmarried men and girls are the only performers.²⁵⁹ Among the Bechuanas the hack-thorn is very sacred, and it would be a serious offence to cut a bough from it and carry it into the village during the rainy season. But when the corn is ripe in the ear the people go with axes, and each man brings home a branch of the sacred hack-thorn, with which they repair the village cattle-yard.²⁶⁰ Many tribes of S. E. Africa will not cut down timber while the corn is green, fearing that if they did so, the crops would be destroyed by blight, hail, or early frost.²⁶¹

Again, the fructifying power of the tree is put forth at seed-time as well as at harvest. Among the Aryan tribes of Gilgit, on the north-western frontier of India, the sacred tree is the *Chili*, a species of cedar (*Juniperus excelsa*). At the beginning of wheat-sowing the people receive from the Raja's granary a quantity of wheat, which is placed in a skin mixed with sprigs of the sacred cedar. A large bonfire of the cedar wood is lighted, and the wheat which is to be sown is held over the smoke. The rest is ground and made into a large cake, which is baked on the same fire and given to the ploughman.²⁶² Here the intention of fertilising the seed by means of the sacred cedar is unmistakable. In all these cases the power of fostering the growth of crops, and, in general,

²⁵⁹ T. H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South-eastern India*, p. 270.

²⁶⁰ J. Mackenzie, *Ten years north of the Orange River*, p. 385.

²⁶¹ Rev. J. Macdonald, MS. notes.

²⁶² Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 103 sq.

of cultivated plants, is ascribed to trees. The ascription is not unnatural. For the tree is the largest and most powerful member of the vegetable kingdom, and man is familiar with it before he takes to cultivating corn. Hence he naturally places the feebler and, to him, newer plant under the dominion of the older and more powerful.

Again, the tree-spirit makes the herds to multiply and blesses women with offspring. The sacred *Chili* or cedar of Gilgit was supposed to possess this virtue in addition to that of fertilising the corn. At the commencement of wheat-sowing three chosen unmarried youths, after undergoing daily washing and purification for three days, used to start for the mountain where the cedars grew, taking with them wine, oil, bread, and fruit of every kind. Having found a suitable tree they sprinkled the wine and oil on it, while they ate the bread and fruit as a sacrificial feast. Then they cut off the branch and brought it to the village, where, amid general rejoicing, it was placed on a large stone beside running water. "A goat was then sacrificed, its blood poured over the cedar branch, and a wild dance took place, in which weapons were brandished about, and the head of the slaughtered goat was borne aloft, after which it was set up as a mark for arrows and bullet-practice. Every good shot was rewarded with a gourd full of wine and some of the flesh of the goat. When the flesh was finished the bones were thrown into the stream and a general ablution took place, after which every man went to his house taking with him a spray of the

cedar. On arrival at his house he found the door shut in his face, and on his knocking for admission, his wife asked, 'What have you brought?' To which he answered, 'If you want children, I have brought them to you; if you want food, I have brought it; if you want cattle, I have brought them; whatever you want, I have it.' The door was then opened and he entered with his cedar spray. The wife then took some of the leaves and pouring wine and water on them placed them on the fire, and the rest were sprinkled with flour and suspended from the ceiling. She then sprinkled flour on her husband's head and shoulders, and addressed him thus: 'Ai Shiri Bagerthum, son of the fairies, you have come from far!' *Shiri Bagerthum*, 'the dreadful king,' being the form of address to the cedar when praying for wants to be fulfilled. The next day the wife baked a number of cakes, and taking them with her, drove the family goats to the Chili stone. When they were collected round the stone, she began to pelt them with pebbles, invoking the Chili at the same time. According to the direction in which the goats ran off, omens were drawn as to the number and sex of the kids expected during the ensuing year. Walnuts and pomegranates were then placed on the Chili stone, the cakes were distributed and eaten, and the goats followed to pasture in whatever direction they showed a disposition to go. For five days afterwards this song was sung in all the houses: —

'Dread Fairy King, I sacrifice before you,
How nobly do you stand! you have filled up my house,

You have brought me a wife when I had not one,
Instead of daughters you have given me sons.
You have shown me the ways of right,
You have given me many children.' ”²⁶³

Here the driving of the goats to the stone on which the cedar had been placed is clearly meant to impart to them the fertilising influence of the cedar. In Europe the May-tree (May-pole) is supposed to possess similar powers over both women and cattle. In some parts of Germany on the 1st of May the peasants set up May-trees at the doors of stables and byres, one May-tree for each horse and cow; this is thought to make the cows yield much milk.²⁶⁴ Camden says of the Irish, “They fancy a green bough of a tree, fastened on May-day against the house, will produce plenty of milk that summer.”²⁶⁵

On the 2d of July some of the Wends used to set up an oak-tree in the middle of the village with an iron cock fastened to its top; then they danced round it, and drove the cattle round it to make them thrive.²⁶⁶

Some of the Esthonians believe in a mischievous spirit called Metsik, who lives in the forest and has the weal of the cattle

²⁶³ Biddulph, *op. cit.* p. 106 sq.

²⁶⁴ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 161; E. Meier, *Deutsche Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Schwaben*, p. 397.; A. Peter, *Volksthümliches aus Österreichisch-Schlesien*, ii. 286; Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 210.

²⁶⁵ Quoted by Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, i. 227, Bohn's ed.

²⁶⁶ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 174.

in his hands. Every year a new image of him is prepared. On an appointed day all the villagers assemble and make a straw man, dress him in clothes, and take him to the common pasture land of the village. Here the figure is fastened to a high tree, round which the people dance noisily. On almost every day of the year prayer and sacrifice are offered to him that he may protect the cattle. Sometimes the image of Metsik is made of a corn-sheaf and fastened to a tall tree in the wood. The people perform strange antics before it to induce Metsik to guard the corn and the cattle.²⁶⁷

The Circassians regard the pear-tree as the protector of cattle. So they cut down a young pear-tree in the forest, branch it, and carry it home, where it is adored as a divinity. Almost every house has one such pear-tree. In autumn, on the day of the festival, it is carried into the house with great ceremony to the sound of music and amid the joyous cries of all the inmates, who compliment it on its fortunate arrival. It is covered with candles, and a cheese is fastened to its top. Round about it they eat, drink, and sing. Then they bid it good-bye and take it back to the courtyard, where it remains for the rest of the year, set up against the wall, without receiving any mark of respect.²⁶⁸

The common European custom of placing a green bush on May Day before the house of a beloved maiden probably

²⁶⁷ Holzmayer, "Osiliana," *Verhandlungen der Estnischen Gesell. zu Dorpat*, vii. 10 sq.; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 407 sq.

²⁶⁸ Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase* (Paris, 1829), i. 309.

originated in the belief of the fertilising power of the tree-spirit.²⁶⁹ Amongst the Kara-Kirgiz barren women roll themselves on the ground under a solitary apple-tree, in order to obtain offspring.²⁷⁰ Lastly, the power of granting to women an easy delivery at child-birth is ascribed to trees both in Sweden and Africa. In some districts of Sweden there was formerly a *bårdträd* or guardian-tree (lime, ash, or elm) in the neighbourhood of every farm. No one would pluck a single leaf of the sacred tree, any injury to which was punished by ill-luck or sickness. Pregnant women used to clasp the tree in their arms in order to ensure an easy delivery.²⁷¹ In some negro tribes of the Congo region pregnant women make themselves garments out of the bark of a certain sacred tree, because they believe that this tree delivers them from the dangers that attend child-bearing.²⁷² The story that Leto clasped a palm-tree and an olive-tree or two laurel-trees when she was about to give birth to Apollo and Artemis perhaps points to a similar Greek belief in the efficacy of certain trees to facilitate delivery.²⁷³

From this review of the beneficent qualities commonly ascribed to tree-spirits, it is easy to understand why customs like

²⁶⁹ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 163 *sqq.* To his authorities add, for Sardinia, R. Tennant, *Sardinia and its Resources* (Rome and London, 1885), p. 185 *sq.*

²⁷⁰ Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur der nördlichen Türkischen Stämme*, v. 2.

²⁷¹ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 51 *sq.*

²⁷² Merolla, "Voyage to Congo," in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 236 *sq.*

²⁷³ Bötticher, *Der Baumkultus der Hellenen*, p. 30 *sq.*

the May-tree or May-pole have prevailed so widely and figured so prominently in the popular festivals of European peasants. In spring or early summer or even on Midsummer Day, it was and still is in many parts of Europe the custom to go out to the woods, cut down a tree and bring it into the village, where it is set up amid general rejoicings. Or the people cut branches in the woods, and fasten them on every house. The intention of these customs is to bring home to the village, and to each house, the blessings which the tree-spirit has in its power to bestow. Hence the custom in some places of planting a May-tree before every house, or of carrying the village May-tree from door to door, that every household may receive its share of the blessing. Out of the mass of evidence on this subject a few examples may be selected.

Sir Henry Piers, in his *Description of Westmeath*, writing in 1682 says: "On May-eve, every family sets up before their door a green bush, strewed over with yellow flowers, which the meadows yield plentifully. In countries where timber is plentiful, they erect tall slender trees, which stand high, and they continue almost the whole year; so as a stranger would go nigh to imagine that they were all signs of ale-sellers, and that all houses were ale-houses."²⁷⁴ In Northamptonshire a young tree ten or twelve feet high used to be planted before each house on May Day so as to appear growing.²⁷⁵ "An antient custom, still retained by the Cornish, is that of decking their doors and porches on

²⁷⁴ Quoted by Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, i. 246 (ed. Bohn).

²⁷⁵ Dyer, *British Popular Customs*, p. 254.

the 1st of May with green boughs of sycamore and hawthorn, and of planting trees, or rather stumps of trees, before their houses.”²⁷⁶ In the north of England it was formerly the custom for young people to rise very early on the morning of the 1st of May, and go out with music into the woods, where they broke branches and adorned them with nosegays and crowns of flowers. This done, they returned about sunrise and fastened the flower-decked branches over the doors and windows of their houses.²⁷⁷ At Abingdon in Berkshire young people formerly went about in groups on May morning, singing a carol of which the following are some of the verses —

“We've been rambling all the night;
And sometime of this day;
And now returning back again,
We bring a garland gay.

“A garland gay we bring you here;
And at your door we stand;
It is a sprout well budded out,
The work of our Lord's hand.”²⁷⁸

At the villages of Saffron Walden and Debden in Essex on the 1st of May little girls go about in parties from door to door

²⁷⁶ Borlase, cited by Brand, *op. cit.* i. 222.

²⁷⁷ Brand, *op. cit.* i. 212 sq.

²⁷⁸ Dyer, *Popular British Customs*, p. 233.

singing a song almost identical with the above and carrying garlands; a doll dressed in white is usually placed in the middle of each garland.²⁷⁹ At Seven Oaks on May Day the children carry boughs and garlands from house to house, begging for pence. The garlands consist of two hoops interlaced crosswise, and covered with blue and yellow flowers from the woods and hedges.²⁸⁰ In some villages of the Vosges Mountains on the first Sunday of May young girls go in bands from house to house, singing a song in praise of May, in which mention is made of the “bread and meal that come in May.” If money is given them, they fasten a green bough to the door; if it is refused, they wish the family many children and no bread to feed them.²⁸¹ In Mayenne (France), boys who bore the name of *Maillotins* used to go about from farm to farm on the 1st of May singing carols, for which they received money or a drink; they planted a small tree or a branch of a tree.²⁸²

On the Thursday before Whitsunday the Russian villagers “go out into the woods, sing songs, weave garlands, and cut down a young birch-tree, which they dress up in woman's clothes, or adorn with many-coloured shreds and ribbons. After that comes a feast, at the end of which they take the dressed-up birch-tree, carry it home to their village with joyful dance and song, and

²⁷⁹ Chambers, *Book of Days*, i. 578; Dyer, *op. cit.* p. 237 sq.

²⁸⁰ Dyer, *op. cit.* p. 243.

²⁸¹ E. Cortet, *Fêtes religieuses*, p. 167 sqq.

²⁸² *Revue des Traditions populaires*, ii. 200.

set it up in one of the houses, where it remains as an honoured guest till Whitsunday. On the two intervening days they pay visits to the house where their 'guest' is; but on the third day, Whitsunday, they take her to a stream and fling her into its waters," throwing their garlands after her. "All over Russia every village and every town is turned, a little before Whitsunday, into a sort of garden. Everywhere along the streets the young birch-trees stand in rows, every house and every room is adorned with boughs, even the engines upon the railway are for the time decked with green leaves."²⁸³ In this Russian custom the dressing of the birch in woman's clothes shows how clearly the tree is conceived as personal; and the throwing it into a stream is most probably a rain-charm. In some villages of Altmark it was formerly the custom for serving-men, grooms, and cowherds to go from farm to farm at Whitsuntide distributing crowns made of birch-branches and flowers to the farmers; these crowns were hung up in the houses and left till the following year.²⁸⁴

In the neighbourhood of Zabern in Alsace bands of people go about carrying May-trees. Amongst them is a man dressed in a white shirt, with his face blackened; in front of him is carried a large May-tree, but each member of the band also carries a smaller one. One of the company carries a huge basket in which he collects eggs, bacon, etc.²⁸⁵ In some parts of Sweden

²⁸³ Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 234 sq.

²⁸⁴ A. Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen*, p. 315.

²⁸⁵ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 162.

on the eve of May Day lads go about carrying each a bunch of fresh-gathered birch twigs, wholly or partially in leaf. With the village fiddler at their head they go from house to house singing May songs; the purport of which is a prayer for fine weather, a plentiful harvest, and worldly and spiritual blessings. One of them carries a basket in which he collects gifts of eggs and the like. If they are well received they stick a leafy twig in the roof over the cottage door.²⁸⁶

But in Sweden midsummer is the season when these ceremonies are chiefly observed. On the Eve of St. John (23d June) the houses are thoroughly cleansed and garnished with green boughs and flowers. Young fir-trees are raised at the doorway and elsewhere about the homestead; and very often small umbrageous arbours are constructed in the garden. In Stockholm on this day a leaf-market is held at which thousands of May-poles (*Maj Stänger*) six inches to twelve feet high, decorated with leaves, flowers, slips of coloured paper, gilt egg-shells, strung on reeds, etc. are exposed for sale. Bonfires are lit on the hills and the people dance round them and jump over them. But the chief event of the day is setting up the May-pole. This consists of a straight and tall spruce-pine tree, stripped of its branches. "At times hoops and at others pieces of wood, placed crosswise, are attached to it at intervals; whilst at others it is provided with bows, representing so to say, a man with his arms akimbo. From top to bottom not only the 'Maj Stång' (May-pole) itself, but

²⁸⁶ L. Lloyd, *Peasant Life in Sweden*, p. 235.

the hoops, bows, etc. are ornamented with leaves, flowers, slips of various cloth, gilt egg-shells, etc.; and on the top of it is a large vane, or it may be a flag.” The raising of the May-pole, the decoration of which is done by the village maidens, is an affair of much ceremony; the people flock to it from all quarters and dance round it in a great ring.²⁸⁷ In some parts of Bohemia also a May-pole or midsummer-tree is erected on St. John's Eve. The lads fetch a tall fir or pine from the wood and set it up on a height, where the girls deck it with nosegays, garlands, and red ribbons. Then they pile brushwood, dry wood, and other combustible materials about the tree, and, when darkness has fallen, set the whole on fire. While the fire was burning the lads used to climb up the tree and fetch down the garlands and ribbons which the girls had fastened to it; but as this led to accidents, the custom has been forbidden. Sometimes the young people fling burning besoms into the air, or run shouting down hill with them. When the tree is consumed, the young men and their sweethearts stand on opposite sides of the fire, and look at each other through garlands and through the fire, to see whether they will be true lovers and will wed. Then they throw the garlands thrice across the smouldering fire to each other. When the blaze has died down, the couples join hands and leap thrice across the glowing embers. The singed garlands are taken home, and kept carefully in the house throughout the year. Whenever a thunder-storm bursts, part of the garlands are burned on the hearth; and

²⁸⁷ L. Lloyd, *op. cit.* p. 257 *sqq.*

when the cattle are sick or are calving, they get a portion of the garlands to eat. The charred embers of the bonfire are stuck in the cornfields and meadows and on the roof of the house, to keep house and field from bad weather and injury.²⁸⁸

It is hardly necessary to illustrate the custom of setting up a village May-tree or May-pole on May Day. One point only – the renewal of the village May-tree – requires to be noticed. In England the village May-pole seems as a rule, at least in later times, to have been permanent, not renewed from year to year.²⁸⁹ Sometimes, however, it was renewed annually. Thus, Borlase says of the Cornish people: “From towns they make incursions, on May-eve, into the country, cut down a tall elm, bring it into the town with rejoicings, and having fitted a straight taper pole to the end of it, and painted it, erect it in the most public part, and upon holidays and festivals dress it with garlands of flowers or ensigns and streamers.”²⁹⁰ An annual renewal seems also to be implied in the description by Stubbs, a Puritanical writer, of the custom of drawing home the May-pole by twenty or forty yoke of oxen.²⁹¹ In some parts of Germany and Austria the May-tree or Whitsuntide-tree is renewed annually, a fresh tree being felled and set up.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 308 sq.

²⁸⁹ Hone, *Every-day Book*, i. 547 sqq.; Chambers, *Book of Days*, i. 571.

²⁹⁰ Quoted by Brand, *op. cit.* i. 237.

²⁹¹ *Id.*, *op. cit.* i. 235.

²⁹² Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 169 sq. note.

We can hardly doubt that originally the practice everywhere was to set up a new May-tree every year. As the object of the custom was to bring in the fructifying spirit of vegetation, newly awakened in spring, the end would have been defeated if, instead of a living tree, green and sappy, an old withered one had been erected year after year or allowed to stand permanently. When, however, the meaning of the custom had been forgotten, and the May-tree was regarded simply as a centre for holiday merrymaking, people saw no reason for felling a fresh tree every year, and preferred to let the same tree stand permanently, only decking it with fresh flowers on May Day. But even when the May-pole had thus become a fixture, the need of giving it the appearance of being a green tree, not a dead pole, was sometimes felt. Thus at Weverham in Cheshire “are two May-poles, which are decorated on this day (May Day) with all due attention to the ancient solemnity; the sides are hung with garlands, and the top terminated by a birch or other tall slender tree with its leaves on; the bark being peeled, and the stem spliced to the pole, so as to give the appearance of one tree from the summit.”²⁹³ Thus the renewal of the May-tree is like the renewal of the Harvest-May; each is intended to secure a fresh portion of the fertilising spirit of vegetation, and to preserve it throughout the year. But whereas the efficacy of the Harvest-May is restricted to promoting the growth of the crops, that of the May-tree or May-branch extends also, as we have seen, to women and cattle. Lastly, it is worth

²⁹³ Hone, *Every-day Book*, ii. 597 sq.

noting that the old May-tree is sometimes burned at the end of the year. Thus in the district of Prague young people break pieces off the public May-tree and place them behind the holy pictures in their rooms, where they remain till next May Day, and are then burned on the hearth.²⁹⁴ In Würtemberg the bushes which are set up on the houses on Palm Sunday are sometimes left there for a year and then burnt.²⁹⁵ The *eiresione* (the Harvest-May of Greece) was perhaps burned at the end of the year.²⁹⁶

So much for the tree-spirit conceived as incorporate or immanent in the tree. We have now to show that the tree-spirit is often conceived and represented as detached from the tree and clothed in human form, and even as embodied in living men or women. The evidence for this anthropomorphic representation of the tree-spirit is largely to be found in the popular customs of European peasantry.

There is an instructive class of cases in which the tree-spirit is represented simultaneously in vegetable form and in human form, which are set side by side as if for the express purpose of explaining each other. In these cases the human representative of the tree-spirit is sometimes a doll or puppet, sometimes a living person; but whether a puppet or a person, it is placed beside a tree or bough; so that together the person or puppet, and the tree

²⁹⁴ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 217; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 566.

²⁹⁵ Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben*, ii. 74 sq.; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 566.

²⁹⁶ Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 1054; Mannhardt, *A. W. F.* p. 222 sq.

or bough, form a sort of bilingual inscription, the one being, so to speak, a translation of the other. Here, therefore, there is no room left for doubt that the spirit of the tree is actually represented in human form. Thus in Bohemia, on the fourth Sunday in Lent, young people throw a puppet called Death into the water; then the girls go into the wood, cut down a young tree, and fasten to it a puppet dressed in white clothes to look like a woman; with this tree and puppet they go from house to house collecting gratuities and singing songs with the refrain —

“We carry Death out of the village,
We bring Summer into the village.”²⁹⁷

Here, as we shall see later on, the “Summer” is the spirit of vegetation returning or reviving in spring. In some places in this country children go about asking for pence with some small imitations of May-poles, and with a finely dressed doll which they call the Lady of the May.²⁹⁸ In these cases the tree and the puppet are obviously regarded as equivalent.

At Thann, in Alsace, a girl called the Little May Rose, dressed in white, carries a small May-tree, which is gay with garlands and ribbons. Her companions collect gifts from door to door, singing a song —

²⁹⁷ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 86 *sqq.*; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 156.

²⁹⁸ Chambers, *Book of Days*, i. 573.

“Little May Rose turn round three times,
Let us look at you round and round!
Rose of the May, come to the greenwood away,
We will be merry all.
So we go from the May to the roses.”

In the course of the song a wish is expressed that those who give nothing may lose their fowls by the marten, that their vine may bear no clusters, their tree no nuts, their field no corn; the produce of the year is supposed to depend on the gifts offered to these May singers.²⁹⁹ Here and in the cases mentioned above, where children go about with green boughs on May Day singing and collecting money, the meaning is that with the spirit of vegetation they bring plenty and good luck to the house, and they expect to be paid for the service. In Russian Lithuania, on the 1st of May, they used to set up a green tree before the village. Then the rustic swains chose the prettiest girl, crowned her, swathed her in birch branches and set her beside the May-tree, where they danced, sang, and shouted “O May! O May!”³⁰⁰ In Brie (Isle de France) a May-tree is set up in the midst of the village; its top is crowned with flowers; lower down it is twined with leaves and twigs, still lower with huge green branches. The girls dance round it, and at the same time a lad wrapt in leaves and called Father May is led about.³⁰¹ In Bavaria, on the 2d of

²⁹⁹ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 312.

³⁰⁰ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 313.

³⁰¹ *Ib.* p. 314.

May, a *Walber* (?) tree is erected before a tavern, and a man dances round it, enveloped in straw from head to foot in such a way that the ears of corn unite above his head to form a crown. He is called the *Walber*, and used to be led in solemn procession through the streets, which were adorned with sprigs of birch.³⁰² In Carinthia, on St. George's Day (24th April), the young people deck with flowers and garlands a tree which has been felled on the eve of the festival. The tree is then carried in procession, accompanied with music and joyful acclamations, the chief figure in the procession being the Green George, a young fellow clad from head to foot in green birch branches. At the close of the ceremonies the Green George, that is an effigy of him, is thrown into the water. It is the aim of the lad who acts Green George to step out of his leafy envelope and substitute the effigy so adroitly that no one shall perceive the change. In many places, however, the lad himself who plays the part of Green George is ducked in a river or pond, with the express intention of thus ensuring rain to make the fields and meadows green in summer. In some places the cattle are crowned and driven from their stalls to the accompaniment of a song —

“Green George we bring,
Green George we accompany,
May he feed our herds well,

³⁰² *Bavaria, Landes-und Volkskunde des Königreichs Bayern*, iii. 357; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 312 sq.

If not, to the water with him.”³⁰³

Here we see that the same powers of making rain and fostering the cattle, which are ascribed to the tree-spirit regarded as incorporate in the tree, are also attributed to the tree-spirit represented by a living man.

An example of the double representation of the spirit of vegetation by a tree and a living man is reported from Bengal. The Oraons have a festival in spring while the sál trees are in blossom, because they think that at this time the marriage of earth is celebrated and the sál flowers are necessary for the ceremony. On an appointed day the villagers go with their priest to the Sarna, the sacred grove, a remnant of the old sál forest in which a goddess Sarna Burhi, or woman of the grove, is supposed to dwell. She is thought to have great influence on the rain; and the priest arriving with his party at the grove sacrifices to her five fowls, of which a morsel is given to each person present. Then they gather the sál flowers and return laden with them to the village. Next day the priest visits every house, carrying the flowers in a wide open basket. The women of each house bring out water to wash his feet as he approaches, and kneeling make him an obeisance. Then he dances with them and places some of the sál flowers over the door of the house and in the women's hair. No sooner is this done than the women empty their water-jugs over him, drenching him to the skin. A feast follows, and the

³⁰³ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 313 *sq.*

young people, with sál flowers in their hair, dance all night on the village green.³⁰⁴ Here, the equivalence of the flower-bearing priest to the goddess of the flowering-tree comes out plainly. For she is supposed to influence the rain, and the drenching of the priest with water is, doubtless, like the ducking of the Green George in Bavaria, a rain-charm. Thus the priest, as if he were the tree goddess herself, goes from door to door dispensing rain and bestowing fruitfulness on each house, but especially on the women.

Without citing more examples to the same effect, we may sum up the result of the preceding paragraphs in the words of Mannhardt. "The customs quoted suffice to establish with certainty the conclusion that in these spring processions the spirit of vegetation is often represented both by the May-tree and in addition by a man dressed in green leaves or flowers or by a girl similarly adorned. It is the same spirit which animates the tree and is active in the inferior plants and which we have recognised in the May-tree and the Harvest-May. Quite consistently the spirit is also supposed to manifest his presence in the first flower of spring and reveals himself both in a girl representing a May-rose, and also, as giver of harvest, in the person of the *Walber*. The procession with this representative of the divinity was supposed to produce the same beneficial effects on the fowls, the fruit-trees, and the crops as the presence of the deity himself. In other words, the mummer was regarded not as an image but

³⁰⁴ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 261.

as an actual representative of the spirit of vegetation; hence the wish expressed by the attendants on the May-rose and the May-tree that those who refuse them gifts of eggs, bacon, etc. may have no share in the blessings which it is in the power of the itinerant spirit to bestow. We may conclude that these begging processions with May-trees or May-boughs from door to door ('bringing the May or the summer') had everywhere originally a serious and, so to speak, sacramental significance; people really believed that the god of growth was present unseen in the bough; by the procession he was brought to each house to bestow his blessing. The names May, Father May, May Lady, Queen of the May, by which the anthropomorphic spirit of vegetation is often denoted, show that the conception of the spirit of vegetation is blent with a personification of the season at which his powers are most strikingly manifested."³⁰⁵

Thus far we have seen that the tree-spirit or the spirit of vegetation in general is represented either in vegetable form alone, as by a tree, bough, or flower; or in vegetable and human form simultaneously, as by a tree, bough, or flower in combination with a puppet or a living person. It remains to show that the representation of him by a tree, bough, or flower is sometimes entirely dropped, while the representation of him by a living person remains. In this case the representative character of the person is generally marked by dressing him or her in leaves or flowers; sometimes too it is indicated by the name he or she

³⁰⁵ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 315 *sq.*

bears.

We saw that in Russia at Whitsuntide a birch-tree is dressed in woman's clothes and set up in the house. Clearly equivalent to this is the custom observed on Whit-Monday by Russian girls in the district of Pinsk. They choose the prettiest of their number, envelop her in a mass of foliage taken from the birch-trees and maples, and carry her about through the village. In a district of Little Russia they take round a "poplar," represented by a girl wearing bright flowers in her hair.³⁰⁶ In the Département de l'Ain (France) on the 1st of May eight or ten boys unite, clothe one of their number in leaves, and go from house to house begging.³⁰⁷ At Whitsuntide in Holland poor women used to go about begging with a little girl called Whitsuntide Flower (*Pinxterbloem*, perhaps a kind of iris); she was decked with flowers and sat in a waggon. In North Brabant she wears the flowers from which she takes her name and a song is sung —

"Whitsuntide Flower

Turn yourself once round."³⁰⁸

In Ruhla (Thüringen) as soon as the trees begin to grow green in spring, the children assemble on a Sunday and go out into the woods, where they choose one of their playmates to be the Little Leaf Man. They break branches from the trees and twine them about the child till only his shoes peep out from the leafy

³⁰⁶ Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 234.

³⁰⁷ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 318.

³⁰⁸ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 318; Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴ ii. 657.

mantle. Holes are made in it for him to see through, and two of the children lead the Little Leaf Man that he may not stumble or fall. Singing and dancing they take him from house to house, asking for gifts of food (eggs, cream, sausage, cakes). Lastly they sprinkle the Leaf Man with water and feast on the food they have collected.³⁰⁹ In England the best-known example of these leaf-clad mummers is the Jack-in-the-Green, a chimney-sweeper who walks encased in a pyramidal-shaped framework of wicker-work, which is covered with holly and ivy, and surmounted by a crown of flowers and ribbons. Thus arrayed he dances on May Day at the head of a troop of chimney-sweeps, who collect pence.³¹⁰ In some parts also of France a young fellow is encased in a wicker framework covered with leaves and is led about.³¹¹ In Frickthal (Aargau) a similar frame of basketwork is called the Whitsuntide Basket. As soon as the trees begin to bud, a spot is chosen in the wood, and here the village lads make the frame with all secrecy, lest others should forestall them. Leafy branches are twined round two hoops, one of which rests on the shoulders of the wearer, the other encircles his calves; holes are made for his eyes and mouth; and a large nosegay crowns the whole. In this guise he appears suddenly in the village at the hour

³⁰⁹ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 320; Witzschel, *Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Thüringen*, p. 211.

³¹⁰ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 322; Hone, *Every-day Book*, i. 583 *sqq.*; Dyer, *British Popular Customs*, p. 230 *sq.*

³¹¹ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 323.

of vespers, preceded by three boys blowing on horns made of willow bark. The great object of his supporters is to set up the Whitsuntide Basket beside the village well, and to keep it and him there, despite the efforts of the lads from neighbouring villages, who seek to carry off the Whitsuntide Basket and set it up at their own well.³¹² In the neighbourhood of Ertingen (Württemberg) a masker of the same sort, known as the Lazy Man (*Latzmann*), goes about the village on Midsummer Day; he is hidden under a great pyramidal or conical frame of wicker-work, ten or twelve feet high, which is completely covered with sprigs of fir. He has a bell which he rings as he goes, and he is attended by a suite of persons dressed up in character – a footman, a colonel, a butcher, an angel, the devil, the doctor, etc. They march in Indian file and halt before every house, where each of them speaks in character, except the Lazy Man, who says nothing. With what they get by begging from door to door they hold a feast.³¹³

In the class of cases of which the above are specimens it is obvious that the leaf-clad person who is led about is equivalent to the May-tree, May-bough, or May-doll, which is carried from house to house by children begging. Both are representatives of the beneficent spirit of vegetation, whose visit to the house is recompensed by a present of money or food.

Often the leaf-clad person who represents the spirit of vegetation is known as the king or the queen; thus, for example,

³¹² *Ib.*

³¹³ Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben*, ii. 114 sq.; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 325.

he or she is called the May King, Whitsuntide King, Queen of May, and so on. These titles, as Mannhardt observes, imply that the spirit incorporate in vegetation is a ruler, whose creative power extends far and wide.³¹⁴

In a village near Salzwedel a May-tree is set up at Whitsuntide and the boys race to it; he who reaches it first is king; a garland of flowers is put round his neck and in his hand he carries a May-bush, with which, as the procession moves along, he sweeps away the dew. At each house they sing a song, wishing the inmates good luck, referring to the “black cow in the stall milking white milk, black hen on the nest laying white eggs,” and begging a gift of eggs, bacon, etc.³¹⁵ In some villages of Brunswick at Whitsuntide a May King is completely enveloped in a May-bush. In some parts of Thüringen also they have a May King at Whitsuntide, but he is got up rather differently. A frame of wood is made in which a man can stand; it is completely covered with birch boughs and is surmounted by a crown of birch and flowers, in which a bell is fastened. This frame is placed in the wood and the May King gets into it. The rest go out and look for him, and when they have found him they lead him back into the village to the magistrate, the clergyman, and others, who have to guess who is in the verdurous frame. If they guess wrong, the May King rings his bell by shaking his head, and a forfeit of beer or the

³¹⁴ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 341 *sq.*

³¹⁵ Kuhn und Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche*, p. 380.

like must be paid by the unsuccessful guesser.³¹⁶ In some parts of Bohemia on Whit-Monday the young fellows disguise themselves in tall caps of birch bark adorned with flowers. One of them is dressed as a king and dragged on a sledge to the village green, and if on the way they pass a pool the sledge is always overturned into it. Arrived at the green they gather round the king; the crier jumps on a stone or climbs up a tree and recites lampoons about each house and its inmates. Afterwards the disguises of bark are stripped off and they go about the village in holiday attire, carrying a May-tree and begging. Cakes, eggs, and corn are sometimes given them.³¹⁷ At Grossvargula, near Langensalza, in last century a Grass King used to be led about in procession at Whitsuntide. He was encased in a pyramid of poplar branches, the top of which was adorned with a royal crown of branches and flowers. He rode on horseback with the leafy pyramid over him, so that its lower end touched the ground, and an opening was left in it only for his face. Surrounded by a cavalcade of young fellows, he rode in procession to the town hall, the parsonage, etc., where they all got a drink of beer. Then under the seven lindens of the neighbouring Sommerberg, the Grass King was stripped of his green casing; the crown was handed to the Mayor, and the branches were stuck in the flax fields in order to make

³¹⁶ Kuhn und Schwartz, *op. cit.* p. 384; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 342.

³¹⁷ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 260 *sq.*; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 342 *sq.*

the flax grow tall.³¹⁸ In this last trait the fertilising influence ascribed to the representative of the tree-spirit comes out clearly. In the neighbourhood of Pilsen (Bohemia) a conical hut of green branches, without any door, is erected at Whitsuntide in the midst of the village. To this hut rides a troop of village lads with a king at their head. He wears a sword at his side and a sugar-loaf hat of rushes on his head. In his train are a judge, a crier, and a personage called the Frog-flayer or Hangman. This last is a sort of ragged merryandrew, wearing a rusty old sword and bestriding a sorry hack. On reaching the hut the crier dismounts and goes round it looking for a door. Finding none, he says, "Ah, this is perhaps an enchanted castle; the witches creep through the leaves and need no door." At last he draws his sword and hews his way into the hut, where there is a chair, on which he seats himself and proceeds to criticise in rhyme the girls, farmers, and farm-servants of the neighbourhood. When this is over, the Frog-flayer steps forward and, after exhibiting a cage with frogs in it, sets up a gallows on which he hangs the frogs in a row.³¹⁹ In the neighbourhood of Plas the ceremony differs in some points. The king and his soldiers are completely clad in bark, adorned with flowers and ribbons; they all carry swords and ride horses, which are gay with green branches and flowers. While the village dames and girls are being criticised at the arbour, a frog is secretly

³¹⁸ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 347 sq.; Witzschel, *Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Thüringen*, p. 203.

³¹⁹ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 253 sqq.

pinched and poked by the crier till it quacks. Sentence of death is passed on the frog by the king; the hangman beheads it and flings the bleeding body among the spectators. Lastly, the king is driven from the hut and pursued by the soldiers.³²⁰ The pinching and beheading of the frog are doubtless, as Mannhardt observes,³²¹ a rain-charm. We have seen³²² that some Indians of the Orinoco beat frogs for the express purpose of producing rain, and that killing a frog is a German rain-charm.

Often the spirit of vegetation in spring is represented by a queen instead of a king. In the neighbourhood of Libchowitz (Bohemia), on the fourth Sunday in Lent, girls dressed in white and wearing the first spring flowers, as violets and daisies, in their hair, lead about the village a girl who is called the Queen and is crowned with flowers. During the procession, which is conducted with great solemnity, none of the girls may stand still, but must keep whirling round continually and singing. In every house the Queen announces the arrival of spring and wishes the inmates good luck and blessings, for which she receives presents.³²³ In German Hungary the girls choose the prettiest girl to be their Whitsuntide Queen, fasten a towering wreath on her brow, and carry her singing through the streets. At every house they stop,

³²⁰ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 262; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 353 sq.

³²¹ *B. K.* p. 355.

³²² Above, p. 18.

³²³ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 93; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 344.

sing old ballads, and receive presents.³²⁴ In the south-east of Ireland on May Day the prettiest girl used to be chosen Queen of the district for twelve months. She was crowned with wild flowers; feasting, dancing, and rustic sports followed, and were closed by a grand procession in the evening. During her year of office she presided over rural gatherings of young people at dances and merrymakings. If she married before next May Day her authority was at an end, but her successor was not elected till that day came round.³²⁵ The May Queen is common in France³²⁶ and familiar in England.

Again the spirit of vegetation is sometimes represented by a king and queen, a lord and lady, or a bridegroom and bride. Here again the parallelism holds between the anthropomorphic and the vegetable representation of the tree-spirit, for we have seen above that trees are sometimes married to each other.³²⁷ In a village near Königgrätz (Bohemia) on Whit-Monday the children play the king's game, at which a king and a queen march about under a canopy, the queen wearing a garland, and the youngest girl carrying two wreaths on a plate behind them. They are attended by boys and girls called groom's men and bridesmaids, and they

³²⁴ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 343 *sq.*

³²⁵ Dyer, *British Popular Customs*, p. 270 *sq.*

³²⁶ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 344 *sq.*; Cortet, *Fêtes religieuses*, p. 160 *sqq.*; Monnier, *Traditions populaires comparées*, p. 282 *sqq.*; Bérenger-Féraud, *Réminiscences populaires de la Provence*, p. 1 *sqq.*

³²⁷ Above, p. [60](#).

go from house to house collecting gifts.³²⁸ Near Grenoble, in France, a king and queen are chosen on the 1st of May and are set on a throne for all to see.³²⁹ At Headington, near Oxford, children used to carry garlands from door to door on May Day. Each garland was carried by two girls, and they were followed by a lord and lady – a boy and girl linked together by a white handkerchief, of which each held an end, and dressed with ribbons, sashes, and flowers. At each door they sang a verse —

“Gentlemen and ladies,
We wish you happy May;
We come to show you a garland,
Because it is May-day.”

On receiving money the lord put his arm about his lady's waist and kissed her.³³⁰ In some Saxon villages at Whitsuntide a lad and a lass disguise themselves and hide in the bushes or high grass outside the village. Then the whole village goes out with music “to seek the bridal pair.” When they find the couple they all gather round them, the music strikes up, and the bridal pair is led merrily to the village. In the evening they dance. In some places the bridal pair is called the prince and the princess.³³¹

³²⁸ Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalendar aus Böhmen*, p. 265 sq.; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 422.

³²⁹ Monnier, *Traditions populaires comparées*, p. 304; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 423.

³³⁰ Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, i. 233 sq. Bohn's ed.; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 424.

³³¹ E. Sommer, *Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Sachsen und Thüringen*, p. 151

In the neighbourhood of Briançon (Dauphiné) on May Day the lads wrap up in green leaves a young fellow whose sweetheart has deserted him or married another. He lies down on the ground and feigns to be asleep. Then a girl who likes him, and would marry him, comes and wakes him, and raising him up offers him her arm and a flag. So they go to the alehouse, where the pair lead off the dancing. But they must marry within the year, or they are treated as old bachelor and old maid, and are debarred the company of the young folk. The lad is called the bridegroom of the month of May (*le fiancé du mois de May*). In the alehouse he puts off his garment of leaves, out of which, mixed with flowers, his partner in the dance makes a nosegay, and wears it at her breast next day, when he leads her again to the alehouse.³³² Like this is a Russian custom observed in the district of Nerechta on the Thursday before Whitsunday. The girls go out into a birch-wood, wind a girdle or band round a stately birch, twist its lower branches into a wreath, and kiss each other in pairs through the wreath. The girls who kiss through the wreath call each other gossips. Then one of the girls steps forward, and mimicking a drunken man, flings herself on the ground, rolls on the grass, and feigns to go fast asleep. Another girl wakens the pretended sleeper and kisses him; then the whole bevy trips singing through the wood to twine garlands, which they throw into the water. In

sq.; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 431 *sq.*

³³² This custom was told to Mannhardt by a French prisoner in the war of 1870-71, *B. K.* p. 434.

the fate of the garlands floating on the stream they read their own.³³³ In this custom the rôle of the sleeper was probably at one time sustained by a lad. In these French and Russian customs we have a forsaken bridegroom, in the following a forsaken bride. On Shrove Tuesday the Slovenes of Oberkrain drag a straw puppet with joyous cries up and down the village; then they throw it into the water or burn it, and from the height of the flames they judge of the abundance of the next harvest. The noisy crew is followed by a female masker, who drags a great board by a string and gives out that she is a forsaken bride.³³⁴

Viewed in the light of what has gone before, the awakening of the forsaken sleeper in these ceremonies probably represents the revival of vegetation in spring. But it is not easy to assign their respective rôles to the forsaken bridegroom and to the girl who wakes him from his slumber. Is the sleeper the leafless forest or the bare earth of winter? Is the girl who wakens him the fresh verdure or the genial sunshine of spring? It is hardly possible, on the evidence before us, to answer these questions. The Oraons of Bengal, it may be remembered, celebrate the marriage of earth in the springtime, when the *sál*-tree is in blossom. But from this we can hardly argue that in the European ceremonies the sleeping bridegroom is “the dreaming earth” and the girl the spring blossoms.

In the Highlands of Scotland the revival of vegetation in spring

³³³ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 434 *sq.*

³³⁴ *Ib.* p. 435.

used to be graphically represented as follows. On Candlemas day (2d February) in the Hebrides “the mistress and servants of each family take a sheaf of oats, and dress it up in women's apparel, put it in a large basket, and lay a wooden club by it, and this they call Brüd's bed; and then the mistress and servants cry three times, Brüd is come, Brüd is welcome. This they do just before going to bed, and when they rise in the morning they look among the ashes, expecting to see the impression of Brüd's club there; which if they do they reckon it a true presage of a good crop and prosperous year, and the contrary they take as an ill omen.”³³⁵ The same custom is described by another witness thus: “Upon the night before Candlemas it is usual to make a bed with corn and hay, over which some blankets are laid, in a part of the house near the door. When it is ready, a person goes out and repeats three times, ... ‘Bridget, Bridget, come in; thy bed is ready.’ One or more candles are left burning near it all night.”³³⁶

Often the marriage of the spirit of vegetation in spring, though not directly represented, is implied by naming the human representative of the spirit “the Bride,” and dressing her in wedding attire. Thus in some villages of Altmark at Whitsuntide, while the boys go about carrying a May-tree or leading a boy enveloped in leaves and flowers, the girls lead about the May

³³⁵ Martin, “Description of the Western Islands of Scotland,” in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, iii. 613; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 436.

³³⁶ *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, from the MSS. of John Ramsay of Ochertyre. Edited by Alex. Allardyce (Edinburgh, 1888), ii. 447.

Bride, a girl dressed as a bride with a great nosegay in her hair. They go from house to house, the May Bride singing a song in which she asks for a present, and tells the inmates of each house that if they give her something they will themselves have something the whole year through; but if they give her nothing they will themselves have nothing.³³⁷ In some parts of Westphalia two girls lead a flower-crowned girl called “the Whitsuntide Bride” from door to door, singing a song in which they ask for eggs.³³⁸ In Bresse in the month of May a girl called *la Mariée* is tricked out with ribbons and nosegays and is led about by a gallant. She is preceded by a lad carrying a green May-tree, and appropriate verses are sung.³³⁹

³³⁷ Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen*, p. 318 *sqq.*; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 437.

³³⁸ Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 438.

³³⁹ Monnier, *Traditions populaires comparées*, p. 283 *sq.*; Cortet, *Fêtes religieuses*, p. 162 *sq.*; Mannhardt, *B. K.* p. 439 *sq.*

§ 5. – Tree-worship in antiquity

Such then are some of the ways in which the tree-spirit or the spirit of vegetation is represented in the customs of our European peasantry. From the remarkable persistence and similarity of such customs all over Europe we are justified in concluding that tree-worship was once an important element in the religion of the Aryan race in Europe, and that the rites and ceremonies of the worship were marked by great uniformity everywhere, and did not substantially differ from those which are still or were till lately observed by our peasants at their spring and midsummer festivals. For these rites bear internal marks of great antiquity, and this internal evidence is confirmed by the resemblance which the rites bear to those of rude peoples elsewhere.³⁴⁰ Therefore it is hardly rash to infer, from this consensus of popular customs, that the Greeks and Romans, like the other Aryan peoples of Europe, once practised forms of tree-worship similar to those which are still kept up by our peasantry. In the palmy days of ancient civilisation, no doubt, the worship had sunk to the level of vulgar superstition and rustic merrymaking, as it has done among ourselves. We need not therefore be surprised that the traces of such popular rites are few and slight in ancient literature. They are not less so in the polite literature of modern Europe; and the negative argument cannot be allowed to go for more in the one

³⁴⁰ Above, pp. 69 *sqq.*, 85.

case than in the other. Enough, however, of positive evidence remains to confirm the presumption drawn from analogy. Much of this evidence has been collected and analysed with his usual learning and judgment by W. Mannhardt.³⁴¹ Here I shall content myself with citing certain Greek festivals which seem to be the classical equivalents of an English May Day in the olden time.

Every few years the Boeotians of Plataea held a festival which they called the Little Daedala. On the day of the festival they went out into an ancient oak forest, the trees of which were of gigantic girth. Here they set some boiled meat on the ground, and watched the birds that gathered round it. When a raven was observed to carry off a piece of the meat and settle on an oak, the people followed it and cut down the tree. With the wood of the tree they made an image, dressed it as a bride, and placed it on a bullock-cart with a bridesmaid beside it. It seems then to have been drawn to the banks of the river Asopus and back to the town, attended by a piping and dancing crowd. After the festival the image was put away and kept till the celebration of the Great Daedala, which fell only once in sixty years. On this great occasion all the images that had accumulated from the celebrations of the Little Daedala were dragged on carts in solemn procession to the river Asopus, and then to the top of Mount Cithaeron. Here an altar had been constructed of square blocks of wood fitted together and surmounted by a heap of brushwood. Animals were sacrificed by being burned

³⁴¹ See especially his *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*.

on the altar, and the altar itself, together with the images, were consumed by the flames. The blaze, we are told, rose to a prodigious height and was seen for many miles. To explain the origin of the festival it was said that once upon a time Hera had quarrelled with Zeus and left him in high dudgeon. To lure her back Zeus gave out that he was about to marry the nymph Plataea, daughter of the river Asopus. He caused a wooden image to be made, dressed and veiled as a bride, and conveyed on a bullock-cart. Transported with rage and jealousy, Hera flew to the cart, and tearing off the veil of the pretended bride, discovered the deceit that had been practised on her. Her rage was now changed to laughter, and she became reconciled to her husband Zeus.³⁴²

The resemblance of this festival to some of the European spring and midsummer festivals is tolerably close. We have seen that in Russia at Whitsuntide the villagers go out into the wood, fell a birch-tree, dress it in woman's clothes, and bring it back to the village with dance and song. On the third day it is thrown into the water.³⁴³ Again, we have seen that in Bohemia on Midsummer Eve the village lads fell a tall fir or pine-tree in the wood and set it up on a height, where it is adorned with garlands, nosegays, and ribbons, and afterwards burnt.³⁴⁴ The reason for burning the tree will appear afterwards; the custom itself is not uncommon in

³⁴² Pausanias, ix. 3; Plutarch, *ap.* Eusebius, *Praepar. Evang.* iii. 1 *sq.*

³⁴³ Above, p. [76](#) *sq.*

³⁴⁴ Above, p. [79](#).

modern Europe. In some parts of the Pyrenees a tall and slender tree is cut down on May Day and kept till Midsummer Eve. It is then rolled to the top of a hill, set up, and burned.³⁴⁵ In Angoulême on St. Peter's Day, 29th June, a tall leafy poplar is set up in the market-place and burned.³⁴⁶ In Cornwall "there was formerly a great bonfire on midsummer-eve; a large summer pole was fixed in the centre, round which the fuel was heaped up. It had a large bush on the top of it."³⁴⁷ In Dublin on May-morning boys used to go out and cut a May-bush, bring it back to town, and then burn it.³⁴⁸

Probably the Boeotian festival belonged to the same class of rites. It represented the marriage of the powers of vegetation in spring or midsummer, just as the same event is represented in modern Europe by a King and Queen or a Lord and Lady of the May. In the Boeotian, as in the Russian, ceremony the tree dressed as a woman represents the English May-pole and May-queen in one. All such ceremonies, it must be remembered, are not, or at least were not originally, mere spectacular or dramatic exhibitions. They are magical charms designed to produce the effect which they dramatically represent. If the revival of vegetation in spring is represented by the awakening of a sleeper, the representation is intended actually to quicken

³⁴⁵ *B. K.* p. 177.

³⁴⁶ *B. K.* p. 177 *sq.*

³⁴⁷ Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, i. 318, Bohn's ed.; *B. K.* p. 178.

³⁴⁸ Hone, *Every-day Book*, ii. 595 *sq.*; *B. K.* p. 178.

the growth of leaves and blossoms; if the marriage of the powers of vegetation is represented by a King and Queen of May, the idea is that the powers so represented will really be rendered more productive by the ceremony. In short, all these spring and midsummer festivals fall under the head of sympathetic magic. The event which it is desired to bring about is represented dramatically, and the very representation is believed to effect, or at least to contribute to, the production of the desired event. In the case of the Daedala the story of Hera's quarrel with Zeus and her sullen retirement may perhaps without straining be interpreted as a mythical expression for a bad season and the failure of the crops. The same disastrous effects were attributed to the anger and seclusion of Demeter after the loss of her daughter Proserpine.³⁴⁹ Now the institution of a festival is often explained by a mythical story of the occurrence upon a particular occasion of those very calamities which it is the real object of the festival to avert; so that if we know the myth told to account for the historical origin of the festival, we can often infer from it the real intention with which the festival was celebrated. If, therefore, the origin of the Daedala was explained by a story of a failure of crops and consequent famine, we may infer that the real object of the festival was to prevent the occurrence of such disasters; and, if I am right in my interpretation of the festival, the object was supposed to be effected by a dramatic representation of the marriage of the divinities most concerned

³⁴⁹ Pausanias, viii. 42.

with the production of vegetation.³⁵⁰ The marriage of Zeus and Hera was dramatically represented at annual festivals in various parts of Greece,³⁵¹ and it is at least a fair conjecture that the nature and intention of these ceremonies were such as I have assigned to the Plataean festival of the Daedala; in other words, that Zeus and Hera at these festivals were the Greek equivalents of the Lord and Lady of the May. Homer's glowing picture of Zeus and Hera couched on fresh hyacinths and crocuses,³⁵² like Milton's description of the dalliance of Zephyr and Aurora, "as he met her once a-Maying," was perhaps painted from the life.

Still more confidently may the same character be vindicated for the annual marriage at Athens of the Queen to Dionysus in the Flowery Month (*Anthesterion*) of spring.³⁵³ For Dionysus, as

³⁵⁰ Once upon a time the Wotjaks of Russia, being distressed by a series of bad harvests, ascribed the calamity to the wrath of one of their gods, *Keremet*, at being unmarried. So they went in procession to the sacred grove, riding on gaily-decked waggons, as they do when they are fetching home a bride. At the sacred grove they feasted all night, and next morning they cut in the grove a square piece of turf which they took home with them. "What they meant by this marriage ceremony," says the writer who reports it, "it is not easy to imagine. Perhaps, as Bechterew thinks, they meant to marry *Keremet* to the kindly and fruitful *mukyl'c in*, the earth-wife, in order that she might influence him for good." – Max Buch, *Die Wotjaken, eine ethnologische Studie* (Stuttgart, 1882), p. 137.

³⁵¹ At Cnossus in Crete, Diodorus, v. 72; at Samos, Lactantius, *Instit.* i. 17; at Athens, Photius, sv. ἱερὸν γάμον; *Etymolog. Magn.* sv. ἱερομνήμονες, p. 468. 52.

³⁵² *Iliad*, xiv. 347 sqq.

³⁵³ Demosthenes, *Neaer.* § 73 sqq. p. 1369 sq.; Hesychius, svv. Διονύσου γάμος and γεραραί; *Etymol. Magn.* sv. γεραῖραι; Pollux, viii. 108; Aug. Mommsen, *Heortologie*, p. 357 sqq.; Hermann, *Gottesdienstliche Alterthümer*,² § 32. 15, § 58. 11 sqq.

we shall see later on, was essentially a god of vegetation, and the Queen at Athens was a purely religious or priestly functionary.³⁵⁴ Therefore at their annual marriage in spring he can hardly have been anything but a King, and she a Queen, of May. The women who attended the Queen at the marriage ceremony would correspond to the bridesmaids who wait on the May-queen.³⁵⁵ Again, the story, dear to poets and artists, of the forsaken and sleeping Ariadne waked and wedded by Dionysus, resembles so closely the little drama acted by French peasants of the Alps on May Day³⁵⁶ that, considering the character of Dionysus as a god of vegetation, we can hardly help regarding it as the description of a spring ceremony corresponding to the French one. In point of fact the marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne is believed by Preller to have been acted every spring in Crete.³⁵⁷ His evidence, indeed, is inconclusive, but the view itself is probable. If I am right in instituting the comparison, the chief difference between the French and the Greek ceremonies must have been that in the former the sleeper was the forsaken bridegroom, in the latter the forsaken bride; and the group of stars in the sky, in which fancy saw Ariadne's wedding-crown,³⁵⁸ could only have been a translation to heaven of the garland worn by the Greek girl who

³⁵⁴ Above, p. [7](#).

³⁵⁵ Above, p. [94](#).

³⁵⁶ Above, p. [95](#) sq.

³⁵⁷ Preller, *Griech. Mythol.*³ i. 559.

³⁵⁸ Hyginus, *Astronomica*, i. 5.

played the Queen of May.

On the whole, alike from the analogy of modern folk-custom and from the facts of ancient ritual and mythology, we are justified in concluding that the archaic forms of tree-worship disclosed by the spring and midsummer festivals of our peasants were practised by the Greeks and Romans in prehistoric times. Do then these forms of tree-worship help to explain the priesthood of Aricia, the subject of our inquiry? I believe they do. In the first place the attributes of Diana, the goddess of the Arician grove, are those of a tree-spirit or sylvan deity. Her sanctuaries were in groves, indeed every grove was her sanctuary,³⁵⁹ and she is often associated with the wood-god Silvanus in inscriptions.³⁶⁰ Like a tree-spirit, she helped women in travail, and in this respect her reputation appears to have stood high at the Arician grove, if we may judge from the votive offerings found on the spot.³⁶¹ Again, she was the patroness of wild animals;³⁶² just as in Finland the wood-god Tapio was believed to care for the wild creatures that roamed the wood, they being considered his cattle.³⁶³ So, too, the Samogitians deemed the birds and beasts of the woods sacred, doubtless because they

³⁵⁹ Servius on Virgil, *Georg.* iii. 332, *nam, ut diximus, et omnis quercus Jovi est consecrata, et omnis lucus Dianae.*

³⁶⁰ Roscher's *Lexikon d. Griech. u. Röm. Mythologie*, c. 1005.

³⁶¹ See above, p. 4. For Diana in this character, see Roscher, *op. cit.* c. 1007.

³⁶² Roscher, c. 1006 *sq.*

³⁶³ Castren, *Finnische Mythologie*, p. 97.

were under the protection of the god of the wood.³⁶⁴ Again, there are indications that domestic cattle were protected by Diana,³⁶⁵ as they certainly were supposed to be by Silvanus.³⁶⁶ But we have seen that special influence over cattle is ascribed to wood-spirits; in Finland the herds enjoyed the protection of the wood-gods both while they were in their stalls and while they strayed in the forest.³⁶⁷ Lastly, in the sacred spring which bubbled, and the perpetual fire which seems to have burned in the Arician grove,³⁶⁸ we may perhaps detect traces of other attributes of forest gods, the power, namely, to make the rain to fall and the sun to shine.³⁶⁹ This last attribute perhaps explains why Virbius, the companion deity of Diana at Nemi, was by some believed to be the sun.³⁷⁰

Thus the cult of the Arician grove was essentially that of a tree-spirit or wood deity. But our examination of European folk-custom demonstrated that a tree-spirit is frequently represented by a living person, who is regarded as an embodiment of the tree-spirit and possessed of its fertilising powers; and our previous survey of primitive belief proved that this conception of a god

³⁶⁴ Mathias Michov, "De Sarmatia Asiana atque Europea," in *Novus Orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum*, p. 457.

³⁶⁵ Livy, i. 45; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 4.

³⁶⁶ Virgil, *Aen.* viii. 600 *sq.*, with Servius's note.

³⁶⁷ Castren, *op. cit.* p. 97 *sq.*

³⁶⁸ Above, p. [4](#) *sq.*

³⁶⁹ Above, p. [66](#) *sq.*

³⁷⁰ Above, p. [6](#).

incarnate in a living man is common among rude races. Further we have seen that the living person who is believed to embody in himself the tree-spirit is often called a king, in which respect, again, he strictly represents the tree-spirit. For the sacred cedar of the Gilgit tribes is called, as we have seen, “the Dreadful King”;³⁷¹ and the chief forest god of the Finns, by name Tapio, represented as an old man with a brown beard, a high hat of fir-cones and a coat of tree-moss, was styled the Wood King, Lord of the Woodland, Golden King of the Wood.³⁷² May not then the King of the Wood in the Arician grove have been, like the King of May, the Grass King, and the like, an incarnation of the tree-spirit or spirit of vegetation? His title, his sacred office, and his residence in the grove all point to this conclusion, which is confirmed by his relation to the Golden Bough. For since the King of the Wood could only be assailed by him who had plucked the Golden Bough, his life was safe from assault so long as the bough or the tree on which it grew remained uninjured. In a sense, therefore, his life was bound up with that of the tree; and thus to some extent he stood to the tree in the same relation in which the incorporate or immanent tree-spirit stands to it. The representation of the tree-spirit both by the King of the Wood and by the Golden Bough (for it will hardly be disputed that the Golden Bough was looked upon as a very special manifestation of the divine life of the grove) need not surprise us, since we have

³⁷¹ Above, p. [71](#).

³⁷² Castren, *Finnische Mythologie*, pp. 92, 95.

found that the tree-spirit is not unfrequently thus represented in double, first by a tree or a bough, and second by a living person.

On the whole then, if we consider his double character as king and priest, his relation to the Golden Bough, and the strictly woodland character of the divinity of the grove, we may provisionally assume that the King of the Wood, like the May King and his congeners of Northern Europe, was deemed a living incarnation of the tree-spirit. As such he would be credited with those miraculous powers of sending rain and sunshine, making the crops to grow, women to bring forth, and flocks and herds to multiply, which are popularly ascribed to the tree-spirit itself. The reputed possessor of powers so exalted must have been a very important personage, and in point of fact his influence appears to have extended far and wide. For³⁷³ in the days when the champaign country around was still parcelled out among the petty tribes who composed the Latin League, the sacred grove on the Alban Mountain is known to have been an object of their common reverence and care. And just as the kings of Cambodia used to send offerings to the mystic Kings of Fire and Water far in the dim depths of the tropical forest, so, we may well believe, from all sides of the broad Latian plain the eyes and steps of Italian pilgrims turned to the quarter where, standing sharply out against the faint blue line of the Apennines or the deeper blue of the distant sea, the Alban Mountain rose before them, the home of the mysterious priest of Nemi, the King of the Wood.

³⁷³ *Historic. Roman. Fragm.* ed. Peter, p. 52 (first ed.)

Chapter II. The Perils Of The Soul

“O liebe flüchtige Seele
Dir ist so bang und weh!”

Heine.

§ 1. – Royal and priestly taboos

In the preceding chapter we saw that in early society the king or priest is often thought to be endowed with supernatural powers or to be an incarnation of a deity; in consequence of which the course of nature is supposed to be more or less under his control, and he is held responsible for bad weather, failure of the crops, and similar calamities. Thus far it appears to be assumed that the king's power over nature, like that over his subjects and slaves, is exerted through definite acts of will; and therefore if drought, famine, pestilence, or storms arise, the people attribute the misfortune to the negligence or guilt of their king, and punish him accordingly with stripes and bonds, or, if he remains obdurate, with deposition and death. Sometimes, however, the course of nature, while regarded as dependent on the king, is supposed to be partly independent of his will. His person is considered, if we may express it so, as the dynamical centre of the universe, from which lines of force radiate to all quarters of the heaven; so that any motion of his – the turning of his head, the lifting of his hand – instantaneously affects and may seriously disturb some part of nature. He is the point of support on which hangs the balance of the world; and the slightest irregularity on his part may overthrow the delicate equipoise. The greatest care must, therefore, be taken both by and of him; and his whole life, down to its minutest details, must be so regulated

that no act of his, voluntary or involuntary, may disarrange or upset the established order of nature. Of this class of monarchs the Mikado or Dairi, the spiritual emperor of Japan, is a typical example. He is an incarnation of the sun goddess, the deity who rules the universe, gods and men included; once a year all the gods wait upon him and spend a month at his court. During that month, the name of which means “without gods,” no one frequents the temples, for they are believed to be deserted.³⁷⁴

The following description of the Mikado's mode of life was written about two hundred years ago:³⁷⁵—

“Even to this day the princes descended of this family, more particularly those who sit on the throne, are looked upon as persons most holy in themselves, and as Popes by birth. And, in order to preserve these advantageous notions in the minds of their subjects, they are obliged to take an uncommon care of their sacred persons, and to do such things, which, examined according to the customs of other nations, would be thought ridiculous and impertinent. It will not be improper to give a few instances of it. He thinks that it would be very prejudicial to his dignity and holiness to touch the ground with his feet; for this reason, when he intends to go anywhere, he must be carried thither on men's shoulders. Much less will they suffer that he

³⁷⁴ *Manners and Customs of the Japanese in the Nineteenth Century. From recent Dutch Visitors to Japan, and the German of Dr. Ph. Fr. von Siebold* (London, 1841), p. 141 sqq.

³⁷⁵ Kaempfer, “History of Japan,” in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, vii. 716 sq.

should expose his sacred person to the open air, and the sun is not thought worthy to shine on his head. There is such a holiness ascribed to all the parts of his body, that he dares to cut off neither his hair, nor his beard, nor his nails. However, lest he should grow too dirty, they may clean him in the night when he is asleep; because, they say, that which is taken from his body at that time hath been stolen from him, and that such a theft doth not prejudice his holiness or dignity. In ancient times, he was obliged to sit on the throne for some hours every morning, with the imperial crown on his head, but to sit altogether like a statue, without stirring either hands or feet, head or eyes, nor indeed any part of his body, because, by this means, it was thought that he could preserve peace and tranquillity in his empire; for if, unfortunately, he turned himself on one side or the other, or if he looked a good while towards any part of his dominions, it was apprehended that war, famine, fire, or some great misfortune was near at hand to desolate the country. But it having been afterwards discovered that the imperial crown was the palladium which by its mobility could preserve peace in the empire, it was thought expedient to deliver his imperial person, consecrated only to idleness and pleasures, from this burthensome duty, and therefore the crown is at present placed on the throne for some hours every morning. His victuals must be dressed every time in new pots, and served at table in new dishes: both are very clean and neat, but made only of common clay; that without any considerable expense they may be laid aside, or broken, after they

have served once. They are generally broke, for fear they should come into the hands of laymen, for they believe religiously that if any layman should presume to eat his food out of these sacred dishes, it would swell and inflame his mouth and throat. The like ill effect is dreaded from the Dairi's sacred habits; for they believe that if a layman should wear them, without the Emperor's express leave or command, they would occasion swellings and pains in all parts of his body." To the same effect an earlier account of the Mikado says: "It was considered as a shameful degradation for him even to touch the ground with his foot. The sun and moon were not even permitted to shine upon his head. None of the superfluities of the body were ever taken from him, neither his hair, his beard, nor his nails were cut. Whatever he eat was dressed in new vessels."³⁷⁶

Similar priestly or rather divine kings are found, at a lower level of barbarism, on the west coast of Africa. At Shark Point near Cape Padron, in Lower Guinea, lives the priestly king Kukulu, alone in a wood. He may not touch a woman nor leave his house; indeed he may not even quit his chair, in which he is obliged to sleep sitting, for if he lay down no wind would arise and navigation would be stopped. He regulates storms, and in general maintains a wholesome and equable state of the

³⁷⁶ Caron, "Account of Japan," in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, vii. 613. Compare Varenus, *Descriptio regni Japoniae*, p. 11, *Nunquam attingebant (quemadmodum et hodie id observat) pedes ipsius terram: radiis Solis caput nunquam illustrabatur: in apertum aërem non procedebat*, etc.

atmosphere.³⁷⁷ In the kingdom of Congo (West Africa) there was a supreme pontiff called Chitomé or Chitombé, whom the negroes regarded as a god on earth and all powerful in heaven. Hence before they would taste the new crops they offered him the first-fruits, fearing that manifold misfortunes would befall them if they broke this rule. When he left his residence to visit other places within his jurisdiction, all married people had to observe strict continence the whole time he was out; for it was supposed that any act of incontinence would prove fatal to him. And if he were to die a natural death, they thought that the world would perish, and the earth, which he alone sustained by his power and merit, would immediately be annihilated.³⁷⁸ Amongst the semi-barbarous nations of the New World, at the date of the Spanish conquest, there were found hierarchies or theocracies like those of Japan. Some of these we have already noticed.³⁷⁹ But the high pontiff of the Zapotecs in Southern Mexico appears to have presented a still closer parallel to the Mikado. A powerful rival to the king himself, this spiritual lord governed Yopaa, one of the chief cities of the kingdom, with absolute dominion. It is impossible, we are told, to over-rate the reverence in which he was held. He was looked on as a god whom the earth was not worthy to hold nor the sun to shine upon. He profaned his

³⁷⁷ A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, i. 287 sq.; cp. *id.*, p. 353 sq.

³⁷⁸ Labat, *Relation historique de l'Ethiopie Occidentale*, i. 254 sqq.

³⁷⁹ Above, pp. [44](#), [49](#).

sanctity if he even touched the ground with his foot. The officers who bore his palanquin on their shoulders were members of the highest families; he hardly deigned to look on anything around him; and all who met him fell with their faces to the earth, fearing that death would overtake them if they saw even his shadow. A rule of continence was regularly imposed on the Zapotec priests, especially upon the high pontiff; but “on certain days in each year, which were generally celebrated with feasts and dances, it was customary for the high priest to become drunk. While in this state, seeming to belong neither to heaven nor to earth, one of the most beautiful of the virgins consecrated to the service of the gods was brought to him.” If the child she bore him was a son, he was brought up as a prince of the blood, and the eldest son succeeded his father on the pontifical throne.³⁸⁰ The supernatural powers attributed to this pontiff are not specified, but probably they resembled those of the Mikado and Chitomé.

Wherever, as in Japan and West Africa, it is supposed that the order of nature, and even the existence of the world, is bound up with the life of the king or priest, it is clear that he must be regarded by his subjects as a source both of infinite blessing and of infinite danger. On the one hand, the people have to thank him for the rain and sunshine which foster the fruits of the earth, for the wind which brings ships to their coasts, and even for the existence of the earth beneath their feet. But

³⁸⁰ Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Hist. des nations civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique-centrale*, iii. 29 sq.; Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States*, ii. 142 sq.

what he gives he can refuse; and so close is the dependence of nature on his person, so delicate the balance of the system of forces whereof he is the centre, that the slightest irregularity on his part may set up a tremor which shall shake the earth to its foundations. And if nature may be disturbed by the slightest involuntary act of the king, it is easy to conceive the convulsion which his death might occasion. The death of the Chitomé, as we have seen, was thought to entail the destruction of the world. Clearly, therefore, out of a regard for their own safety, which might be imperilled by any rash act of the king, and still more by his death, the people will exact of their king or priest a strict conformity to those rules, the observance of which is necessary for his own preservation, and consequently for the preservation of his people and the world. The idea that early kingdoms are despotisms in which the people exist only for the sovereign, is wholly inapplicable to the monarchies we are considering. On the contrary, the sovereign in them exists only for his subjects; his life is only valuable so long as he discharges the duties of his position by ordering the course of nature for his people's benefit. So soon as he fails to do so the care, the devotion, the religious homage which they had hitherto lavished on him, cease and are changed into hatred and contempt; he is dismissed ignominiously, and may be thankful if he escapes with his life. Worshipped as a god by them one day, he is killed by them as a criminal the next. But in this changed behaviour of the people there is nothing capricious or inconsistent. On the contrary, their

conduct is entirely of a piece. If their king is their god, he is or should be also their preserver; and if he will not preserve them, he must make room for another who will. So long, however, as he answers their expectations, there is no limit to the care which they take of him, and which they compel him to take of himself. A king of this sort lives hedged in by a ceremonious etiquette, a network of prohibitions and observances, of which the intention is not to contribute to his dignity, much less to his comfort, but to restrain him from conduct which, by disturbing the harmony of nature, might involve himself, his people, and the universe in one common catastrophe. Far from adding to his comfort, these observances, by trammelling his every act, annihilate his freedom and often render the very life, which it is their object to preserve, a burden and sorrow to him.

Of the supernaturally endowed kings of Loango it is said that the more powerful a king is, the more taboos is he bound to observe; they regulate all his actions, his walking and his standing, his eating and drinking, his sleeping and waking.³⁸¹ To these restraints the heir to the throne is subject from infancy; but as he advances in life the number of abstinences and ceremonies which he must observe increases, “until at the moment that he ascends the throne he is lost in the ocean of rites and taboos.”³⁸² The kings of Egypt, as we have seen,³⁸³ were worshipped as

³⁸¹ Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, i. 355.

³⁸² Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, p. 336.

³⁸³ P. [49](#) sq.

gods, and the routine of their daily life was regulated in every detail by precise and unvarying rules. "The life of the kings of Egypt," says Diodorus,³⁸⁴ "was not like that of other monarchs who are irresponsible and may do just what they choose; on the contrary, everything was fixed for them by law, not only their official duties, but even the details of their daily life... The hours both of day and night were arranged at which the king had to do, not what he pleased, but what was prescribed for him... For not only were the times appointed at which he should transact public business or sit in judgment; but the very hours for his walking and bathing and sleeping with his wife, and, in short, performing every act of life, were all settled. Custom enjoined a simple diet; the only flesh he might eat was veal and goose, and he might only drink a prescribed quantity of wine." Of the taboos imposed on priests, the rules of life observed by the Flamen Dialis at Rome furnish a striking example. As the worship of Virbius at Nemi was conducted, as we have seen,³⁸⁵ by a Flamen, who may possibly have been the King of the Wood himself, and whose mode of life may have resembled that of the Roman Flamen, these rules have a special interest for us. They were such as the following: The Flamen Dialis might not ride or even touch a horse, nor see an army under arms, nor wear a ring which was not broken, nor have a knot on any part of his garments; no fire except a sacred fire might be taken out of his house; he might

³⁸⁴ *Bibl. Hist.* i. 70.

³⁸⁵ P. 6.

not touch wheaten flour or leavened bread; he might not touch or even name a goat, a dog, raw meat, beans, and ivy; he might not walk under a vine; the feet of his bed had to be daubed with mud; his hair could be cut only by a free man and with a bronze knife, and his hair and nails when cut had to be buried under a lucky tree; he might not touch a dead body nor enter a place where one was burned; he might not see work being done on holy days; he might not be uncovered in the open air; if a man in bonds were taken into his house, he had to be unbound and the cords had to be drawn up through a hole in the roof and so let down into the street. His wife, the Flaminica, had to observe nearly the same rules, and others of her own besides. She might not ascend more than three steps of the kind of staircase called Greek; at a certain festival she might not comb her hair; the leather of her shoes might not be made from a beast that had died a natural death, but only from one that had been slain or sacrificed; if she heard thunder she was tabooed till she had offered an expiatory sacrifice.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁶ Aulus Gellius, x. 15; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 109-112; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 146; Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* i. vv. 179, 448, iv. 518; Macrobius, *Saturn.* i. 16, 8 sq.; Festus, p. 161 A, ed. Müller. For more details see Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, iii.² 326 sqq.

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