

FRAZER JAMES GEORGE

THE GOLDEN BOUGH: A
STUDY IN MAGIC AND
RELIGION (THIRD EDITION,
VOL. 04 OF 12)

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in Magic and Religion
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James George Frazer

The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion

(Third Edition, Vol. 04 of 12)

Preface

With this third part of *The Golden Bough* we take up the question, Why had the King of the Wood at Nemi regularly to perish by the hand of his successor? In the first part of the work I gave some reasons for thinking that the priest of Diana, who bore the title of King of the Wood beside the still lake among the Alban Hills, personated the great god Jupiter or his duplicate Dianus, the deity of the oak, the thunder, and the sky. On this theory, accordingly, we are at once confronted with the wider and deeper question, Why put a man-god or human representative of deity to a violent death? Why extinguish the divine light in its earthly vessel instead of husbanding it to its natural close? My general answer to that question is contained in the present volume. If I am right, the motive for slaying a man-god is a fear lest with the enfeeblement of his body in sickness or old age his sacred spirit should suffer a corresponding

decay, which might imperil the general course of nature and with it the existence of his worshippers, who believe the cosmic energies to be mysteriously knit up with those of their human divinity. Hence, if there is any measure of truth in this theory, the practice of putting divine men and particularly divine kings to death, which seems to have been common at a particular stage in the evolution of society and religion, was a crude but pathetic attempt to disengage an immortal spirit from its mortal envelope, to arrest the forces of decomposition in nature by retrenching with ruthless hand the first ominous symptoms of decay. We may smile if we please at the vanity of these and the like efforts to stay the inevitable decline, to bring the relentless revolution of the great wheel to a stand, to keep youth's fleeting roses for ever fresh and fair; but perhaps in spite of every disillusionment, when we contemplate the seemingly endless vistas of knowledge which have been opened up even within our own generation, many of us may cherish in our heart of hearts a fancy, if not a hope, that some loophole of escape may after all be discovered from the iron walls of the prison-house which threaten to close on and crush us; that, groping about in the darkness, mankind may yet chance to lay hands on "that golden key that opes the palace of eternity," and so to pass from this world of shadows and sorrow to a world of untroubled light and joy. If this is a dream, it is surely a happy and innocent one, and to those who would wake us from it we may murmur with Michael Angelo,

"Però non mi destar, deh! parla basso."

J. G. FRAZER.
Cambridge,
11th June 1911.

Chapter I. The Mortality Of The Gods

Mortality of savage gods, Greek gods.

At an early stage of his intellectual development man deems himself naturally immortal, and imagines that were it not for the baleful arts of sorcerers, who cut the vital thread prematurely short, he would live for ever. The illusion, so flattering to human wishes and hopes, is still current among many savage tribes at the present day,¹ and it may be supposed to have

¹ For examples see M. Dobrizhoffer, *Historia de Abiponibus* (Vienna, 1784), ii. 92 sq., 240 sqq.; C. Gay, "Fragment d'un voyage dans le Chili et au Cusco," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), Deuxième Série, xix. (1843) p. 25; H. Delaporte, "Une Visite chez les Araucaniens," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), Quatrième Série, x. (1855) p. 30; K. von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 344, 348; E. F. im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana* (London, 1883), pp. 330 sq.; A. G. Morice, "The Canadian Dénés," *Annual Archaeological Report, 1905*; (Toronto, 1906), p. 207; (Sir) George Grey, *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery into North-West and Western Australia* (London, 1841), ii. 238; A. Oldfield, "The Aborigines of Australia," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, N.S. iii. (1865) p. 236; J. Dawson, *Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, 1881), p. 63; Rev. G. Taplin, "The Narrinyeri," *Native Tribes of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1879), p. 25; C. W. Schürmann, "The Aboriginal Tribes of Port Lincoln," *Native Tribes of South Australia*, p. 237; H. E. A. Meyer, in *Native Tribes of South Australia*, p. 195; R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria* (Melbourne, 1878), i. 110, ii. 289 sq.; W. Stanbridge, in *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, New Series, i. (1861) p. 299; L. Fison and A. W. Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, pp. 250 sq.; A. L. P. Cameron, "Notes on some Tribes of New South Wales," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiv. (1885) pp. 361, 362 sq.; W. Ridley, *Kamilaroi*, Second Edition (Sydney, 1875), p. 159; Baldwin

prevailed universally in that Age of Magic which appears to have everywhere preceded the Age of Religion. But in time the sad truth of human mortality was borne in upon our primitive philosopher with a force of demonstration which no prejudice could resist and no sophistry dissemble. Among the manifold influences which combined to wring from him a reluctant assent to the necessity of death must be numbered the growing influence of religion, which by exposing the vanity of magic and of all the extravagant pretensions built on it gradually lowered

Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 46-48; *Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, v. (Cambridge, 1904) pp. 248, 323; E. Beardmore, "The Natives of Mowat, British New Guinea," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xix. (1890) p. 461; R. E. Guise, "On the Tribes inhabiting the Mouth of the Wanigela River, New Guinea," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxviii. (1899) p. 216; C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 279; K. Vetter, *Komm herüber und hilf uns! oder die Arbeit der Neuen-Dettelsauer Mission*, iii. (Barmen, 1898) pp. 10 sq.; id., in *Nachrichten über Kaiser-Wilhelmsland und den Bismarck-Archipel*, 1897, pp. 94, 98; A. Deniau, "Croyances religieuses et mœurs des indigènes de l'île Malo," *Missions Catholiques*, xxxiii. (1901) pp. 315 sq.; C. Ribbe, *Zwei Jahre unter den Kannibalen der Salomo-Inseln* (Dresden-Blasewitz, 1903), p. 268; P. A. Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel* (Hiltrup bei Münster, n. d.), p. 344; P. Rascher, "Die Sulka," *Archiv für Anthropologie*, xxix. (1904) pp. 221 sq.; R. Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (Stuttgart, 1907), pp. 199-201; G. Brown, D.D., *Melanesians and Polynesians* (London, 1910), p. 176; Father Abinal, "Astrologie Malgache," *Missions Catholiques*, xi. (1879) p. 506; A. Grandidier, "Madagascar," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), Sixième Série, iii. (1872) p. 399; Father Campana, "Congo, Mission Catholique de Landana," *Missions Catholiques*, xxvii. (1895) pp. 102 sq.; Th. Masui, *Guide de la Section de l'État Indépendant du Congo à l'Exposition de Bruxelles-Tervueren en 1897* (Brussels, 1897), p. 82. The discussion of this and similar evidence must be reserved for another work.

man's proud and defiant attitude towards nature, and taught him to believe that there are mysteries in the universe which his feeble intellect can never fathom, and forces which his puny hands can never control. Thus more and more he learned to bow to the inevitable and to console himself for the brevity and the sorrows of life on earth by the hope of a blissful eternity hereafter. But if he reluctantly acknowledged the existence of beings at once superhuman and supernatural, he was as yet far from suspecting the width and the depth of the gulf which divided him from them. The gods with whom his imagination now peopled the darkness of the unknown were indeed admitted by him to be his superiors in knowledge and in power, in the joyous splendour of their life and in the length of its duration. But, though he knew it not, these glorious and awful beings were merely, like the spectre of the Brocken, the reflections of his own diminutive personality exaggerated into gigantic proportions by distance and by the mists and clouds upon which they were cast. Man in fact created gods in his own likeness and being himself mortal he naturally supposed his creatures to be in the same sad predicament. Thus the Greenlanders believed that a wind could kill their most powerful god, and that he would certainly die if he touched a dog. When they heard of the Christian God, they kept asking if he never died, and being informed that he did not, they were much surprised, and said that he must be a very great god indeed.² In answer to the enquiries of Colonel Dodge, a North

² C. Meiners, *Geschichte der Religionen* (Hannover, 1806-1807), i. 48.

American Indian stated that the world was made by the Great Spirit. Being asked which Great Spirit he meant, the good one or the bad one, "Oh, neither of *them*" replied he, "the Great Spirit that made the world is dead long ago. He could not possibly have lived as long as this."³ A tribe in the Philippine Islands told the Spanish conquerors that the grave of the Creator was upon the top of Mount Cabunian.⁴ Heitsi-eibib, a god or divine hero of the Hottentots, died several times and came to life again. His graves are generally to be met with in narrow defiles between mountains. When the Hottentots pass one of them, they throw a stone on it for good luck, sometimes muttering "Give us plenty of cattle."⁵ The grave of Zeus, the great god of Greece, was shewn to visitors in Crete as late as about the beginning of our era.⁶ The body of Dionysus was buried at Delphi beside the golden statue of Apollo, and his tomb bore the inscription, "Here lies Dionysus dead, the son of Semele."⁷ According to one account,

³ R. I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians*, p. 112.

⁴ F. Blumentritt, "Der Ahnencultus und die religiösen Anschauungen der Malaaien des Philippinen-Archipels," *Mittheilungen d. Wiener geogr. Gesellschaft*, 1882, p. 198.

⁵ Sir James E. Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa*, i. 166; H. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im Südlichen Africa* (Berlin, 1811-1812), i. 349 *sq.*; W. H. I. Bleek, *Reynard the Fox in South Africa* (London, 1864), pp. 75 *sq.*; Theophilus Hahn, *Tsuni-Goam, the Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* (London, 1881), pp. 56, 69.

⁶ Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*, 9 *sq.*; Diodorus Siculus, iii. 61; Lucian, *Philopseudes*, 3; *id.*, *Jupiter Tragoedus*, 45; *id.*, *Philopatris*, 10; Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae*, 17; Cicero, *De natura deorum*, iii. 21. 53; Pomponius Mela, ii. 7. 112; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 21; Lactantius, *Divin. instit.* i. II.

⁷ Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 35; Philochorus, *Fragm.* 22, in C. Müller's *Fragmenta*

Apollo himself was buried at Delphi; for Pythagoras is said to have carved an inscription on his tomb, setting forth how the god had been killed by the python and buried under the tripod.⁸ The ancient god Cronus was buried in Sicily,⁹ and the graves of Hermes, Aphrodite, and Ares were shewn in Hermopolis, Cyprus, and Thrace.¹⁰

Mortality of Egyptian gods.

The great gods of Egypt themselves were not exempt from the common lot. They too grew old and died. For like men they were composed of body and soul, and like men were subject to all the passions and infirmities of the flesh. Their bodies, it is true, were fashioned of more ethereal mould, and lasted longer than ours, but they could not hold out for ever against the siege of time. Age converted their bones into silver, their flesh into gold, and their azure locks into lapis-lazuli. When their time came, they passed away from the cheerful world of the living to reign as dead gods over dead men in the melancholy world beyond the grave. Even their souls, like those of mankind, could only endure after death so long as their bodies held together; and hence it was as needful

historicum Graecorum, i. p. 378; Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 8, ed. Otto; J. Tzetzes, *Schol. on Lycophron*, 208. Compare Ch. Petersen, "Das Grab und die Todtenfeier des Dionysos," *Philologus*, xv. (1860) pp. 77-91. The grave of Dionysus is also said to have been at Thebes (Clemens Romanus, *Recognitiones*, x. 24; Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, i. col. 1434).

⁸ Porphyry, *Vit. Pythag.* 16.

⁹ Philochorus, *Fr.* 184, in C. Müller's *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum*, ii. p. 414.

¹⁰ Ch. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* (Königsberg, 1829), pp. 574 *sq.*

to preserve the corpses of the gods as the corpses of common folk, lest with the divine body the divine spirit should also come to an untimely end. At first their remains were laid to rest under the desert sands of the mountains, that the dryness of the soil and the purity of the air might protect them from putrefaction and decay. Hence one of the oldest titles of the Egyptian gods is “they who are under the sands.” But when at a later time the discovery of the art of embalming gave a new lease of life to the souls of the dead by preserving their bodies for an indefinite time from corruption, the deities were permitted to share the benefit of an invention which held out to gods as well as to men a reasonable hope of immortality. Every province then had the tomb and mummy of its dead god. The mummy of Osiris was to be seen at Mendes; Thinis boasted of the mummy of Anhourî; and Heliopolis rejoiced in the possession of that of Toumou.¹¹ But while their bodies lay swathed and bandaged here on earth in the tomb, their souls, if we may trust the Egyptian priests, shone as bright stars in the firmament. The soul of Isis sparkled in Sirius, the soul of Horus in Orion, and the soul of Typhon in the Great Bear.¹² But the death of the god did not involve the extinction of his sacred stock; for he commonly had by his wife a son and heir, who on the demise of his divine parent succeeded

¹¹ G. Maspero, *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient classique: les origines*, pp. 108-111, 116-118. On the mortality of the Egyptian gods see further A. Moret, *Le Rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte* (Paris, 1902), pp. 219 *sqq.*

¹² Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 21, 22, 38, 61; Diodorus Siculus, i. 27. 4; Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci inscriptiones selectae*, i. No. 56, p. 102.

to the full rank, power, and honours of the godhead.¹³ The high

¹³ A. Wiedemann, *Die Religion der alten Aegypter*, pp. 59 sq.; G. Maspero, *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient classique: les origines*, pp. 104-108, 150. Indeed it was an article of the Egyptian creed that every god must die after he had begotten a son in his own likeness (A. Wiedemann, *Herodots zweites Buch*, p. 204). Hence the Egyptian deities were commonly arranged in trinities of a simple and natural type, each comprising a father, a mother, and a son. "Speaking generally, two members of such a triad were gods, one old and one young, and the third was a goddess, who was, naturally, the wife, or female counterpart, of the older god. The younger god was the son of the older god and goddess, and he was supposed to possess all the attributes and powers which belonged to his father... The feminine counterpart or wife of the chief god was usually a local goddess of little or no importance; on the other hand, her son by the chief god was nearly as important as his father, because it was assumed that he would succeed to his rank and throne when the elder god had passed away. The conception of the triad or trinity is, in Egypt, probably as old as the belief in gods, and it seems to be based on the anthropomorphic views which were current in the earliest times about them" (E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, London, 1904, i. 113 sq.). If the Christian doctrine of the Trinity took shape under Egyptian influence, the function originally assigned to the Holy Spirit may have been that of the divine mother. In the apocryphal *Gospel to the Hebrews*, as Mr. F. C. Conybeare was kind enough to point out to me, Christ spoke of the Holy Ghost as his mother. The passage is quoted by Origen (*Comment. in Joan. II.* vol. iv. col. 132, ed. Migne), and runs as follows: "My mother the Holy Spirit took me a moment ago by one of my hairs and carried me away to the great Mount Tabor." Compare Origen, *In Jeremiam Hom.* XV. 4, vol. iii. col. 433, ed. Migne. In the reign of Trajan a certain Alcibiades, from Apamea in Syria, appeared at Rome with a volume in which the Holy Ghost was described as a stalwart female about ninety-six miles high and broad in proportion. See Hippolytus, *Refut. omnium haeresium*, ix. 13, p. 462, ed. Duncker and Schneidewin. The Ophites represented the Holy Spirit as "the first woman," "mother of all living," who was beloved by "the first man" and likewise by "the second man," and who conceived by one or both of them "the light, which they call Christ." See H. Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest*, pp. 116 sq., quoting Irenaeus, i. 28. As to a female member of the Trinity, see further *id.*, *Dreiheit, ein Versuch mythologischer Zahlenlehre* (Bonn, 1903), pp. 41 sqq.; Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the*

gods of Babylon also, though they appeared to their worshippers only in dreams and visions, were conceived to be human in their bodily shape, human in their passions, and human in their fate; for like men they were born into the world, and like men they loved and fought and died.¹⁴

The death of the Great Pan. Death of the King of the Jinn. Death of the Grape-cluster.

One of the most famous stories of the death of a god is told by Plutarch. It runs thus. In the reign of the emperor Tiberius a certain schoolmaster named Epitherses was sailing from Greece to Italy. The ship in which he had taken his passage was a merchantman and there were many other passengers on board. At evening, when they were off the Echinadian Islands, the wind died away, and the vessel drifted close in to the island of Paxos. Most of the passengers were awake and many were still drinking wine after dinner, when suddenly a voice hailed the ship from the island, calling upon Thamus. The crew and passengers were

Roman Empire, ch. 1. vol. ix. p. 261, note g (Edinburgh, 1811). Mr. Conybeare tells me that Philo Judæus, who lived in the first half of the first century of our era, constantly defines God as a Trinity in Unity, or a Unity in Trinity, and that the speculations of this Alexandrian Jew deeply influenced the course of Christian thought on the mystical nature of the deity. Thus it seems not impossible that the ancient Egyptian doctrine of the divine Trinity may have been distilled through Philo into Christianity. On the other hand it has been suggested that the Christian Trinity is of Babylonian origin. See H. Zimmern, in E. Schrader's *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*,³ pp. 418 sq., 440.

¹⁴ L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion and Mythology* (London, 1899), p. 8.

taken by surprise, for though there was an Egyptian pilot named Thamus on board, few knew him even by name. Twice the cry was repeated, but Thamus kept silence. However, at the third call he answered, and the voice from the shore, now louder than ever, said, "When you are come to Palodes, announce that the Great Pan is dead." Astonishment fell upon all, and they consulted whether it would be better to do the bidding of the voice or not. At last Thamus resolved that, if the wind held, he would pass the place in silence, but if it dropped when they were off Palodes he would give the message. Well, when they were come to Palodes, there was a great calm; so Thamus standing in the stern and looking towards the land cried out, as he had been bidden, "The Great Pan is dead." The words had hardly passed his lips when a loud sound of lamentation broke on their ears, as if a multitude were mourning. This strange story, vouched for by many on board, soon got wind at Rome, and Thamus was sent for and questioned by the emperor Tiberius himself, who caused enquiries to be made about the dead god.¹⁵ In modern times, also, the annunciation of the death of the Great Pan has been much discussed and various explanations of it have been suggested. On the whole the simplest and most natural would seem to be that the deity whose sad end was thus mysteriously proclaimed and lamented was the Syrian god Tammuz or Adonis, whose death is known to have been annually bewailed by his followers both in Greece and in his native Syria. At Athens the solemnity

¹⁵ Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 17.

fell at midsummer, and there is no improbability in the view that in a Greek island a band of worshippers of Tammuz should have been celebrating the death of their god with the customary passionate demonstrations of sorrow at the very time when a ship lay becalmed off the shore, and that in the stillness of the summer night the voices of lamentation should have been wafted with startling distinctness across the water and should have made on the minds of the listening passengers a deep and lasting impression.¹⁶ However that may be, stories of the same kind found currency in western Asia down to the Middle Ages. An

¹⁶ This is in substance the explanation briefly suggested by F. Liebrecht, and developed more fully and with certain variations of detail by S. Reinach. See F. Liebrecht, *Des Gervasius von Tilbury Otia Imperialia* (Hanover, 1856), p. 180; S. Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, iii. (Paris, 1908), pp. 1 *sqq.* As to the worship of Tammuz or Adonis in Syria and Greece see my *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Second Edition (London, 1907). In Plutarch's narrative confusion seems to have arisen through the native name (Tammuz) of the deity, which either accidentally coincided with that of the pilot (as S. Reinach thinks) or was erroneously transferred to him by a narrator (as F. Liebrecht supposed). An entirely different explanation of the story has been proposed by Dr. W. H. Roscher. He holds that the god whose death was lamented was the great ram-god of Mendes in Egypt, whom Greek writers constantly mistook for a goat-god and identified with Pan. A living ram was always revered as an incarnation of the god, and when it died there was a great mourning throughout all the land of Mendes. Some stone coffins of the sacred animal have been found in the ruins of the city. See Herodotus, ii. 46, with A. Wiedemann's commentary; W. H. Roscher, "Die Legende vom Tode des grossen Pan," *Fleckeisen's Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*, xxxviii. (1892) pp. 465-477. Dr. Roscher shews that Thamus was an Egyptian name, comparing Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 274 d e; Polyaeus, iii. 2. 5; Philostratus, *Vit. Apollon. Tyan.* vi. 5. 108. As to the worshipful goat, or rather ram, of Mendes, see also Diodorus Siculus, i. 84; Strabo, xvii. 1. 19, p. 802; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.* ii. 39, p. 34, ed. Potter; Suidas, s. v. Μένδην.

Arab writer relates that in the year 1063 or 1064 a. d., in the reign of the caliph Caiem, a rumour went abroad through Bagdad, which soon spread all over the province of Irac, that some Turks out hunting in the desert had seen a black tent, where many men and women were beating their faces and uttering loud cries, as it is the custom to do in the East when some one is dead. And among the cries they distinguished these words, "The great King of the Jinn is dead, woe to this country!" In consequence of this a mysterious threat was circulated from Armenia to Chuzistan that every town which did not lament the dead King of the Jinn should utterly perish. Again, in the year 1203 or 1204 a. d. a fatal disease, which attacked the throat, raged in parts of Mosul and Irac, and it was divulged that a woman of the Jinn called Umm 'Uncūd or "Mother of the Grape-cluster" had lost her son, and that all who did not lament for him would fall victims to the epidemic. So men and women sought to save themselves from death by assembling and beating their faces, while they cried out in a lamentable voice, "O mother of the Grape-cluster, excuse us; the Grape-cluster is dead; we knew it not."¹⁷

¹⁷ F. Liebrecht, *op. cit.* pp. 180 *sq.*; W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*,² pp. 412, 414. The latter writer observes with justice that "the wailing for 'Uncūd, the divine Grape-cluster, seems to be the last survival of an old vintage piaculum." "The dread of the worshippers," he adds, "that the neglect of the usual ritual would be followed by disaster, is particularly intelligible if they regarded the necessary operations of agriculture as involving the violent extinction of a particle of divine life." On the mortality of the gods in general and of the Teutonic gods in particular, see J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴ i. 263 *sqq.*; compare E. H. Meyer, *Mythologie der Germanen* (Strasburg, 1903), p. 288. As to the mortality of the Irish gods, see Douglas Hyde,

Chapter II. The Killing Of The Divine King

§ 1. Preference for a Violent Death

Human gods are killed to prevent them from growing old and feeble.

If the high gods, who dwell remote from the fret and fever of this earthly life, are yet believed to die at last, it is not to be expected that a god who lodges in a frail tabernacle of flesh should escape the same fate, though we hear of African kings who have imagined themselves immortal by virtue of their sorceries.¹⁸ Now primitive peoples, as we have seen,¹⁹ sometimes believe that their safety and even that of the world is bound up with the life of one of these god-men or human incarnations of the divinity. Naturally, therefore, they take the utmost care of his life, out of a regard for their own. But no amount of care and precaution will prevent the man-god from growing old and feeble

¹⁸ "Der Muata Cazembe und die Völkerstämme der Maravis, Chevas, Muembas, Lundas und andere von Süd-Afrika," *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Erdkunde*, vi. (1856) p. 395; F. T. Valdez, *Six Years of a Traveller's Life in Western Africa* (London, 1861), ii. 241 sq.

¹⁹ See *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 6, 7 sq.

and at last dying. His worshippers have to lay their account with this sad necessity and to meet it as best they can. The danger is a formidable one; for if the course of nature is dependent on the man-god's life, what catastrophes may not be expected from the gradual enfeeblement of his powers and their final extinction in death? There is only one way of averting these dangers. The man-god must be killed as soon as he shews symptoms that his powers are beginning to fail, and his soul must be transferred to a vigorous successor before it has been seriously impaired by the threatened decay. The advantages of thus putting the man-god to death instead of allowing him to die of old age and disease are, to the savage, obvious enough. For if the man-god dies what we call a natural death, it means, according to the savage, that his soul has either voluntarily departed from his body and refuses to return, or more commonly that it has been extracted, or at least detained in its wanderings, by a demon or sorcerer.²⁰ In any of these cases the soul of the man-god is lost to his worshippers; and with it their prosperity is gone and their very existence endangered. Even if they could arrange to catch the soul of the dying god as it left his lips or his nostrils and so transfer it to a successor, this would not effect their purpose; for, dying of disease, his soul would necessarily leave his body in the last stage of weakness and exhaustion, and so enfeebled it would continue to drag out a languid, inert existence in any body to which it might be transferred. Whereas by slaying him his worshippers

²⁰ See *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 26 sqq.

could, in the first place, make sure of catching his soul as it escaped and transferring it to a suitable successor; and, in the second place, by putting him to death before his natural force was abated, they would secure that the world should not fall into decay with the decay of the man-god. Every purpose, therefore, was answered, and all dangers averted by thus killing the man-god and transferring his soul, while yet at its prime, to a vigorous successor.

Preference for a violent death: the sick and old killed.

Some of the reasons for preferring a violent death to the slow death of old age or disease are obviously as applicable to common men as to the man-god. Thus the Mangaian think that "the spirits of those who die a natural death are excessively feeble and weak, as their bodies were at dissolution; whereas the spirits of those who are slain in battle are strong and vigorous, their bodies not having been reduced by disease."²¹ The Barongo believe that in the world beyond the grave the spirits of their dead ancestors appear with the exact form and lineaments which their bodies exhibited at the moment of death; the spirits are young or old according as their bodies were young or old when they died; there are baby spirits who crawl about on all fours.²² The Lengua Indians of the Gran Chaco are persuaded that the souls of the departed correspond exactly in form and characteristics to the

²¹ W. W. Gill, *Myths and Songs of the South Pacific* (London, 1876), p. 163.

²² H. A. Junod, *Les Ba-Ronga* (Neuchatel, 1898), pp. 381 sq.

bodies which they quitted at death; thus a tall man is tall, a short man is short, and a deformed man is deformed in the spirit-land, and the disembodied soul of a child remains a child, it never develops into an adult. Hence they burn the body of a murderer and scatter the ashes to the winds, thinking that this treatment will prevent his spirit from assuming human shape in the other world.²³ So, too, the Naga tribes of Manipur hold that the ghost of a dead man is an exact image of the deceased as he was at the moment of death, with his scars, tattoo marks, mutilations, and all the rest.²⁴ The Baganda think that the ghosts of men who were mutilated in life are mutilated in like manner after death; so to avoid that shame they will rather die with all their limbs than lose one by amputation and live.²⁵ Hence, men sometimes prefer to kill themselves or to be killed before they grow feeble, in order that in the future life their souls may start fresh and vigorous as they left their bodies, instead of decrepit and worn out with age and disease. Thus in Fiji, "self-immolation is by no means rare, and they believe that as they leave this life, so they will remain ever after. This forms a powerful motive to escape from decrepitude, or from a crippled condition, by a voluntary death."²⁶ Or, as another observer of the Fijians puts it more

²³ W. Barbrooke Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land* (London, 1911), p. 120.

²⁴ T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (London, 1911), p. 159.

²⁵ Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 281.

²⁶ Ch. Wilkes, *Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition* (London, 1845), iii. 96.

fully, “the custom of voluntary suicide on the part of the old men, which is among their most extraordinary usages, is also connected with their superstitions respecting a future life. They believe that persons enter upon the delights of their elysium with the same faculties, mental and physical, that they possess at the hour of death, in short, that the spiritual life commences where the corporeal existence terminates. With these views, it is natural that they should desire to pass through this change before their mental and bodily powers are so enfeebled by age as to deprive them of their capacity for enjoyment. To this motive must be added the contempt which attaches to physical weakness among a nation of warriors, and the wrongs and insults which await those who are no longer able to protect themselves. When therefore a man finds his strength declining with the advance of age, and feels that he will soon be unequal to discharge the duties of this life, and to partake in the pleasures of that which is to come, he calls together his relations, and tells them that he is now worn out and useless, that he sees they are all ashamed of him, and that he has determined to be buried.” So on a day appointed they used to meet and bury him alive.²⁷ In Vaté, one of the New Hebrides, the aged were buried alive at their own request. It was considered a disgrace to the family of an old chief if he was not buried alive.²⁸

²⁷ *U.S. Exploring Expedition, Ethnology and Philology*, by H. Hale (Philadelphia, 1846), p. 65. Compare Th. Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*,² i. 183; J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific* (London, 1853), p. 248.

²⁸ G. Turner, *Samoa*, p. 335.

Of the Kamants, a Jewish tribe in Abyssinia, it is reported that “they never let a person die a natural death, but that if any of their relatives is nearly expiring, the priest of the village is called to cut his throat; if this be omitted, they believe that the departed soul has not entered the mansions of the blessed.”²⁹ The old Greek philosopher Heraclitus thought that the souls of those who die in battle are purer than the souls of those who die of disease.³⁰

Preference for a violent death: the sick and aged killed.

Among the Chiriguanos, a tribe of South American Indians on the river Pilcomayo, when a man was at the point of death his nearest relative used to break his spine by a blow of an axe, for they thought that to die a natural death was the greatest misfortune that could befall a man.³¹ Whenever a Payagua Indian of Paraguay, or a Guayana of south-eastern Brazil, grew weary of life, a feast was made, and amid the revelry and dancing the man was gummed and feathered with the plumage of many-coloured birds. A huge jar had been previously fixed in the ground to be ready for him; in this he was placed, the mouth of the jar was covered with a heavy lid of baked clay, the earth was heaped

²⁹ Martin Flad, *A Short Description of the Falasha and Kamants in Abyssinia*, p. 19.

³⁰ H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*,² i. (Berlin, 1906) p. 81; *id.*, *Herakleitos von Ephesos*² (Berlin, 1909), p. 50, Frag. 136, ψυχὰι ἀρρήφατοι καθαρώτεραι ἢ ἐνὶ νοῦσιν.

³¹ F. de Castelnau, *Expédition dans les parties centrales de l'Amérique du Sud*, iv. (Paris, 1851) p. 380. Compare *id.* ii. 49 *sq.* as to the practice of the Chavantes, a tribe of Indians on the Tocantins river.

over it, and thus “he went to his doom more joyful and gladsome than to his first nuptials.”³² Among the Koryaks of north-eastern Asia, when a man felt that his last hour was come, superstition formerly required that he should either kill himself or be killed by a friend, in order that he might escape the Evil One and deliver himself up to the Good God.³³ Similarly among the Chukchees of the same region, when a man's strength fails and he is tired of life, he requests his son or other near relation to despatch him, indicating the manner of death he prefers to die. So, on a day appointed, his friends and neighbours assemble, and in their presence he is stabbed, strangled, or otherwise disposed of according to his directions.³⁴ The turbulent Angamis are the most

³² R. Southey, *History of Brazil*, iii. (London, 1819) p. 619; R. F. Burton, in *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1874), p. 122.

³³ C. von Dittmar, “Über die Koräken und die ihnen sehr nahe verwandten Tschuktschen,” *Bulletin de la Classe philologique de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St-Petersbourg*, xiii. (1856) coll. 122, 124 *sq.* The custom has now been completely abandoned. See W. Jochelson, “The Koryak, Religion and Myths” (Leyden and New York, 1905), p. 103 (*Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History, The Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, vol. vi. part i.).

³⁴ C. von Dittmar, *op. cit.* col. 132; De Wrangell, *Le Nord de la Sibérie* (Paris, 1843), i. 263 *sq.*; “Die Ethnographie Russlands nach A. F. Rittich,” *Petermann's Mittheilungen, Ergänzungsheft*, No. 54 (Gotha, 1878), pp. 14 *sq.*; “Der Anadyr-Bezirk nach A. W. Olssufjew,” *Petermann's Mittheilungen*, xlv. (1899) p. 230; V. Priklonski, “Todtengebräuche der Jakuten,” *Globus*, lix. (1891) p. 82; R. von Seidlitz, “Der Selbstmord bei den Tschuktschen,” *ib.* p. 111; Cremat, “Der Anadyrbezirk Sibiriens und seine Bevölkerung,” *Globus*, lxvi. (1894) p. 287; H. de Windt, *Through the Gold-fields of Alaska to Bering Straits* (London, 1898), pp. 223-225; W. Bogaras, “The Chukchee” (Leyden and New York, 1904-1909), pp. 560 *sqq.* (*Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History, The Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, vol. vii.).

warlike and bloodthirsty of the wild head-hunting tribes in the valley of the Brahmapootra. Among them, when a warrior dies a natural death, his nearest male relative takes a spear and wounds the corpse by a blow on the head, in order that the man may be received with honour in the other world as one who has died in battle.³⁵ The heathen Norsemen believed that only those who fell fighting were received by Odin in Valhalla; hence it appears to have been customary to wound the dying with a spear, in order to secure their admission to the happy land. The custom may have been a mitigation of a still older practice of slaughtering the sick.³⁶ We know from Procopius that among the Heruli, a Teutonic tribe, the sick and old were regularly slain at their own request and then burned on a pyre.³⁷ The Wends used to kill their aged parents and other kinsfolk, and having killed them they boiled and ate their bodies; and the old folks preferred to die thus rather than to drag out a weary life of weakness and decrepitude.³⁸

³⁵ L. A. Waddell, "The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, lxi. part iii. (1901) pp. 20, 24; T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (London, 1911), p. 151.

³⁶ K. Simrock, *Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie*,⁵ pp. 177 sq., 507; H. M. Chadwick, *The Cult of Othin* (London, 1899), pp. 13 sq., 34 sq.

³⁷ Procopius, *De bello Gothico*, ii. 14.

³⁸ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*,³ p. 488. A custom of putting the sick and aged to death seems to have prevailed in several branches of the Aryan family; it may at one time have been common to the whole stock. See J. Grimm, *op. cit.* pp. 486 sqq.; O. Schrader, *Reallexikon der indogermanischen Altertumskunde*, pp. 36-39.

§ 2. Kings killed when their Strength fails

Divine kings put to death. The Chitomé of Congo.
Ethiopian kings of Meroe.

But it is with the death of the god-man – the divine king or priest – that we are here especially concerned. The mystic kings of Fire and Water in Cambodia are not allowed to die a natural death. Hence when one of them is seriously ill and the elders think that he cannot recover, they stab him to death.³⁹ The people of Congo believed, as we have seen,⁴⁰ that if their pontiff the Chitomé were to die a natural death, the world would perish, and the earth, which he alone sustained by his power and merit, would immediately be annihilated. Accordingly when he fell ill and seemed likely to die, the man who was destined to be his successor entered the pontiff's house with a rope or a club and strangled or clubbed him to death.⁴¹ A fuller account of this custom is given by an old Italian writer as follows: “Let us pass to the death of the magicians, who often die a violent death, and that for the most part voluntarily. I shall speak only of the head of this crew, from whom his followers take example. He is called Ganga Chitome, being reputed god of the earth. The first-fruits of all

³⁹ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, ii. 4 sq.

⁴⁰ *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 5 sq.

⁴¹ J. B. Labat, *Relation historique de l'Éthiopie occidentale* (Paris, 1732), i. 260 sq.; W. Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa* (London, 1863), p. 362.

the crops are offered to him as his due, because they are thought to be produced by his power, and not by nature at the bidding of the Most High God. This power he boasts he can impart to others, when and to whom he pleases. He asserts that his body cannot die a natural death, and therefore when he knows he is near the end of his days, whether it is brought about by sickness or age, or whether he is deluded by the demon, he calls one of his disciples to whom he wishes to communicate his power, in order that he may succeed him. And having made him tie a noose to his neck he commands him to strangle him, or to knock him on the head with a great cudgel and kill him. His disciple obeys and sends him a martyr to the devil, to suffer torments with Lucifer in the flames for ever. This tragedy is enacted in public, in order that his successor may be manifested, who hath the power of fertilising the earth, the power having been imparted to him by the deceased; otherwise, so they say, the earth would remain barren, and the world would perish. Oh too great foolishness and palpable blindness of the gentiles, to enlighten the eye of whose mind there would be needed the very hand of Christ whereby he opened the bodily eyes of him that had been born blind! I know that in my time one of these magicians was cast into the sea, another into a river, a mother put to death with her son, and many more seized by our orders and banished.”⁴² The Ethiopian kings

⁴² G. Merolla, *Relazione del viaggio nel regno di Congo* (Naples, 1726), p. 76. The English version of this passage (Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 228) has already been quoted by Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury) in his *Origin of Civilisation*,⁴ pp.

of Meroe were worshipped as gods; but whenever the priests chose, they sent a messenger to the king, ordering him to die, and alleging an oracle of the gods as their authority for the command. This command the kings always obeyed down to the reign of Ergamenes, a contemporary of Ptolemy II., King of Egypt. Having received a Greek education which emancipated him from the superstitions of his countrymen, Ergamenes ventured to disregard the command of the priests, and, entering the Golden Temple with a body of soldiers, put the priests to the sword.⁴³

Kings of Fazoql on the Blue Nile.

Customs of the same sort appear to have prevailed in this region down to modern times. Thus we are told that in Fazoql, a district in the valley of the Blue Nile, to the west of Abyssinia, it was customary, as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, to hang a king who was no longer beloved. His relatives and ministers assembled round him, and announced that as he no longer pleased the men, the women, the asses, the oxen, and the fowls of the country, it was better he should die. Once on a time, when a king was unwilling to take the hint, his own wife and mother urged him so strongly not to disgrace himself by disregarding the custom, that he submitted to his fate and was strung up in the usual way. In some tribes of Fazoql the king had to administer justice daily under a certain tree. If from sickness or any other cause he was unable to discharge this duty

358 *sq.* In that version the native title of the pontiff is misspelt.

⁴³ Diodorus Siculus, iii. 6; Strabo, xvii. 2. 3, p. 822.

for three whole days, he was hanged on the tree in a noose, which contained two razors so arranged that when the noose was drawn tight by the weight of the king's body they cut his throat.⁴⁴ At Fazolglou an annual festival, which partook of the nature of a Saturnalia, was preceded by a formal trial of the king in front of his house. The judges were the chief men of the country. The king sat on his royal stool during the trial, surrounded by armed men, who were ready to carry out a sentence of death. A little way off a jackal and a dog were tied to a post. The conduct of the king during his year of office was discussed, complaints were heard, and if the verdict was unfavourable, the king was executed and his successor chosen from among the members of his family. But if the monarch was acquitted, the people at once paid their homage to him afresh, and the dog or the jackal was killed in his stead. This custom lasted down to the year 1837 or 1838, when king Yassin was thus condemned and executed.⁴⁵ His nephew Assusa was compelled under threats of death to succeed him in the office.⁴⁶ Afterwards it would seem that the death of

⁴⁴ R. Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the peninsula of Sinai* (London, 1853), pp. 202, 204. I have to thank Dr. E. Westermarck for pointing out these passages to me. Fazoql lies in the fork between the Blue Nile and its tributary the Tumat. See J. Russeger, *Reisen in Europa, Asien und Afrika*, ii. 2 (Stuttgart, 1844), p. 552 note.

⁴⁵ Brun-Rollet, *Le Nil Blanc et le Soudan* (Paris, 1855), pp. 248 *sq.* For the orgiastic character of these annual festivals, see *id.* p. 245. Fazolglou is probably the same as Fazoql. The people who practise the custom are called Bertat by E. Marno (*Reisen im Gebiete des blauen und weissen Nil* (Vienna, 1874), p. 68).

⁴⁶ J. Russeger, *Reisen in Europa, Asien und Afrika*, ii. 2, p. 553. Russeger met

the dog was regularly accepted as a substitute for the death of the king. At least this may be inferred from a later account of the Fazoql practice, which runs thus: "The meaning of another of their customs is quite obscure. At a certain time of the year they have a kind of carnival, where every one does what he likes best. Four ministers of the king then bear him on an anqareb out of his house to an open space of ground; a dog is fastened by a long cord to one of the feet of the anqareb. The whole population collects round the place, streaming in on every side. They then throw darts and stones at the dog, till he is killed, after which the king is again borne into his house."⁴⁷

Shilluk custom of putting divine kings to death. The Shilluk kings supposed to be reincarnations of Nyakang, the semi-divine founder of the dynasty. The shrines of Nyakang.

A custom of putting their divine kings to death at the first symptoms of infirmity or old age prevailed until lately, if indeed it is even now extinct and not merely dormant, among the Shilluk

Assusa in January 1838, and says that the king had then been a year in office. He does not mention the name of the king's uncle who had, he tells us, been strangled by the chiefs; but I assume that he was the Yassin who is mentioned by Brun-Rollet. Russegger adds that the strangling of the king was performed publicly, and in the most solemn manner, and was said to happen often in Fazoql and the neighbouring countries.

⁴⁷ R. Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the peninsula of Sinai* (London, 1853), p. 204. Lepsius's letter is dated "The Pyramids of Meroë, 22nd April 1844." His informant was Osman Bey, who had lived for sixteen years in these regions. An *anqareb* or *angareb* is a kind of bed made by stretching string or leather thongs over an oblong wooden framework.

of the White Nile, and in recent years it has been carefully investigated by Dr. C. G. Seligmann, to whose researches I am indebted for the following detailed information on the subject.⁴⁸ The Shilluk are a tribe or nation who inhabit a long narrow fringe of territory on the western bank of the White Nile from Kaka in the north to Lake No in the south, as well as a strip on the eastern bank of the river, which stretches from Fashoda to Taufikia and for some thirty-five miles up the Sobat River. The country of the Shilluk is almost entirely in grass, hence the principal wealth of the people consists in their flocks and herds, but they also grow a considerable quantity of the species of millet which is known as durra. But though the Shilluk are mainly a pastoral people, they are not nomadic, but live in many settled villages. The tribe at present numbers about forty thousand souls, and is governed by a single king (*ret*), whose residence is at Fashoda. His subjects take great care of him, and hold him in much honour. In the old days his word was law and he was not suffered to go forth to battle. At the present day he still keeps up considerable state and exercises much authority; his decisions on all matters brought before him are readily obeyed; and he never moves without a bodyguard of from twelve to twenty men. The reverence which the Shilluk pay to their king appears to arise chiefly from the conviction that he is a reincarnation of the spirit of Nyakang, the semi-divine hero who founded the dynasty and settled the tribe

⁴⁸ I have to thank Dr. Seligmann for his kindness and courtesy in transmitting to me his unpublished account and allowing me to draw on it at my discretion.

in their present territory, to which he is variously said to have conducted them either from the west or from the south. Tradition has preserved the pedigree of the kings from Nyakang to the present day. The number of kings recorded between Nyakang and the father of the reigning monarch is twenty, distributed over twelve generations; but Dr. Seligmann is of opinion that many more must have reigned, and that the genealogy of the first six or seven kings, as given to him, has been much abbreviated. There seems to be no reason to doubt the historical character of all of them, though myths have gathered like clouds round the persons of Nyakang and his immediate successors. The Shilluk about Kodok (Fashoda) think of Nyakang as having been a man in appearance and physical qualities, though unlike his royal descendants of more recent times he did not die but simply disappeared. His holiness is manifested especially by his relation to Jüok, the great god of the Shilluk, who created man and is responsible for the order of nature. Jüok is formless and invisible and like the air he is everywhere at once. He is far above Nyakang and men alike, but he is not worshipped directly, and it is only through the intercession of Nyakang, whose favour the Shilluk secure by means of sacrifices, that Jüok can be induced to send the needed rain for the cattle and the crops.⁴⁹ In his character

⁴⁹ As to Jüok (Čuok), the supreme being of the Shilluk, see P. W. Hofmayr, "Religion der Schilluk," *Anthropos*, vi. (1911) pp. 120-122, whose account agrees with the briefer one given by Dr. C. G. Seligmann. Otiose supreme beings (*dieux fainéants*) of this type, who having made the world do not meddle with it and to whom little or no worship is paid, are common in Africa.

of rain-giver Nyakang is the great benefactor of the Shilluk. Their country, baked by the burning heat of the tropical sun, depends entirely for its fertility on the waters of heaven, for the people do not resort to artificial irrigation. When the rain falls, then the grass sprouts, the millet grows, the cattle thrive, and the people have food to eat. Drought brings famine and death in its train.⁵⁰ Nyakang is said not only to have brought the Shilluk into their present land, but to have made them into a nation of warriors, divided the country among them, regulated marriage, and made the laws.⁵¹ The religion of the Shilluk at the present time consists mainly of the worship paid to this semi-divine hero, the traditionary ancestor of their kings. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the traditions concerning him are substantially correct; in all probability he was simply a man whom the superstition of his fellows in his own and subsequent ages has raised to the rank of a deity.⁵² No less than ten shrines are dedicated to his worship; the three most famous are at Fashoda, Akurwa, and Fenikang. They consist of one or more huts enclosed by a fence; generally there are several huts within the enclosure, one or more of them being occupied by the guardians of the shrine. These guardians are old men, who not

⁵⁰ P. W. Hofmayr, "Religion der Schilluk," *Anthropos*, vi. (1911) pp. 123, 125. This writer gives Nykang as the name of the first Shilluk king.

⁵¹ P. W. Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 123.

⁵² This is the view both of Dr. C. G. Seligmann and of Father P. W. Hofmayr (*op. cit.* p. 123).

only keep the hallowed spot scrupulously clean, but also act as priests, killing the sacrificial victims which are brought to the shrine, sharing their flesh, and taking the skins for themselves. All the shrines of Nyakang are called graves of Nyakang (*kengo Nyakang*), though it is well known that nobody is buried there.⁵³ Sacred spears are kept in all of them and are used to slaughter the victims offered in sacrifice at the shrines. The originals of these spears are said to have belonged to Nyakang and his companions, but they have disappeared and been replaced by others.

Annual rain-making ceremony performed at the shrines of Nyakang. Harvest ceremony at the shrines of Nyakang.

Two great ceremonies are annually performed at the shrines of Nyakang: one of them is intended to ensure the fall of rain, the other is celebrated at harvest. At the rain-making ceremony, which is held before the rains at the beginning of the month *alabor*, a bullock is slain with a sacred spear before the door of the shrine, while the king stands by praying in a loud voice to Nyakang to send down the refreshing showers on the thirsty land. As much of the blood of the victim as possible is collected in a gourd and thrown into the river, perhaps as a rain-charm. This intention of the sacrifice comes out more plainly in a form of the ritual which is said to be observed at Ashop. There the sacrificial bullock is speared high up in the flank, so that the wound is not immediately fatal. Then the wounded animal is allowed and

⁵³ The word *kengo* is applied only to the shrines of Nyakang and the graves of the kings. Graves of commoners are called *roro*.

indeed encouraged to walk to and from the river before it sinks down and dies. In the blood that streams from its side on the ground the people may see a symbol of the looked-for rain.⁵⁴ Care is taken not to break the bones of the animal, and they, like the blood, are thrown into the river. At the annual rain-making ceremony a cow is also dedicated to Nyakang: it is not killed but added to the sacred herd of the shrine. The other great annual ceremony observed at the shrines of Nyakang falls at harvest. When the millet has been reaped, every one brings a portion of the grain to a shrine of Nyakang, where it is ground into flour, which is made into porridge with water fetched from the river. Then some of the porridge is poured out on the threshold of the hut which the spirit of Nyakang is supposed to inhabit; some of it is smeared on the outer walls of the building; and some of it is emptied out on the ground outside. Even before harvest it is customary to bring some of the ripening grain from the fields and to thrust it into the thatch of the huts in the shrines, no doubt in order to secure the blessing of Nyakang on the crops. Sacrifices are also offered at these shrines for the benefit of sick people. A sufferer will bring or send a sheep to the nearest sanctuary, where the guardians will slaughter the animal with a sacred spear and pray for the patient's recovery.

Shilluk kings put to death when they shew signs of ill-health or failing strength.

⁵⁴ On the use of flowing blood in rain-making ceremonies see *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 256, 257 sq.

It is a fundamental article of the Shilluk creed that the spirit of the divine or semi-divine Nyakang is incarnate in the reigning king, who is accordingly himself invested to some extent with the character of a divinity. But while the Shilluk hold their kings in high, indeed religious reverence and take every precaution against their accidental death, nevertheless they cherish “the conviction that the king must not be allowed to become ill or senile, lest with his diminishing vigour the cattle should sicken and fail to bear their increase, the crops should rot in the fields, and man, stricken with disease, should die in ever increasing numbers.”⁵⁵ To prevent these calamities it used to be the regular custom with the Shilluk to put the king to death whenever he shewed signs of ill-health or failing strength. One of the fatal symptoms of decay was taken to be an incapacity to satisfy the sexual passions of his wives, of whom he has very many, distributed in a large number of houses at Fashoda. When this ominous weakness manifested itself, the wives reported it to the chiefs, who are popularly said to have intimated to the king his doom by spreading a white cloth over his face and knees as he lay slumbering in the heat of the sultry afternoon. Execution soon followed the sentence of death. A hut was specially built for the occasion: the king was led into it and lay down with his head resting on the lap of a nubile virgin: the door of the hut was then walled up; and the couple were left without food, water, or fire to die of hunger and suffocation. This was the old custom,

⁵⁵ Dr. C. G. Seligmann, *The Shilluk Divine Kings* (in manuscript).

but it was abolished some five generations ago on account of the excessive sufferings of one of the kings who perished in this way. He survived his companion for some days, and in the interval was so distressed by the stench of her putrefying body that he shouted to the people, whom he could hear moving outside, never again to let a king die in this prolonged and exquisite agony. After a time his cries died away into silence; death had released him from his sufferings; but since then the Shilluk have adopted a quicker and more merciful mode of executing their kings. What the exact form of execution has been in later times Dr. Seligmann found it very difficult to ascertain, though with regard to the fact of the execution he tells us that there is not the least doubt. It is said that the chiefs announce his fate to the king, and that afterwards he is strangled in a hut which has been specially built for the occasion.

Shilluk kings formerly liable to be attacked and killed at any time by rival claimants to the throne.

From Dr. Seligmann's enquiries it appears that not only was the Shilluk king liable to be killed with due ceremony at the first symptoms of incipient decay, but even while he was yet in the prime of health and strength he might be attacked at any time by a rival and have to defend his crown in a combat to the death. According to the common Shilluk tradition any son of a king had the right thus to fight the king in possession and, if he succeeded in killing him, to reign in his stead. As every king had a large harem and many sons, the number of possible candidates for the throne at any time may well have been not inconsiderable, and the

reigning monarch must have carried his life in his hand. But the attack on him could only take place with any prospect of success at night; for during the day the king surrounded himself with his friends and bodyguards, and an aspirant to the throne could hardly hope to cut his way through them and strike home. It was otherwise at night. For then the guards were dismissed and the king was alone in his enclosure with his favourite wives, and there was no man near to defend him except a few herdsmen, whose huts stood a little way off. The hours of darkness were therefore the season of peril for the king. It is said that he used to pass them in constant watchfulness, prowling round his huts fully armed, peering into the blackest shadows, or himself standing silent and alert, like a sentinel on duty, in some dark corner. When at last his rival appeared, the fight would take place in grim silence, broken only by the clash of spears and shields, for it was a point of honour with the king not to call the herdsmen to his assistance.⁵⁶

When the king did not perish in single combat, but was put to death on the approach of sickness or old age, it became necessary to find a successor for him. Apparently the successor was chosen by the most powerful chiefs from among the princes (*niāret*), the sons either of the late king or of one of his predecessors. Details as to the mode of election are lacking. So far as Dr.

⁵⁶ On this subject Dr. Seligmann writes to me (March 9th, 1911) as follows: "The assumption of the throne as the result of victory in single combat doubtless occurred once; at the present day and perhaps for the whole of the historic period it has been superseded by the ceremonial killing of the king, but I regard these stories as folk-lore indicating what once really happened."

Seligmann could ascertain, the kings elect shewed no reluctance to accept the fatal sovereignty; indeed he was told a story of a man who clamoured to be made king for only one day, saying that he was perfectly ready to be killed after that. The age at which the king was killed would seem to have commonly been between forty and fifty.⁵⁷ To the improvident and unimaginative savage the prospect of being put to death at the end of a set time, whether long or short, has probably few terrors; and if it has any, we may suspect that they are altogether outweighed in his mind by the opportunities for immediate enjoyment of all kinds which a kingdom affords to his unbridled appetites and passions.

Ceremonies at the accession of a Shilluk king.

An important part of the solemnities attending the accession of a Shilluk king appears to be intended to convey to the new monarch the divine spirit of Nyakang, which has been transmitted from the founder of the dynasty to all his successors on the throne. For this purpose a sacred four-legged stool and a mysterious object which bears the name of Nyakang himself are brought with much solemnity from the shrine of Nyakang at Akurwa to the small village of Kwom near Fashoda, where the king elect and the chiefs await their arrival. The thing called Nyakang is said to be of cylindrical shape, some two or three feet long by six inches broad. The chief of Akurwa informed Dr.

⁵⁷ These particulars I take from letters of Dr. C. G. Seligmann's to me (dated 8th February and 9th March 1911). They are not mentioned in the writer's paper on the subject.

Seligmann that the object in question is a rude wooden figure of a man, which was fashioned long ago at the command of Nyakang in person. We may suppose that it represents the divine king himself and that it is, or was formerly, supposed to house his spirit, though the chief of Akurwa denied to Dr. Seligmann that it does so now. Be that as it may, the object plays a prominent part at the installation of a new king. When the men of Akurwa arrive at Kwom with the sacred stool and the image of Nyakang, as we may call it, they engage in a sham fight with the men who are waiting for them with the king elect. The weapons used on both sides are simply stalks of millet. Being victorious in the mock combat, the men of Akurwa escort the king to Fashoda, and some of them enter the shrine of Nyakang with the stool. After a short time they bring the stool forth again and set it on the ground outside of the sacred enclosure. Then the image of Nyakang is placed on the stool; the king elect holds one leg of the stool and an important chief holds another. The king is surrounded by a crowd of princes and nobles, and near him stand two of his paternal aunts and two of his sisters. After that a bullock is killed and its flesh eaten by the men of certain families called *ororo*, who are said to be descended from the third of the Shilluk kings. Then the Akurwa men carry the image of Nyakang into the shrine, and the *ororo* men place the king elect on the sacred stool, where he remains seated for some time, apparently till sunset. When he rises, the Akurwa men carry the stool back into the shrine, and the king is escorted to three new huts, where he stays in

seclusion for three days. On the fourth night he is conducted quietly, almost stealthily, to his royal residence at Fashoda, and next day he shews himself publicly to his subjects. The three new huts in which he spent the days of his seclusion are then broken up and their fragments cast into the river. The installation of a new king generally takes place about the middle of the dry season; and it is said that the men of Akurwa tarry at Fashoda with the image of Nyakang till about the beginning of the rains. Before they leave Fashoda they sacrifice a bullock, and at every waddy or bed of a stream that they cross they kill a sheep.

Worship of the dead Shilluk kings.

Like Nyakang himself, their founder, each of the Shilluk kings after death is worshipped at a shrine, which is erected over his grave, and the grave of a king is always in the village where he was born.⁵⁸ The tomb-shrine of a king resembles the shrine of Nyakang, consisting of a few huts enclosed by a fence; one of the huts is built over the king's grave, the others are occupied by the guardians of the shrine. Indeed the shrines of Nyakang and the shrines of the kings are scarcely to be distinguished from each other, and the religious rituals observed at all of them are

⁵⁸ When one of the king's wives is with child, she remains at Fashoda till the fourth or fifth month of her pregnancy; she is then sent away to a village, not necessarily her own, where she remains under the charge of the village chief until she has finished nursing the child. Afterwards she returns to Fashoda, but the child invariably remains in the village of his or her birth and is brought up there. All royal children of either sex, in whatever part of the Shilluk territory they may happen to die, are buried the village where they were born.

identical in form and vary only in matters of detail, the variations being due apparently to the far greater sanctity attributed to the shrines of Nyakang. The grave-shrines of the kings are tended by certain old men or women, who correspond to the guardians of the shrines of Nyakang. They are usually widows or old men-servants of the deceased king, and when they die they are succeeded in their office by their descendants. Moreover, cattle are dedicated to the grave-shrines of the kings and sacrifices are offered at them just as at the shrines of Nyakang. Thus when the millet crop threatens to fail or a murrain to break out among the cattle, either Nyakang himself or one of his successors on the throne will appear to somebody in a dream and demand a sacrifice. The dream is reported to the king, who thereupon at once sends a cow and a bullock to one or more of the shrines of Nyakang, if it was he who appeared in the vision, or to the grave-shrine of the particular king whom the dreamer saw in his dream. The bullock is then sacrificed and the cow added to the sacred herd belonging to the shrine. Further, the harvest ceremony which is performed at the shrines of Nyakang is usually, though not necessarily, performed also at the grave-shrines of the kings; and, lastly, sick folk send animals to be sacrificed as offerings on their behalf at the shrines of the kings just as they send them to the shrines of Nyakang.

Sick people and others supposed to be possessed by the spirits of dead Shilluk kings.

Sick people have, indeed, a special reason for sacrificing to the

spirits of the dead kings in the hope of recovery, inasmuch as one of the commonest causes of sickness, according to the Shilluk, is the entrance of one of these royal spirits into the body of the sufferer, whose first care, therefore, is to rid himself as quickly as possible of his august but unwelcome guest. Apparently, however, it is only the souls of the early kings who manifest themselves in this disagreeable fashion. Dr. Seligmann met with a woman, for example, who had been ill and who attributed her illness to the spirit of Dag, the second of the Shilluk kings, which had taken possession of her body. But a sacrifice of two sheep had induced the spirit to quit her, and she wore anklets of beads, with pieces of the ears of the sheep strung on them, which she thought would effectually guard her against the danger of being again possessed by the soul of the dead king. Nor is it only in sickness that the souls of dead kings are thought to take possession of the bodies of the living. Certain men and women, who bear the name of *ajuago*, are believed to be permanently possessed by the spirit of one or other of the early kings, and in virtue of this inspiration they profess to heal the sick and do a brisk trade in amulets. The first symptom of possession may take the form of illness or of a dream from which the sleeper awakes trembling and agitated. A long and complicated ceremony follows to abate the extreme force of the spiritual manifestations in the new medium, for were these to continue in their first intensity he would not dare to approach his women. But whichever of the dead kings may manifest himself to the living,

whether in dreams or in the form of bodily possession, his spirit is deemed, at least by many of the Shilluk, to be identical with that of Nyakang; they do not clearly distinguish, if indeed they distinguish at all, between the divine spirit of the founder of the dynasty and its later manifestations in all his royal successors.

The principal element in the religion of the Shilluk is the worship of their kings. The kings put to death in order to preserve their divine spirit from natural decay, which would sympathetically affect the crops, the cattle, and mankind.

In general the principal element in the religion of the Shilluk would seem to be the worship which they pay to their sacred or divine kings, whether dead or alive. These are believed to be animated by a single divine spirit, which has been transmitted from the semi-mythical, but probably in substance historical, founder of the dynasty through all his successors to the present day. Yet the divine spirit, as Dr. Seligmann justly observes, is clearly not thought of as congenital in the members of the royal house; it is only conveyed to each king on his accession by means of the mysterious object called Nyakang, in which, as Dr. Seligmann with great probability conjectures, the holy spirit of Nyakang may be supposed to reside. Hence, regarding their kings as incarnate divinities on whom the welfare of men, of cattle, and of the corn implicitly depends, the Shilluk naturally pay them the greatest respect and take every care of them; and however strange it may seem to us, their custom of putting the divine king to death as soon as he shews signs of ill-health or failing strength springs

directly from their profound veneration for him and from their anxiety to preserve him, or rather the divine spirit by which he is animated, in the most perfect state of efficiency: nay, we may go further and say that their practice of regicide is the best proof they can give of the high regard in which they hold their kings. For they believe, as we have seen, that the king's life or spirit is so sympathetically bound up with the prosperity of the whole country, that if he fell ill or grew senile the cattle would sicken and cease to multiply, the crops would rot in the fields, and men would perish of widespread disease. Hence, in their opinion, the only way of averting these calamities is to put the king to death while he is still hale and hearty, in order that the divine spirit which he has inherited from his predecessors may be transmitted in turn by him to his successor while it is still in full vigour and has not yet been impaired by the weakness of disease and old age. In this connexion the particular symptom which is commonly said to seal the king's death-warrant is highly significant; when he can no longer satisfy the passions of his numerous wives, in other words, when he has ceased, whether partially or wholly, to be able to reproduce his kind, it is time for him to die and to make room for a more vigorous successor. Taken along with the other reasons which are alleged for putting the king to death, this one suggests that the fertility of men, of cattle, and of the crops is believed to depend sympathetically on the generative power of the king, so that the complete failure of that power in him would involve a corresponding failure in men, animals, and plants, and

would thereby entail at no distant date the entire extinction of all life, whether human, animal, or vegetable. No wonder, that with such a danger before their eyes the Shilluk should be most careful not to let the king die what we should call a natural death of sickness or old age. It is characteristic of their attitude towards the death of the kings that they refrain from speaking of it as death: they do not say that a king has died but simply that he has “gone away” like his divine ancestors Nyakang and Dag, the two first kings of the dynasty, both of whom are reported not to have died but to have disappeared. The similar legends of the mysterious disappearance of early kings in other lands, for example at Rome and in Uganda,⁵⁹ may well point to a similar custom of putting them to death for the purpose of preserving their life.

Parallel between the Shilluk kings and the King of the Wood at Nemi.

On the whole the theory and practice of the divine kings of the Shilluk correspond very nearly to the theory and practice of the priests of Nemi, the Kings of the Wood, if my view of the latter is correct.⁶⁰ In both we see a series of divine kings on whose life the fertility of men, of cattle, and of vegetation is believed to depend, and who are put to death, whether in single

⁵⁹ As to the disappearance of the early Roman kings see *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, vol. ii. pp. 312 *sqq.*; as to the disappearance of the early kings of Uganda, see the Rev. J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 214.

⁶⁰ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 1 *sqq.*, ii. 376 *sqq.*

combat or otherwise, in order that their divine spirit may be transmitted to their successors in full vigour, uncontaminated by the weakness and decay of sickness or old age, because any such degeneration on the part of the king would, in the opinion of his worshippers, entail a corresponding degeneration on mankind, on cattle, and on the crops. Some points in this explanation of the custom of putting divine kings to death, particularly the method of transmitting their divine souls to their successors, will be dealt with more fully in the sequel. Meantime we pass to other examples of the general practice.

The Dinka of the Upper Nile.

The Dinka are a congeries of independent tribes in the valley of the White Nile, whose territory, lying mostly on the eastern bank of the river and stretching from the sixth to the twelfth degree of North Latitude, has been estimated to comprise between sixty and seventy thousand square miles. They are a tall long-legged people rather slender than fat, with curly hair and a complexion of the deepest black. Though ill-fed, they are strong and healthy and in general reach a great age. The nation embraces a number of independent tribes, and each tribe is mainly composed of the owners of cattle; for the Dinka are essentially a pastoral people, passionately devoted to the care of their numerous herds of oxen, though they also keep sheep and goats, and the women cultivate small quantities of millet (durra) and sesame. The tribes have no political union. Each village forms a separate community, pasturing its herds together

in the same grass-land. With the change of the seasons the people migrate with their flocks and herds to and from the banks of the Nile. In summer, when the plains near the great river are converted into swamps and covered with clouds of mosquitoes, the herdsmen and their families drive their beasts to the higher land of the interior, where the animals find firm ground, abundant fodder, and pools of water at which to slake their thirst in the fervour of the noonday heat. Here in the clearings of the forest the community takes up its abode, each family dwelling by itself in one or more conical huts enclosed by a strong fence of stakes and thorn-bushes. It is in the patches of open ground about these dwellings that the women grow their scanty crops of millet and sesame. The mode of tillage is rude. The stumps of the trees which have been felled are left standing to a height of several feet; the ground is hacked by the help of a tool between a hoe and a spade, and the weeds are uprooted with the hand. Such as it is, the crop is exposed to the ravages of apes and elephants by night and of birds by day. The hungry blacks do not always wait till the corn is ripe, but eat much of it while the ears are still green. The cattle are kept in separate parks (*mura*hs) away from the villages. It is in the season of the summer rains that the Dinka are most happy and prosperous. Then the cattle find sweet grass, plentiful water, coolness and shade in the forest; then the people subsist in comfort on the milk of their flocks and herds, supplementing it with the millet which they reap and the wild fruits which they gather in the forest; then they brew

the native beer, then they marry and dance by night under the bright moon of the serene tropical sky. But in autumn a great change passes over the life of the community. When October has come, the rains are over, the grass of the pastures is eaten down or withered, the pools are dry; thirst compels the whole village, with its lowing herds and bleating flocks, to migrate to the neighbourhood of the river. Now begins a time of privation and suffering. There is no grass for the cattle save in some marshy spots, where the herdsman must fight his rivals in order to win a meagre supply of fodder for his starveling beasts. There is no milk for the people, no fruits on the trees, except a bitter sort of acorns, from which a miserable flour is ground to stay the pangs of hunger. The lean and famished natives are driven to fish in the river for the tubers of water-lilies, to grub in the earth for roots, to boil the leaves of trees, and as a last resource to drink the blood drawn from the necks of their wretched cattle. The gaunt appearance of the people at this season fills the beholder with horror. The herds are decimated by famine, but even more beasts perish by dysentery and other diseases when the first rains cause the fresh grass to sprout.⁶¹

⁶¹ “E. de Pruyssenaere's Reisen und Forschungen im Gebiete des Weissen und Blauen Nil,” *Petermann's Mittheilungen, Ergänzungsheft*, No. 50 (Gotha, 1877), pp. 18-23. Compare G. Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, Third Edition (London, 1878), i. 48 *sqq.* In the text I have followed de Pruyssenaere's description of the privations endured by the Dinka in the dry season. But that description is perhaps only applicable in seasons of unusual drought, for Dr. C. G. Seligmann, writing from personal observation, informs me that he regards the description as much overdrawn; in an average year, he tells me, the cattle do not die of famine and the natives are not

Dengdit, the Supreme Being of the Dinka. Totemism of the Dinka.

It is no wonder that the rain, on which the Dinka are so manifestly dependent for their subsistence, should play a great part in their religion and superstition. They worship a supreme being whose name of Dengdit means literally Great Rain.⁶² It was he who created the world and established the present order of things, and it is he who sends down the rain from the “rain-place,” his home in the upper regions of the air. But according to the Niel Dinka this great being was once incarnate in human form. Born of a woman, who descended from the sky, he became the ancestor of a clan which has the rain for its totem; for the recent researches of Dr. C. G. Seligmann have proved that every Dinka tribe is divided into a number of clans, each of which reveres as its totem a species of animals or plants or other natural objects, such as rain or fire. Animal totems seem to be the commonest; amongst them are the lion, the elephant, the crocodile, the hippopotamus, the fox, the hyaena, and a species of small birds called *amur*, clouds of which infest the cornfields and do great damage to the crops. Each clan speaks of its totemic animal or plant as its ancestor and refrains from injuring and

starving. According to his information the drinking of the blood of their cattle is a luxury in which the Dinka indulge themselves at any time of the year.

⁶² For this and the following information as to the religion, totemism, and rain-makers of the Dinka I am indebted to the kindness of Dr. C. G. Seligmann, who investigated the Shilluk and Dinka in 1909-1910 and has most obligingly placed his manuscript materials at my disposal.

eating it. Men of the Crocodile clan, for example, call themselves "Brothers of the Crocodile," and will neither kill nor eat the animal; indeed they will not even eat out of any vessel which has held crocodile flesh. And as they do not injure crocodiles, so they imagine that their crocodile kinsfolk will not injure them, hence men of this clan swim freely in the river, even by night, without fear of being attacked by the dangerous reptiles. And when the totem is a carnivorous animal, members of the clan may propitiate it by killing sheep and throwing out the flesh to be devoured by their animal brethren either on the outskirts of the village or in the river. Members of the Small Bird (*amur*) clan perform ceremonies to prevent the birds from injuring the crops. The relationship between a clan and its animal ancestor or totem is commonly explained by a legend that in the beginning an ancestress gave birth to twins, one of whom was the totemic animal and the other the human ancestor. Like most totemic clans, the clans of the Dinka are exogamous, that is, no man may marry a woman of his own clan. The descent of the clans is in the paternal line; in other words, every man and woman belongs to his or her father's clan, not to that of his or her mother. But the Rain clan of the Niel Dinka has for its ancestor, as we have seen, the supreme god himself, who deigned to be born of a woman and to live for a long time among men, ruling over them, till at last he grew very old and disappeared appropriately, like Romulus, in a great storm of rain. Shrines erected in his honour appear to be scattered all over the Dinka country and offerings are made

at them.

Rain-makers among the Dinka.

Perhaps without being unduly rash we may conjecture that the great god of the Dinka, who gives them the rain, was indeed, what tradition represents him as having been, a man among men, in fact a human rain-maker, whom at his death the superstition of his fellows promoted to the rank of a deity above the clouds. Be that as it may, the human rain-maker (*bain*) is a very important personage among the Dinka to this day; indeed the men in authority whom travellers dub chiefs or sheikhs are in fact the actual or potential rain-makers of the tribe or community.⁶³ Each of them is believed to be animated by the spirit of a great rain-maker, which has come down to him through a succession of rain-makers; and in virtue of this inspiration a successful rain-maker enjoys very great power and is consulted on all important matters. For example, in the Bor tribe of Dinka at the present time there is an old but active rain-maker named Biyordit, who is reputed to have immanent in him a great and powerful spirit called Lerpiu, and by reason of this reputation he exercises immense influence over all the Dinka of the Bor and Tain tribes. While the mighty spirit Lerpiu is supposed to be embodied in the rain-maker, it is also thought to inhabit a certain hut which serves as a shrine. In front of the hut stands a post to which are fastened the horns of many bullocks that have been sacrificed to Lerpiu;

⁶³ On the importance of the rain-makers among the Dinka and other tribes of the Upper Nile, see *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 345 *sqq.*

and in the hut is kept a very sacred spear which bears the name of Lerpiu and is said to have fallen from heaven six generations ago. As fallen stars are also called Lerpiu, we may suspect that an intimate connexion is supposed to exist between meteorites and the spirit which animates the rain-maker; nor would such a connexion seem unnatural to the savage, who observes that meteorites and rain alike descend from the sky. In spring, about the month of April, when the new moon is a few days old, a sacrifice of bullocks is offered to Lerpiu for the purpose of inducing him to move Dengdit, the great heavenly rain-maker, to send down rain on the parched and thirsty earth. Two bullocks are led twice round the shrine and afterwards tied by the rain-maker to the post in front of it. Then the drums beat and the people, old and young, men and women, dance round the shrine and sing, while the beasts are being sacrificed, "Lerpiu, our ancestor, we have brought you a sacrifice. Be pleased to cause rain to fall." The blood of the bullocks is collected in a gourd, boiled in a pot on the fire, and eaten by the old and important people of the clan. The horns of the animals are attached to the post in front of the shrine.

Dinka rain-makers not allowed to die a natural death.

In spite, or rather in virtue, of the high honour in which he is held, no Dinka rain-maker is allowed to die a natural death of sickness or old age; for the Dinka believe that if such an untoward event were to happen, the tribe would suffer from disease and famine, and the herds would not yield their increase. So when

a rain-maker feels that he is growing old and infirm, he tells his children that he wishes to die. Among the Agar Dinka a large grave is dug and the rain-maker lies down in it on his right side with his head resting on a skin. He is surrounded by his friends and relatives, including his younger children; but his elder children are not allowed to approach the grave lest in their grief and despair they should do themselves a bodily injury. For many hours, generally for more than a day, the rain-maker lies without eating or drinking. From time to time he speaks to the people, recalling the past history of the tribe, reminding them how he has ruled and advised them, and instructing them how they are to act in the future. Then, when he has concluded his admonition, he tells them that it is finished and bids them cover him up. So the earth is thrown down on him as he lies in the grave, and he soon dies of suffocation. Such, with minor variations, appears to be the regular end of the honourable career of a rain-maker in all the Dinka tribes. The Khor-Adar Dinka told Dr. Seligmann that when they have dug the grave for their rain-maker they strangle him in his house. The father and paternal uncle of one of Dr. Seligmann's informants had both been rain-makers and both had been killed in the most regular and orthodox fashion. Even if a rain-maker is quite young he will be put to death should he seem likely to perish of disease. Further, every precaution is taken to prevent a rain-maker from dying an accidental death, for such an end, though not nearly so serious a matter as death from illness or old age, would be sure to entail sickness on the tribe. As soon

as a rain-maker is killed, his valuable spirit is supposed to pass to a suitable successor, whether a son or other near blood relation.

Kings put to death in Unyoro and other parts of Africa.

In the Central African kingdom of Unyoro down to recent years custom required that as soon as the king fell seriously ill or began to break up from age, he should die by his own hand; for, according to an old prophecy, the throne would pass away from the dynasty if ever the king were to die a natural death. He killed himself by draining a poisoned cup. If he faltered or were too ill to ask for the cup, it was his wife's duty to administer the poison.⁶⁴ When the king of Kibanga, on the Upper Congo, seems near his end, the sorcerers put a rope round his neck, which they draw gradually tighter till he dies.⁶⁵ If the king of Gingero happens to be wounded in war, he is put to death by his comrades, or, if they fail to kill him, by his kinsfolk, however hard he may beg for mercy. They say they do it that he may not die by the hands of his enemies.⁶⁶ The Jukos are a heathen tribe of the Benue river, a great tributary of the Niger. In their country

⁶⁴ *Emin Pasha in Central Africa, being a Collection of his Letters and Journals* (London, 1888), p. 91; J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, ii. 529 sq. (from information given by the Rev. John Roscoe).

⁶⁵ Father Guillemé, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, lx. (1888) p. 258; *id.*, "Credenze religiose dei Negri di Kibanga nell' Alto Congo," *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari*, vii. (1888) p. 231.

⁶⁶ *The Travels of the Jesuits in Ethiopia*, collected and historically digested by F. Balthazar Tellez, of the Society of Jesus (London, 1710), p. 197. We may compare the death of Saul (1 Samuel, xxxi. 3-6).

“the town of Gatri is ruled by a king who is elected by the big men of the town as follows. When in the opinion of the big men the king has reigned long enough, they give out that ‘the king is sick’ – a formula understood by all to mean that they are going to kill him, though the intention is never put more plainly. They then decide who is to be the next king. How long he is to reign is settled by the influential men at a meeting; the question is put and answered by each man throwing on the ground a little piece of stick for each year he thinks the new king should rule. The king is then told, and a great feast prepared, at which the king gets drunk on guinea-corn beer. After that he is speared, and the man who was chosen becomes king. Thus each Juko king knows that he cannot have very many more years to live, and that he is certain of his predecessor's fate. This, however, does not seem to frighten candidates. The same custom of king-killing is said to prevail at Quonde and Wukari as well as at Gatri.”⁶⁷ In the three Hausa kingdoms of Gobir, Katsina, and Daura, in Northern Nigeria, as soon as a king shewed signs of failing health or growing infirmity, an official who bore the title of Killer of the Elephant (*kariagiwa*) appeared and throttled him by holding his windpipe. The king elect was afterwards conducted to the centre of the town, called Head of the Elephant (*kan giwa*), where he was made to lie down on a bed. Then a black ox was slaughtered and its blood allowed to pour all over his body. Next the ox was flayed, and the remains

⁶⁷ Lieut. H. Pope-Hennessy, “Notes on the Jukos and other Tribes of the Middle Benue,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxx. (1900) p. (29).

of the dead king, which had been disembowelled and smoked for seven days over a slow fire, were wrapt up in the hide and dragged along the ground to the place of burial, where they were interred in a circular pit. After his bath of ox blood the new king had to remain for seven days in his mother's house, undergoing ablutions daily. On the eighth day he was conducted in state to his palace. In the kingdom of Daura the new monarch had moreover to step over the corpse of his predecessor.⁶⁸

The Matiamvo of Angola.

The Matiamvo is a great king or emperor in the interior of Angola. One of the inferior kings of the country, by name Challa, gave to a Portuguese expedition the following account of the manner in which the Matiamvo comes by his end. "It has been customary," he said, "for our Matiamvos to die either in war or by a violent death, and the present Matiamvo must meet this last fate, as, in consequence of his great exactions, he has lived long enough. When we come to this understanding, and decide that he should be killed, we invite him to make war with our enemies, on which occasion we all accompany him and his family to the war, when we lose some of our people. If he escapes unhurt, we return to the war again and fight for three or four days. We then suddenly abandon him and his family to their fate, leaving him in the enemy's hands. Seeing himself thus deserted, he causes his throne to be erected, and, sitting down, calls his

⁶⁸ J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, ii. 608, on the authority of Mr. H. R. Palmer, Resident in Charge of Katsina.

family around him. He then orders his mother to approach; she kneels at his feet; he first cuts off her head, then decapitates his sons in succession, next his wives and relatives, and, last of all, his most beloved wife, called Anacullo. This slaughter being accomplished, the Matiamvo, dressed in all his pomp, awaits his own death, which immediately follows, by an officer sent by the powerful neighbouring chiefs, Caniquinha and Canica. This officer first cuts off his legs and arms at the joints, and lastly he cuts off his head; after which the head of the officer is struck off. All the potentates retire from the encampment, in order not to witness his death. It is my duty to remain and witness his death, and to mark the place where the head and arms have been deposited by the two great chiefs, the enemies of the Matiamvo. They also take possession of all the property belonging to the deceased monarch and his family, which they convey to their own residence. I then provide for the funeral of the mutilated remains of the late Matiamvo, after which I retire to his capital and proclaim the new government. I then return to where the head, legs, and arms have been deposited, and, for forty slaves, I ransom them, together with the merchandise and other property belonging to the deceased, which I give up to the new Matiamvo, who has been proclaimed. This is what has happened to many Matiamvos, and what must happen to the present one.”⁶⁹

Zulu kings put to death on the approach of old age.

⁶⁹ F. T. Valdez, *Six Years of a Traveller's Life in Western Africa* (London, 1861), ii. 194 sq.

It appears to have been a Zulu custom to put the king to death as soon as he began to have wrinkles or grey hairs. At least this seems implied in the following passage written by one who resided for some time at the court of the notorious Zulu tyrant Chaka, in the early part of the nineteenth century: "The extraordinary violence of the king's rage with me was mainly occasioned by that absurd nostrum, the hair oil, with the notion of which Mr. Farewell had impressed him as being a specific for removing all indications of age. From the first moment of his having heard that such a preparation was attainable, he evinced a solicitude to procure it, and on every occasion never forgot to remind us of his anxiety respecting it; more especially on our departure on the mission his injunctions were particularly directed to this object. It will be seen that it is one of the barbarous customs of the Zoolas in their choice or election of their kings that he must neither have wrinkles nor grey hairs, as they are both distinguishing marks of disqualification for becoming a monarch of a warlike people. It is also equally indispensable that their king should never exhibit those proofs of having become unfit and incompetent to reign; it is therefore important that they should conceal these indications so long as they possibly can. Chaka had become greatly apprehensive of the approach of grey hairs; which would at once be the signal for him to prepare to make his exit from this sublunary world, it being always followed by the death of the monarch."⁷⁰ The writer to

⁷⁰ Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (London, 1836), i. 295

whom we are indebted for this instructive anecdote of the hair-oil omits to specify the mode in which a grey-haired and wrinkled Zulu chief used “to make his exit from this sublunary world”; but on analogy we may conjecture that he did so by the simple and perfectly sufficient process of being knocked on the head.

Kings of Sofala put to death on account of bodily blemishes.

The custom of putting kings to death as soon as they suffered from any personal defect prevailed two centuries ago in the Caffre kingdom of Sofala, to the north of the present Zululand. We have seen that these kings of Sofala, each of whom bore the official name of Quiteve, were regarded as gods by their people, being entreated to give rain or sunshine, according as each might be wanted.⁷¹ Nevertheless a slight bodily blemish, such as the loss of a tooth, was considered a sufficient cause for putting one of these god-men to death, as we learn from the following passage of an old Portuguese historian: “It was formerly the custom of the kings of this land to commit suicide by taking poison when any disaster or natural physical defect fell upon them, such as impotence, infectious disease, the loss of their front teeth, by which they were disfigured, or any other deformity or affliction. To put an end to such defects they killed themselves, saying that the king should be free from any blemish, and if not, it was better for his honour that he should die and seek another life where

sq., compare pp. 232, 290 *sq.*

⁷¹ *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 392.

he would be made whole, for there everything was perfect. But the Quiteve who reigned when I was in those parts would not imitate his predecessors in this, being discreet and dreaded as he was; for having lost a front tooth he caused it to be proclaimed throughout the kingdom that all should be aware that he had lost a tooth and should recognise him when they saw him without it, and if his predecessors killed themselves for such things they were very foolish, and he would not do so; on the contrary, he would be very sorry when the time came for him to die a natural death, for his life was very necessary to preserve his kingdom and defend it from his enemies; and he recommended his successors to follow his example.”⁷² The same historian tells us that “near the kingdom of Quiteve is another of which Sedanda is king, the laws and customs of which are very similar to those of Quiteve, all these Kaffirs being of the same nation, and these two kingdoms having formerly been one, as I shall relate hereafter. When I was in Sofala it happened that King Sedanda was seized with a severe and contagious leprosy, and seeing that his complaint was incurable, having named the prince who was to succeed him, he took poison and died, according to the custom of those kings

⁷² J. dos Santos, “Eastern Ethiopia,” in G. McCall Theal's *Records of Southeastern Africa*, vii. (1901) pp. 194 *sq.* A more highly-flavoured and full-bodied, though less slavishly accurate, translation of this passage is given in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 684, where the English translator has enriched the unadorned simplicity of the Portuguese historian's style with “the scythe of time” and other flowers of rhetoric.

when they are afflicted with any physical deformity.”⁷³

Kings required to be unblemished. Courtiers required to imitate their sovereign.

The king of Sofala who dared to survive the loss of his front tooth was thus a bold reformer like Ergamenes, king of Ethiopia. We may conjecture that the ground for putting the Ethiopian kings to death was, as in the case of the Zulu and Sofala kings, the appearance on their person of any bodily defect or sign of decay; and that the oracle which the priests alleged as the authority for the royal execution was to the effect that great calamities would result from the reign of a king who had any blemish on his body; just as an oracle warned Sparta against a “lame reign,” that is, the reign of a lame king.⁷⁴ It is some confirmation of this conjecture that the kings of Ethiopia were chosen for their size, strength, and beauty long before the custom of killing them was abolished.⁷⁵ To this day the Sultan of Wadai must have no obvious bodily defect, and the king of Angoy cannot be crowned if he has a single blemish, such as a broken or a filed tooth or

⁷³ J. dos Santos, *op. cit.* p. 193.

⁷⁴ Xenophon, *Hellenica*, iii. 3. 3; Plutarch, *Agesilaus*, 3; *id.*, *Lysander*, 22; Pausanias, iii. 8. 9.

⁷⁵ Herodotus, iii. 20; Aristotle, *Politics*, iv. 4. 4.; Athenaeus, xiii. 20, p. 566. According to Nicolaus Damascenus (*Fr.* 142, in *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, iii. p. 463), the handsomest and bravest man was only raised to the throne when the king had no heirs, the heirs being the sons of his sisters. But this limitation is not mentioned by the other authorities.

the scar of an old wound.⁷⁶ According to the Book of Acaill and many other authorities no king who was afflicted with a personal blemish might reign over Ireland at Tara. Hence, when the great King Cormac Mac Art lost one eye by an accident, he at once abdicated.⁷⁷ It is only natural, therefore, to suppose, especially with the other African examples before us, that any bodily defect or symptom of old age appearing on the person of the Ethiopian monarch was the signal for his execution. At a later time it is recorded that if the king of Ethiopia became maimed in any part of his body all his courtiers had to suffer the same mutilation.⁷⁸ But this rule may perhaps have been instituted at the time when the custom of killing the king for any personal defect was abolished; instead of compelling the king to die because, for example, he had lost a tooth, all his subjects would be obliged to lose a tooth, and thus the invidious superiority of the subjects over the king would be cancelled. A rule of this sort is still observed in the same region at the court of the Sultans of Darfur. When the Sultan coughs, every one makes the sound *ts ts* by striking the tongue against the root of the upper teeth; when he sneezes, the whole assembly utters a sound like the cry of the jeko; when he falls off his horse, all his followers must fall off likewise; if any one of them remains in the saddle, no matter how

⁷⁶ G. Nachtigal, *Saharâ und Sûdân*, iii. (Leipsic, 1889) p. 225; A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste* (Jena, 1874-75), i. 220.

⁷⁷ P. W. Joyce, *Social History of Ancient Ireland* (London, 1903), i. 311.

⁷⁸ Strabo, xvii. 2. 3, p. 823; Diodorus Siculus, iii. 7.

high his rank, he is laid on the ground and beaten.⁷⁹ At the court of the king of Uganda in central Africa, when the king laughs, every one laughs; when he sneezes, every one sneezes; when he has a cold, every one pretends to have a cold; when he has his hair cut, so has everybody.⁸⁰ At the court of Boni in Celebes it is a rule that whatever the king does all the courtiers must do. If he stands, they stand; if he sits, they sit; if he falls off his horse, they fall off their horses; if he bathes, they bathe, and passers-by must go into the water in the dress, good or bad, which they happen to have on.⁸¹ When the emperor of China laughs, the mandarins in attendance laugh also; when he stops laughing, they stop; when he is sad, their countenances are chopfallen; “you would say that their faces are on springs, and that the emperor can touch the springs and set them in motion at pleasure.”⁸² But to return to the

⁷⁹ Mohammed Ebn-Omar El-Tounsy, *Voyage au Darfour* (Paris, 1845), pp. 162 *sq.*; *Travels of an Arab Merchant in Soudan*, abridged from the French by Bayle St. John (London, 1854), p. 78; *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), IVme Série, iv. (1852) pp. 539 *sq.*

⁸⁰ R. W. Felkin, “Notes on the Waganda Tribe of Central Africa,” in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, xiii. (1884-1886) p. 711; J. Roscoe, “Further Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Baganda,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 77 (as to sneezing).

⁸¹ *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, from the Journal of James Brooke, Esq., Rajah of Sarawak*, by Captain R. Mundy, i. 134. My friend the late Mr. Lorimer Fison, in a letter of August 26th, 1898, told me that the custom of falling down whenever a chief fell was observed also in Fiji, where it had a special name, *bale muri*, “fall-follow.”

⁸² Mgr. Bruguière, in *Annales de l'Association de la Propagation de la Foi*, v. (1831) pp. 174 *sq.*

death of the divine king.

Kings of Eyeo put to death. Voluntary death by fire of the old Prussian *Kirwaido*.

Many days' journey to the north-east of Abomey, the old capital of Dahomey, lies the kingdom of Eyeo. "The Eyeos are governed by a king, no less absolute than the king of Dahomy, yet subject to a regulation of state, at once humiliating and extraordinary. When the people have conceived an opinion of his ill-government, which is sometimes insidiously infused into them by the artifice of his discontented ministers, they send a deputation to him with a present of parrots' eggs, as a mark of its authenticity, to represent to him that the burden of government must have so far fatigued him that they consider it full time for him to repose from his cares and indulge himself with a little sleep. He thanks his subjects for their attention to his ease, retires to his own apartment as if to sleep, and there gives directions to his women to strangle him. This is immediately executed, and his son quietly ascends the throne upon the usual terms of holding the reins of government no longer than whilst he merits the approbation of the people." About the year 1774, a king of Eyeo, whom his ministers attempted to remove in the customary manner, positively refused to accept the proffered parrots' eggs at their hands, telling them that he had no mind to take a nap, but on the contrary was resolved to watch for the benefit of his subjects. The ministers, surprised and indignant at his recalcitrancy, raised a rebellion, but were defeated with great slaughter, and thus by

his spirited conduct the king freed himself from the tyranny of his councillors and established a new precedent for the guidance of his successors.⁸³ However, the old custom seems to have revived and persisted until late in the nineteenth century, for a Catholic missionary, writing in 1884, speaks of the practice as if it were still in vogue.⁸⁴ Another missionary, writing in 1881, thus describes the usage of the Egbas and the Yorubas of west Africa: "Among the customs of the country one of the most curious is unquestionably that of judging and punishing the king. Should he have earned the hatred of his people by exceeding his rights, one of his councillors, on whom the heavy duty is laid, requires of the prince that he shall 'go to sleep,' which means simply 'take poison and die.' If his courage fails him at the supreme moment, a friend renders him this last service, and quietly, without betraying the secret, they prepare the people for the news of the king's death. In Yoruba the thing is managed a little differently. When a son is born to the king of Oyo, they make a model of the infant's right foot in clay and keep it in the house of the elders (*ogboni*). If the king fails to observe the customs of the country, a messenger, without speaking a word, shews him his child's foot. The king knows what that means. He takes poison and goes to sleep."⁸⁵

⁸³ A. Dalzel, *History of Dahomy* (London, 1793), pp. 12 *sq.*, 156 *sq.*

⁸⁴ Father Baudin, "Le Fétichisme ou la religion des Nègres de la Guinée," *Missions Catholiques*, xvi. (1884) p. 215.

⁸⁵ Missionary Holley, "Étude sur les Egbas," *Missions Catholiques*, xiii. (1881) pp. 351 *sq.* Here Oyo is probably the same as Eyeo mentioned above.

The old Prussians acknowledged as their supreme lord a ruler who governed them in the name of the gods, and was known as God's Mouth (*Kirwaido*). When he felt himself weak and ill, if he wished to leave a good name behind him, he had a great heap made of thorn-bushes and straw, on which he mounted and delivered a long sermon to the people, exhorting them to serve the gods and promising to go to the gods and speak for the people. Then he took some of the perpetual fire which burned in front of the holy oak-tree, and lighting the pile with it burned himself to death.⁸⁶

Voluntary deaths by fire. Peregrinus at Olympia.
Buddhist monks in China.

We need not doubt the truth of this last tradition. Fanaticism or the mere love of notoriety has led men in other ages and other lands to court death in the flames. In antiquity the mountebank Peregrinus, after bidding for fame in the various characters of a Christian martyr, a shameless cynic, and a rebel against Rome, ended his disreputable and vainglorious career by publicly burning himself at the Olympic festival in the presence of a crowd of admirers and scoffers, among whom was the satirist Lucian.⁸⁷ Buddhist monks in China sometimes seek to attain

⁸⁶ Simon Grunau, *Preussische Chronik*, herausgegeben von Dr. M. Perlbach (Leipsic, 1876), i. p. 97.

⁸⁷ Lucian, *De morte Peregrini*. That Lucian's account of the mountebank's death is not a fancy picture is proved by the evidence of Tertullian, *Ad martyres*, 4, "*Peregrinus qui non olim se rogo immisit.*"

Nirvana by the same method, the flame of their religious zeal being fanned by a belief that the merit of their death redounds to the good of the whole community, while the praises which are showered upon them in their lives, and the prospect of the honours and worship which await them after death, serve as additional incentives to suicide. The beautiful mountains of Tien-tai, in the district of Tai-chow, are, or were till lately, the scene of many such voluntary martyrdoms. The victims are monks who, weary of the vanities of earth, have withdrawn even from their monasteries and spent years alone in one or other of the hermitages which are scattered among the ravines and precipices of this wild and secluded region. Their fancy having been wrought and their resolution strung to the necessary pitch by a life of solitude and brooding contemplation, they announce their intention and fix the day of their departure from this world of shadows, always choosing for that purpose a festival which draws a crowd of worshippers and pilgrims to one of the many monasteries of the district. Advertisements of the approaching solemnity are posted throughout the country, and believers are invited to attend and assist the martyrs with their prayers. From three to five monks are said thus to commit themselves to the flames every year at Tien-tai. They prepare by fasting and ablution for the last fiery trial of their faith. An upright chest containing a seat is placed in a brick furnace, and the space between the chest and the walls of the furnace is filled with fuel. The doomed man takes his seat in the chest; the door is

shut on him and barred; fire is applied to the combustibles, and consumes the candidate for heaven. When all is over, the charred remains are raked together, worshipped, and reverently buried in a dagoba or shrine destined for the preservation and worship of the relics of saints. The victims, it is said, are not always voluntary. In remote districts unscrupulous priests have been known to stupefy a clerical brother with drugs and then burn him publicly, an unwilling martyr, as a means of spreading the renown of the monastery and thereby attracting the alms of the faithful. On the twenty-eighth of January 1888 the Spiritual-hill monastery, distant about a day's journey from the city of Wen-chow, witnessed the voluntary death by fire of two monks who bore the euphonious names of Perceptive-intelligence and Effulgent-glamour. Before they entered the furnaces, the spectators prayed them to become after death the spiritual guardians of the neighbourhood, to protect it from all evil influences, and to grant luck in trade, fine seasons, plentiful harvests, and every other blessing. The martyrs complaisantly promised to comply with these requests, and were thereupon worshipped as living Buddhas, while a stream of gifts poured into the coffers of the monastery.⁸⁸ Among the Esquimaux of Bering Strait a shaman has been known to burn himself alive in the expectation of returning to life with much stronger powers

⁸⁸D. S. Macgowan, M.D., "Self-immolation by Fire in China," *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, xix. (1888) pp. 445-451, 508-521.

than he had possessed before.⁸⁹

Religious suicides in Russia. Belief in the approaching end of the world.

But the suicides by fire of Chinese Buddhists and Esquimaux sorcerers have been far surpassed by the frenzies of Christian fanaticism. In the seventeenth century the internal troubles of their unhappy country, viewed in the dim light of prophecy, created a widespread belief among the Russian people that the end of the world was at hand, and that the reign of Antichrist was about to begin. We know from Scripture that the old serpent, which is the devil, has been or will be shut up under lock and key for a thousand years,⁹⁰ and that the number of the Beast is six hundred and sixty-six.⁹¹ A simple mathematical calculation, based on these irrefragable data, pointed to the year one thousand six hundred and sixty-six as the date when the final consummation of all things and the arrival of the Beast in question might be confidently anticipated. When the year came and went and still, to the general surprise, the animal failed to put in an appearance, the calculations were revised, it was discovered that an error had crept into them, and the world was respited for another thirty-three years. But though opinions differed as to the precise date of the catastrophe, the pious were unanimous in their

⁸⁹ E. W. Nelson, "The Eskimo about Bering Strait," *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, Part I. (Washington, 1899), pp. 320, 433 *sq.*

⁹⁰ Revelation xx. 1-3.

⁹¹ Revelation xiii. 18.

conviction of its proximity. Accordingly some of them ceased to till their fields, abandoned their houses, and on certain nights of the year expected the sound of the last trump in coffins which they took the precaution of closing, lest their senses, or what remained of them, should be overpowered by the awful vision of the Judgment Day.

Epidemic of suicide. Suicide by starvation. Suicide by fire.

It would have been well if the delusion of their disordered intellects had stopped there. Unhappily in many cases it went much further, and suicide, universal suicide, was preached by fervent missionaries as the only means to escape the snares of Antichrist and to pass from the sins and sorrows of this fleeting world to the eternal joys of heaven. Whole communities hailed with enthusiasm the gospel of death, and hastened to put its precepts in practice. An epidemic of suicide raged throughout northern and north-eastern Russia. At first the favourite mode of death was by starvation. In the forest of Vetloug, for example, an old man founded an establishment for the use of religious suicides. It was a building without doors and windows. The aspirants to heaven were lowered into it through a hole in the roof, the hatch was battened down on them, and men armed with clubs patrolled the outer walls to prevent the prisoners from escaping. Hundreds of persons thus died a lingering death. At first the sounds of devotion issued from the walls; but as time went on these were replaced by entreaties for food, prayers

for mercy, and finally imprecations on the miscreant who had lured these misguided beings to destruction and on the parents who had brought them into the world to suffer such exquisite torments. Thus death by famine was attended by some obvious disadvantages. It was slow: it opened the door to repentance. it occasionally admitted of rescue. Accordingly death by fire was preferred as surer and more expeditious. Priests, monks, and laymen scoured the villages and hamlets preaching salvation by the flames, some of them decked in the spoils of their victims; for the motives of the preachers were often of the basest sort. They did not spare even the children, but seduced them by promises of the gay clothes, the apples, the nuts, the honey they would enjoy in heaven. Sometimes when the people hesitated, these infamous wretches decided the wavering minds of their dupes by a false report that the troops were coming to deliver them up to Antichrist, and so to rob them of a blissful eternity. Then men, women, and children rushed into the flames. Sometimes hundreds, and even thousands, thus perished together. An area was enclosed by barricades, fuel was heaped up in it, the victims huddled together, fire set to the whole, and the sacrifice consummated. Any who in their agony sought to escape were driven or thrown back into the flames, sometimes by their own relations. These sinister fires generally blazed at night, reddening the sky till daybreak. In the morning nothing remained but charred bodies gnawed by prowling dogs; but the stench of

burnt human flesh poisoned the air for days afterwards.⁹²

A Jewish Messiah.

As the Christians expected the arrival of Antichrist in the year 1666, so the Jews cheerfully anticipated the long-delayed advent of their Messiah in the same fateful year. A Jew of Smyrna, by name Sabatei-Sevi, availed himself of this general expectation to pose as the Messiah in person. He was greeted with enthusiasm. Jews from many parts of Europe hastened to pay their homage and, what was still better, their money to the future deliverer of his country, who in return parcelled out among them, with the greatest liberality, estates in the Holy Land which did not belong to him. But the alternative of death by impalement or conversion to Mohammedanism, which the Sultan submitted to his consideration, induced him to revise his theological opinions, and on looking into the matter more closely he discovered that his true mission in life was to preach the total abolition of the Jewish religion and the substitution for it of Islam.⁹³

⁹² Ivan Stchoukine, *Le Suicide collectif dans le Raskol russe* (Paris, 1903), pp. 45-53, 61-78, 84-87, 96-99, 102-112. The mania in its most extreme form died away towards the end of the seventeenth century, but during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cases of collective suicide from religious motives occurred from time to time, people burning themselves in families or in batches of thirty or forty. The last of these suicides by fire took place in 1860, when fifteen persons thus perished in the Government of Olonetz. Twenty-four others buried themselves alive near Tiraspol in the winter of 1896-97. See I. Stchoukine, *op. cit.* pp. 114-126.

⁹³ Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, iii. 142-145 (*Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, xiii. Paris, 1878).

§ 3. Kings killed at the End of a Fixed Term

Kings put to death after a fixed term. Suicide of the kings of Quilacare at the end of a reign of twelve years.

In the cases hitherto described, the divine king or priest is suffered by his people to retain office until some outward defect, some visible symptom of failing health or advancing age, warns them that he is no longer equal to the discharge of his divine duties; but not until such symptoms have made their appearance is he put to death. Some peoples, however, appear to have thought it unsafe to wait for even the slightest symptom of decay and have preferred to kill the king while he was still in the full vigour of life. Accordingly, they have fixed a term beyond which he might not reign, and at the close of which he must die, the term fixed upon being short enough to exclude the probability of his degenerating physically in the interval. In some parts of southern India the period fixed was twelve years. Thus, according to an old traveller, in the province of Quilacare, about twenty leagues to the north-east of Cape Comorin, "there is a Gentile house of prayer, in which there is an idol which they hold in great account, and every twelve years they celebrate a great feast to it, whither all the Gentiles go as to a jubilee. This temple possesses many lands and much revenue: it is a very great affair. This province

has a king over it, who has not more than twelve years to reign from jubilee to jubilee. His manner of living is in this wise, that is to say: when the twelve years are completed, on the day of this feast there assemble together innumerable people, and much money is spent in giving food to Bramans. The king has a wooden scaffolding made, spread over with silken hangings: and on that day he goes to bathe at a tank with great ceremonies and sound of music, after that he comes to the idol and prays to it, and mounts on to the scaffolding, and there before all the people he takes some very sharp knives, and begins to cut off his nose, and then his ears, and his lips, and all his members, and as much flesh off himself as he can; and he throws it away very hurriedly until so much of his blood is spilled that he begins to faint, and then he cuts his throat himself. And he performs this sacrifice to the idol, and whoever desires to reign other twelve years and undertake this martyrdom for love of the idol, has to be present looking on at this: and from that place they raise him up as king.”⁹⁴

Custom of the kings of Calicut.

The king of Calicut, on the Malabar coast, bears the title of Samorin or Samory, which in the native language is said to mean “God on earth.”⁹⁵ He “pretends to be of a higher rank than

⁹⁴ Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1866), pp. 172 sq.

⁹⁵ L. di Varthema, *Travels*, translated by J. W. Jones and edited by G. P. Badger (Hakluyt Society, London, 1863), p. 134. In a note the Editor says that the name Zamorin (Samorin) according to some “is a corruption of *Tamuri*, the name of the

the Brahmans, and to be inferior only to the invisible gods; a pretention that was acknowledged by his subjects, but which is held as absurd and abominable by the Brahmans, by whom he is only treated as a Sudra.”⁹⁶ Formerly the Samorin had to cut his throat in public at the end of a twelve years' reign. But towards the end of the seventeenth century the rule had been modified as follows: “Many strange customs were observed in this country in former times, and some very odd ones are still continued. It was an ancient custom for the Samorin to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat, on a publick scaffold erected for the purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who are very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, and went on the scaffold, and very decently cut his own throat in the view of the assembly, and his body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony, I know not, but it is now laid aside. And a new custom is followed by the modern Samorins, that jubilee is proclaimed throughout his dominions, at the end of twelve years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain, and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days, with mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end of the feast

most exalted family of the Nair caste.”

⁹⁶ Francis Buchanan, “Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar,” in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, viii. 735.

any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action, in fighting their way through 30 or 40,000 of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds him in his empire. In anno 1695, one of those jubilees happened, and the tent pitched near Pennany, a seaport of his, about fifteen leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell in, with sword and target, among the guard, and, after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperados had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age, that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and, when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent, and made a stroke at his Majesty's head, and had certainly despatched him if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head had not marred the blow; but, before he could make another, he was killed by the guards; and, I believe, the same Samorin reigns yet. I chanced to come that time along the coast and heard the guns for two or three days and nights successively.”⁹⁷

Fuller account of the Calicut custom.

The English traveller, whose account I have quoted, did not himself witness the festival he describes, though he heard the sound of the firing in the distance. Fortunately, exact records of these festivals and of the number of men who perished at them have been preserved in the archives of the royal family at Calicut.

⁹⁷ Alex. Hamilton, “A New Account of the East Indies,” in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, viii. 374.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century they were examined by Mr. W. Logan, with the personal assistance of the reigning king, and from his work it is possible to gain an accurate conception both of the tragedy and of the scene where it was periodically enacted down to 1743, when the ceremony took place for the last time.

The *Maha Makhamor* Great Sacrifice at Calicut.

The festival at which the king of Calicut staked his crown and his life on the issue of battle was known as the *Maha Makham* or Great Sacrifice. It fell every twelfth year, when the planet Jupiter was in retrograde motion in the sign of the Crab, and it lasted twenty-eight days, culminating at the time of the eighth lunar asterism in the month of Makaram. As the date of the festival was determined by the position of Jupiter in the sky, and the interval between two festivals was twelve years, which is roughly Jupiter's period of revolution round the sun,⁹⁸ we may conjecture that the splendid planet was supposed to be in a special sense the king's star and to rule his destiny, the period of its revolution in heaven corresponding to the period of his reign on earth. However that may be, the ceremony was observed with great pomp at the Tirunavayi temple, on the north bank of the Ponnani River. The

⁹⁸ The sidereal revolution of Jupiter is completed in 11 years 314.92 days (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, s. v. "Astronomy," ii. 808). The twelve-years revolution of Jupiter was known to the Greek astronomers, from whom the knowledge may perhaps have penetrated into India. See Geminus, *Eisagoge*, I, p. 10, ed. Halma.

spot is close to the present railway line. As the train rushes by, you can just catch a glimpse of the temple, almost hidden behind a clump of trees on the river bank. From the western gateway of the temple a perfectly straight road, hardly raised above the level of the surrounding rice-fields and shaded by a fine avenue, runs for half a mile to a high ridge with a precipitous bank, on which the outlines of three or four terraces can still be traced. On the topmost of these terraces the king took his stand on the eventful day. The view which it commands is a fine one. Across the flat expanse of the rice-fields, with the broad placid river winding through them, the eye ranges eastward to high tablelands, their lower slopes embowered in woods, while afar off looms the great chain of the western Ghauts, and in the furthest distance the Neilgherries or Blue Mountains, hardly distinguishable from the azure of the sky above.

The attack on the king.

But it was not to the distant prospect that the king's eyes naturally turned at this crisis of his fate. His attention was arrested by a spectacle nearer at hand. For all the plain below was alive with troops, their banners waving gaily in the sun, the white tents of their many camps standing sharply out against the green and gold of the rice-fields. Forty thousand fighting men or more were gathered there to defend the king. But if the plain swarmed with soldiers, the road that cuts across it from the temple to the king's stand was clear of them. Not a soul was stirring on it. Each side of the way was barred by palisades, and from the

palisades on either hand a long hedge of spears, held by strong arms, projected into the empty road, their blades meeting in the middle and forming a glittering arch of steel. All was now ready. The king waved his sword. At the same moment a great chain of massy gold, enriched with bosses, was placed on an elephant at his side. That was the signal. On the instant a stir might be seen half a mile away at the gate of the temple. A group of swordsmen, decked with flowers and smeared with ashes, has stepped out from the crowd. They have just partaken of their last meal on earth, and they now receive the last blessings and farewells of their friends. A moment more and they are coming down the lane of spears, hewing and stabbing right and left at the spearmen, winding and turning and writhing among the blades as if they had no bones in their bodies. It is all in vain. One after the other they fall, some nearer the king, some further off, content to die, not for the shadow of a crown, but for the mere sake of approving their dauntless valour and swordsmanship to the world. On the last days of the festival the same magnificent display of gallantry, the same useless sacrifice of life was repeated again and again. Yet perhaps no sacrifice is wholly useless which proves that there are men who prefer honour to life.⁹⁹

Custom of kings in Bengal. Custom of the kings of
Passier. Custom of Slavonic kings.

“It is a singular custom in Bengal,” says an old native historian

⁹⁹ W. Logan, *Malabar* (Madras, 1887), i. 162-169. The writer describes in particular the festival of 1683, when fifty-five men perished in the manner described.

of India, "that there is little of hereditary descent in succession to the sovereignty. There is a throne allotted for the king; there is, in like manner, a seat or station assigned for each of the *amirs*, *wazirs*, and *mansabdars*. It is that throne and these stations alone which engage the reverence of the people of Bengal. A set of dependents, servants, and attendants are annexed to each of these situations. When the king wishes to dismiss or appoint any person, whosoever is placed in the seat of the one dismissed is immediately attended and obeyed by the whole establishment of dependents, servants, and retainers annexed to the seat which he occupies. Nay, this rule obtains even as to the royal throne itself. Whoever kills the king, and succeeds in placing himself on that throne, is immediately acknowledged as king; all the *amirs*, *wazirs*, soldiers, and peasants instantly obey and submit to him, and consider him as being as much their sovereign as they did their former prince, and obey his orders implicitly. The people of Bengal say, 'We are faithful to the throne; whoever fills the throne we are obedient and true to it.' "¹⁰⁰ A custom of the same sort formerly prevailed in the little kingdom of Passier, on the northern coast of Sumatra. The old Portuguese historian De Barros, who informs us of it, remarks with surprise that no wise man would wish to be king of Passier, since the monarch was not allowed by his subjects to live long. From time to time

¹⁰⁰ Sir H. M. Elliot, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, iv. 260. I have to thank Mr. R. S. Whiteway, of Brownscombe, Shottermill, Surrey, for kindly calling my attention to this and the following instance of the custom of regicide.

a sort of fury seized the people, and they marched through the streets of the city chanting with loud voices the fatal words, “The king must die!” When the king heard that song of death he knew that his hour had come. The man who struck the fatal blow was of the royal lineage, and as soon as he had done the deed of blood and seated himself on the throne he was regarded as the legitimate king, provided that he contrived to maintain his seat peaceably for a single day. This, however, the regicide did not always succeed in doing. When Fernão Peres d’Andrade, on a voyage to China, put in at Passier for a cargo of spices, two kings were massacred, and that in the most peaceable and orderly manner, without the smallest sign of tumult or sedition in the city, where everything went on in its usual course, as if the murder or execution of a king were a matter of everyday occurrence. Indeed, on one occasion three kings were raised to the dangerous elevation and followed each other on the dusty road of death in a single day. The people defended the custom, which they esteemed very laudable and even of divine institution, by saying that God would never allow so high and mighty a being as a king, who reigned as his vicegerent on earth, to perish by violence unless for his sins he thoroughly deserved it.¹⁰¹ Far away from the tropical island of Sumatra a rule of the same sort appears to have obtained among the old Slavs. When the

¹⁰¹ De Barros, *Da Asia, dos feitos, que os Portuguezes fizeram no descubrimento e conquista dos mares e terras do Oriente*, Decada Terceira, Liv. V. cap. i. pp. 512 sq. (Lisbon, 1777).

captives Gunn and Jarmerik contrived to slay the king and queen of the Slavs and made their escape, they were pursued by the barbarians, who shouted after them that if they would only come back they would reign instead of the murdered monarch, since by a public statute of the ancients the succession to the throne fell to the king's assassin. But the flying regicides turned a deaf ear to promises which they regarded as mere baits to lure them back to destruction; they continued their flight, and the shouts and clamour of the barbarians gradually died away in the distance.¹⁰²

Custom of *Thalavettiparothiam* in Malabar. Custom of the Sultans of Java.

When kings were bound to suffer death, whether at their own hands or at the hands of others, on the expiration of a fixed term of years, it was natural that they should seek to delegate the painful duty, along with some of the privileges of sovereignty, to a substitute who should suffer vicariously in their stead. This expedient appears to have been resorted to by some of the princes of Malabar. Thus we are informed by a native authority on that country that “in some places all powers both executive and judicial were delegated for a fixed period to natives by the sovereign. This institution was styled *Thalavettiparothiam* or authority obtained by decapitation. *Parothiam* is the name of a supreme authority of those days. The name of the office is still preserved in the Cochin state, where the village headman is

¹⁰² Saxo Grammaticus, *Historia Danica*, viii. pp. 410 *sq.*, ed. P. E. Müller (p. 334 of Mr. Oliver Elton's English translation).

called a *Parathiakaran*. This *Thalavettiparothiam* was a terrible but interesting institution. It was an office tenable for five years during which its bearer was invested with supreme despotic powers within his jurisdiction. On the expiry of the five years the man's head was cut off and thrown up in the air amongst a large concourse of villagers, each of whom vied with the other in trying to catch it in its course down. He who succeeded was nominated to the post for the next five years.”¹⁰³ A similar delegation of the duty of dying for his country was perhaps practised by the Sultans of Java. At least such a custom would explain a strange scene which was witnessed at the court of one of these sultans by the famous traveller Ibn Batuta, a native of Tangier, who visited the East Indies in the first half of the fourteenth century. He says: “During my audience with the Sultan I saw a man who held in his hand a knife like that used by a grape-gleaner. He placed it on his own neck and spoke for a long time in a language which I did not understand. After that he seized the knife with both hands at once and cut his throat. His head fell to the ground, so sharp was the blade and so great the force with which he used it. I remained dumbfounded at his behaviour, but the Sultan said to me, ‘Does any one do like that in your country?’ I answered, ‘Never did I see such a thing.’ He smiled and replied, ‘These people are our slaves, and

¹⁰³ T. K. Gopal Panikkar (of the Madras Registration Department), *Malabar and its Folk* (Madras, N. D., preface dated Chowghaut, 8th October 1900), pp. 120 *sq.* I have to thank my friend Mr. W. Crooke for calling my attention to this account.

they kill themselves for love of us.' Then he commanded that they should take away him who had slain himself and should burn him. The Sultan's officers, the grandees, the troops, and the common people attended the cremation. The sovereign assigned a liberal pension to the children of the deceased, to his wife, and to his brothers; and they were highly honoured because of his conduct. A person, who was present at the audience when the event I have described took place, informed me that the speech made by the man who sacrificed himself set forth his devotion to the monarch. He said that he wished to immolate himself out of affection for the sovereign, as his father had done for love of the prince's father, and as his grandfather had done out of regard for the prince's grandfather."¹⁰⁴ We may conjecture that formerly the sultans of Java, like the kings of Quilacare and Calicut, were bound to cut their own throats at the end of a fixed term of years, but that at a later time they deputed the painful, though glorious, duty of dying for their country to the members of a certain family, who received by way of recompense ample provision during their life and a handsome funeral at death.

Religious suicides in India.

A similar mode of religious suicide seems to have been often adopted in India, especially in Malabar, during the Middle Ages. Thus we are told by Friar Jordanus that in the Greater India, by which he seems to mean Malabar and the neighbouring regions,

¹⁰⁴ *Voyage d'Ibn Batoutah*, texte arabe, accompagné d'une traduction par C. Deffrémery et B. R. Sanguinetti (Paris, 1853-58), iv. 246 sq.

many sacrifice themselves to the idols. When they are sick or involved in misfortune, they vow themselves to the idol in case they are delivered. Then, when they have recovered, they fatten themselves for one or two years; and when another festival comes round, they cover themselves with flowers, crown themselves with white garlands, and go singing and playing before the idol, when it is carried through the land. There, after they have shown off a great deal, they take a sword with two handles, like those used in currying leather, put it to the back of their neck, and cutting strongly with both hands sever their heads from their bodies before the idol.¹⁰⁵ Again, Nicolo Conti, who travelled in the East in the early part of the fifteenth century, informs us that in the city of Cambaita “many present themselves who have determined upon self immolation, having on their neck a broad circular piece of iron, the fore part of which is round and the hinder part extremely sharp. A chain attached to the fore part hangs suspended upon the breast, into which the victims, sitting down with their legs drawn up and their neck bent, insert their feet. Then, on the speaker pronouncing certain words, they suddenly stretch out their legs, and at the same time drawing up their neck, cut off their own head, yielding up their lives as a sacrifice to their idols. These men are regarded as saints.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *The Wonders of the East*, by Friar Jordanus, translated by Col. Henry Yule (London, 1863, Hakluyt Society), pp. 32 sq.

¹⁰⁶ *India in the Fifteenth Century, being a Collection of Voyages to India in the century preceding the Portuguese discovery of the Cape of Good Hope*, edited by R. H. Major (Hakluyt Society, London, 1857), “The Travels of Nicolo Conti in the East,” pp. 27

Among the Jaintias or Syntengs, a Khasi tribe of Assam, human sacrifices used to be annually offered on the *Sandhi* day in the month of Ashwin. Persons often came forward voluntarily and presented themselves as victims. This they generally did by appearing before the Rajah on the last day of Shravan and declaring that the goddess had called them to herself. After due enquiry, if the would-be victim were found suitable, it was customary for the Rajah to present him with a golden anklet and to give him permission to live as he chose and to do what he liked, the royal treasury undertaking to pay compensation for any damage he might do in the exercise of his remarkable privileges. But the enjoyment of these privileges was very short. On the day appointed the voluntary victim, after bathing and purifying himself, was dressed in new attire, daubed with red sandal-wood and vermilion, and bedecked with garlands. Thus arrayed, he sat for a time in meditation and prayer on a dais in front of the goddess; then he made a sign with his finger, and the executioner, after uttering the usual formulas, cut off his head, which was thereafter laid before the goddess on a golden plate. The lungs were cooked and eaten by such *Kandra Yogis* as were present, and it is said that the royal family partook of a small quantity of rice cooked in the blood of the victim. The ceremony was usually

sq. An instrument of the sort described in the text (a crescent-shaped knife with chains and stirrups attached to it for the convenience of the suicide) used to be preserved at Kshira, a village of Bengal near Nadiya: it was called a *karavat*. See *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, newly translated and edited by Colonel Henry Yule, Second Edition (London, 1875), ii. 334.

witnessed by crowds of spectators who assembled from all parts of the neighbouring hills. When the supply of voluntary victims fell short, emissaries were sent out to kidnap strangers from other territories, and it was the practice of such man-hunts that led to the annexation of the Jaintia country by the British.¹⁰⁷

Pretence of putting the king's proxy to death. Man killed at the installation of a king of Cassange.

When once kings, who had hitherto been bound to die a violent death at the end of a term of years, conceived the happy thought of dying by deputy in the persons of others, they would very naturally put it in practice; and accordingly we need not wonder at finding so popular an expedient, or traces of it, in many lands. Thus, for example, the Bhuiyas are an aboriginal race of north-eastern India, and one of their chief seats is Keonjhur. At the installation of a Rajah of Keonjhur a ceremony is observed which has been described as follows by an English officer who witnessed it: "Then the sword, a very rusty old weapon, is placed in the Raja's hands, and one of the Bhuiyas, named Anand Kopat, comes before him, and kneeling sideways, the Raja touches him on the neck as if about to strike off his head, and it is said that in former days there was no fiction in this part of the ceremony. The family of the Kopat hold their lands on the condition that the victim when required shall be produced. Anand, however, hurriedly arose after the accolade and disappeared. He must not

¹⁰⁷ Major P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1907), pp. 102 *sq.*, quoting Mr. Gait in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1898.

be seen for three days; then he presents himself again to the Raja as miraculously restored to life.”¹⁰⁸ Here the custom of putting the king's proxy to death has dwindled, probably under English influence, to a mere pretence; but elsewhere it survives, or survived till recent times, in full force. Cassange, a native state in the interior of Angola, is ruled by a king, who bears the title of Jaga. When a king is about to be installed in office, some of the chiefs are despatched to find a human victim, who may not be related by blood or marriage to the new monarch. When he comes to the king's camp, the victim is provided with everything he requires, and all his orders are obeyed as promptly as those of the sovereign. On the day of the ceremony the king takes his seat on a perforated iron stool, his chiefs, councillors, and the rest of the people forming a great circle round about him. Behind the king sits his principal wife, together with all his concubines. An iron gong, with two small bells attached to it, is then struck by an official, who continues to ring the bells during the ceremony. The victim is then introduced and placed in front of the king, but with his back towards him. Armed with a scimitar the king then cuts open the man's back, extracts his heart, and having taken a bite out of it, spits it out and gives it to be burned. The councillors meantime hold the victim's body so that the blood from the wound spouts against the king's breast and belly, and, pouring through the hole in the iron stool, is collected by the chiefs in their hands, who rub their breasts and beards with it,

¹⁰⁸ E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 146.

while they shout, "Great is the king and the rites of the state!" After that the corpse is skinned, cut up, and cooked with the flesh of an ox, a dog, a hen, and some other animals. The meal thus prepared is served first to the king, then to the chiefs and councillors, and lastly to all the people assembled. Any man who refused to partake of it would be sold into slavery together with his family.¹⁰⁹ The distinction with which the human victim is here treated before his execution suggests that he is a substitute for the king.

Sacrifice of the king's sons in Sweden: evidence of a nine years' tenure of the throne.

Scandinavian traditions contain some hints that of old the Swedish kings reigned only for periods of nine years, after which they were put to death or had to find a substitute to die in their stead. Thus Aun or On, king of Sweden, is said to have sacrificed to Odin for length of days and to have been answered by the god that he should live so long as he sacrificed one of his sons every ninth year. He sacrificed nine of them in this manner, and would have sacrificed the tenth and last, but the Swedes would not allow him. So he died and was buried in a mound at Upsala.¹¹⁰ Another indication of a similar tenure of the crown

¹⁰⁹ F. T. Valdez, *Six Years of a Traveller's Life in Western Africa* (London, 1861), ii. 158-160. I have translated the title *Maquita* by "chief"; the writer does not explain it.

¹¹⁰ *Ynglinga Saga*, 29 (*The Heimskringla*, translated by S. Laing, i. 239 sq.). Compare H. M. Chadwick, *The Cult of Othin* (London, 1899), p. 4. According to Messrs. Laing and Chadwick the sacrifice took place every *tenth* year. But I follow Prof. K. Weinhold

occurs in a curious legend of the disposition and banishment of Odin. Offended at his misdeeds, the other gods outlawed and exiled him, but set up in his place a substitute, Oller by name, a cunning wizard, to whom they accorded the symbols both of royalty and of godhead. The deputy bore the name of Odin, and reigned for nearly ten years, when he was driven from the throne, while the real Odin came to his own again. His discomfited rival retired to Sweden and was afterwards slain in an attempt to repair his shattered fortunes.¹¹¹ As gods are often merely men who loom large through the mists of tradition, we may conjecture that this Norse legend preserves a confused reminiscence of ancient Swedish kings who reigned for nine or ten years together, then abdicated, delegating to others the privilege of dying for their country. The great festival which was held at Upsala every nine years may have been the occasion on which the king or his deputy was put to death. We know that human sacrifices formed part of the rites.¹¹²

who translates "*hit tiunda hvert ár*" by "*alle neun Jahre*" ("Die mystische Neunzahl bei den Deutschen," *Abhandlungen der könig. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1897, p. 6). So in Latin *decimo quoque anno* should be translated "every ninth year."

¹¹¹ Saxo Grammaticus, *Historia Danica*, iii. pp. 129-131, ed. P. E. Müller (pp. 98 sq. of Oliver Elton's English translation).

¹¹² Adam of Bremen, *Descriptio insularum Aquilonis*, 27 (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, cxlvi. col. 644). See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, vol. ii. pp. 364 sq.

§ 4. Octennial Tenure of the Kingship

Limited tenure of the kingship in ancient Greece. The Spartan kings appear formerly to have held office for periods of eight years only. The dread of meteors shared by savages.

There are some grounds for believing that the reign of many ancient Greek kings was limited to eight years, or at least that at the end of every period of eight years a new consecration, a fresh outpouring of the divine grace, was regarded as necessary in order to enable them to discharge their civil and religious duties. Thus it was a rule of the Spartan constitution that every eighth year the ephors should choose a clear and moonless night and sitting down observe the sky in silence. If during their vigil they saw a meteor or shooting star, they inferred that the king had sinned against the deity, and they suspended him from his functions until the Delphic or Olympic oracle should reinstate him in them. This custom, which has all the air of great antiquity, was not suffered to remain a dead letter even in the last period of the Spartan monarchy; for in the third century before our era a king, who had rendered himself obnoxious to the reforming party, was actually deposed on various trumped-up charges, among which the allegation that the ominous sign

had been seen in the sky took a prominent place.¹¹³ When we compare this custom with the evidence to be presently adduced of an eight years' tenure of the kingship in Greece, we shall probably agree with K. O. Müller¹¹⁴ that the quaint Spartan practice was much more than a mere antiquarian curiosity; it was the attenuated survival of an institution which may once have had great significance, and it throws an important light on the restrictions and limitations anciently imposed by religion on the Dorian kingship. What exactly was the import of a meteor in the opinion of the old Dorians we can hardly hope to determine; one thing only is clear, they regarded it as a portent of so

¹¹³ Plutarch, *Agis*, II. Plutarch says that the custom was observed "at intervals of nine years" (δι' ἐτῶν ἐννέα), but the expression is equivalent to our "at intervals of eight years." In reckoning intervals of time numerically the Greeks included both the terms which are separated by the interval, whereas we include only one of them. For example, our phrase "every second day" would be rendered in Greek διὰ τρίτης ἡμέρας, literally "every third day." Again, a cycle of two years is in Greek *trieteris*, literally "a period of three years"; a cycle of eight years is *ennaeteris*, literally "a period of nine years"; and so forth. See Censorinus, *De die natali*, 18. The Latin use of the ordinal numbers is similar, *e. g.* our "every second year" would be *tertio quoque anno* in Latin. However, the Greeks and Romans were not always consistent in this matter, for they occasionally reckoned in our fashion. The resulting ambiguity is not only puzzling to moderns; it sometimes confused the ancients themselves. For example, it led to a derangement of the newly instituted Julian calendar, which escaped detection for more than thirty years. See Macrobius, *Saturn.* i. 14. 13 *sq.*; Solinus, i. 45-47. On the ancient modes of counting in such cases see A. Schmidt, *Handbuch der griechischen Chronologie* (Jena, 1888), pp. 95 *sqq.* According to Schmidt, the practice of adding both terms to the sum of the intervening units was not extended by the Greeks to numbers above nine.

¹¹⁴ *Die Dorier*,² ii. 96.

ominous and threatening a kind that its appearance under certain circumstances justified and even required the deposition of their king. This exaggerated dread of so simple a natural phenomenon is shared by many savages at the present day; and we shall hardly err in supposing that the Spartans inherited it from their barbarous ancestors, who may have watched with consternation, on many a starry night among the woods of Germany, the flashing of a meteor through the sky. It may be well, even at the cost of a digression, to illustrate this primitive superstition by examples.

Superstitions of the Australian aborigines as to shooting stars.

Thus, shooting stars and meteors are viewed with apprehension by the natives of the Andaman Islands, who suppose them to be lighted faggots hurled into the air by the malignant spirit of the woods in order to ascertain the whereabouts of any unhappy wight in his vicinity. Hence if they happen to be away from their camp when the meteor is seen, they hide themselves and remain silent for a little before they venture to resume the work they were at; for example, if they are out fishing they will crouch at the bottom of the boat.¹¹⁵ The natives of the Tully River in Queensland believe falling stars to be the fire-sticks carried about by the spirits of dead enemies. When they see one shooting through the air they take it as a

¹¹⁵ E. Man, *Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands*, pp. 84 sq.

sign that an enemy is near, and accordingly they shout and make as much noise as they can; next morning they all go out in the direction in which the star fell and look for the tracks of their foe.¹¹⁶ The Turrbal tribe of Queensland thought that a falling star was a medicine-man flying through the air and dropping his fire-stick to kill somebody; if there was a sick man in the camp, they regarded him as doomed.¹¹⁷ The Ngarigo of New South Wales believed the fall of a meteor to betoken the place where their foes were mustering for war.¹¹⁸ The Kaitish tribe of central Australia imagine that the fall of a star marks the whereabouts of a man who has killed another by means of a magical pointing-stick or bone. If a member of any group has been killed in this way, his friends watch for the descent of a meteor, march in that direction, slay an enemy there, and leave his body lying on the ground. The friends of the murdered man understand what has happened, and bury his body where the star fell; for they recognise the spot by the softness of the earth.¹¹⁹ The Mara tribe of northern Australia suppose a falling star to be one of two hostile spirits, father and son, who live up in the sky and come down occasionally to do harm to men. In this tribe the profession of medicine-man

¹¹⁶ W. E. Roth, *North Queensland Bulletin*, No. 5, *Superstition, Magic, and Medicine* (Brisbane, 1903), p. 8.

¹¹⁷ A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 429.

¹¹⁸ A. W. Howitt, *op. cit.* p. 430. One of the earliest writers on New South Wales reports that the natives attributed great importance to the falling of a star (D. Collins, *Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (London, 1804), p. 383).

¹¹⁹ Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 627.

is strictly hereditary in the stock which has the falling star for its totem;¹²⁰ if these wizards had ever developed into kings, the descent of a meteor at certain times might have had the same fatal significance for them as for the kings of Sparta. The Tau Islands, to the west of the Bismarck Archipelago, make war in the direction in which they have observed a star to fall,¹²¹ probably for a reason like that which induces the Kaitish to do the same.

Superstitions of the negroes and other African races as to shooting stars.

When the Baronga of south Africa see a shooting star they spit on the ground to avert the evil omen, and cry, "Go away! go away all alone!" By this they mean that the light, which is so soon to disappear, is not to take them with it, but to go and die by itself.¹²² So when a Masai perceives the flash of a meteor he spits several times and says, "Be lost! go in the direction of the enemy!" after which he adds, "Stay away from me."¹²³ The Namaquas "are greatly afraid of the meteor which is vulgarly called a falling star, for they consider it a sign that sickness is coming upon the cattle, and to escape it they will immediately drive them to some other parts of the country. They call out to the star how

¹²⁰ Spencer and Gillen, *op. cit.* pp. 488, 627 *sq.*

¹²¹ G. Thilenius, *Ethnographische Ergebnisse aus Melanesien*, ii. (Halle, 1903) p. 129.

¹²² H. A. Junod, *Les Ba-ronga* (Neuchatel, 1898), p. 470.

¹²³ A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), p. 316.

many cattle they have, and beg of it not to send sickness.”¹²⁴ The Bechuanas are also much alarmed at the appearance of a meteor. If they happen to be dancing in the open air at the time, they will instantly desist and retire hastily to their huts.¹²⁵ The Ewe negroes of Guinea regard a falling star as a powerful divinity, and worship it as one of their national gods, by the name of Nyikpla or Nyigbla. In their opinion the falling star is especially a war-god who marches at the head of the host and leads it to victory, riding like Castor and Pollux on horseback. But he is also a rain-god, and the showers are sent by him from the sky. Special priests are devoted to his worship, with a chief priest at their head, who resides in the capital. They are known by the red staves which they carry and by the high-pointed caps, woven of threads and palm-leaves, which they wear on their heads. In times of drought they call upon their god by night with wild howls. Once a year an ox is sacrificed to him at the capital, and the priests consume the flesh. On this occasion the people smear themselves with the pollen of a certain plant and go in procession through the towns and villages, singing, dancing, and beating drums.¹²⁶

Superstitions of the American Indians as to shooting

¹²⁴ J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa* (London, 1815), pp. 428 *sq.*

¹²⁵ *Id.*, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey* (London, 1822), ii. 204.

¹²⁶ G. Zündel, “Land und Volk der Eweer auf der Slavenküste in Westafrika,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, xii. (1877) pp. 415 *sq.*; C. Spiess, “Religionsbegriffe der Evheer in Westafrika,” *Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, vi. (1903) Dritte Abtheilung, p. 112.

stars.

By some Indians of California meteors were called “children of the moon,” and whenever young women saw one of them they fell to the ground and covered their heads, fearing that, if the meteor saw them, their faces would become ugly and diseased.¹²⁷ The Tarahumares of Mexico fancy that a shooting star is a dead sorcerer coming to harm a man who harmed him in life. Hence when they see one they huddle together and scream for terror.¹²⁸ When a German traveller was living with the Bororos of central Brazil, a splendid meteor fell, spreading dismay through the Indian village. It was believed to be the soul of a dead medicine-man, who suddenly appeared in this form to announce that he wanted meat, and that, as a preliminary measure, he proposed to visit somebody with an attack of dysentery. Its appearance was greeted with yells from a hundred throats: men, women, and children swarmed out of their huts like ants whose nest has been disturbed; and soon watch-fires blazed, round which at a little distance groups of dusky figures gathered, while in the middle, thrown into strong relief by the flickering light of the fire, two red-painted sorcerers reeled and staggered in a state of frantic excitement, snorting and spitting towards the quarter of the sky where the meteor had run its brief but brilliant course. Pressing his right hand to his yelling mouth, each of them held aloft in

¹²⁷ Boscana, “Chinigchinich, a Historical Account of the Origin, etc., of the Indians of St. Juan Capistrano,” in A. Robinson's *Life in California* (New York, 1846), p. 299.

¹²⁸ C. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico* (London, 1903), i. 324 *sq.*

his extended left, by way of propitiating the angry star, a bundle of cigarettes. "There!" they seemed to say, "all that tobacco will we give to ward off the impending visitation. Woe to you, if you do not leave us in peace."¹²⁹ The Lengua Indians of the Gran Chaco also stand in great fear of meteors, imagining them to be stones hurled from heaven at the wicked sorcerers who have done people to death by their charms.¹³⁰ When the Abipones beheld a meteor flashing or heard thunder rolling in the sky, they imagined that one of their medicine-men had died, and that the flash of light and the peal of thunder were part of his funeral honours.¹³¹

Shooting stars regarded as demons.

When the Laughlan Islanders see a shooting star they make a great noise, for they think it is the old woman who lives in the moon coming down to earth to catch somebody, who may relieve her of her duties in the moon while she goes away to the happy spirit-land.¹³² In Vedic India a meteor was believed to be the embodiment of a demon, and on its appearance certain hymns or

¹²⁹ K. von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 514 *sq.* The Peruvian Indians also made a prodigious noise when they saw a shooting star. See P. de Cieza de Leon, *Travels* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1864), p. 232.

¹³⁰ G. Kurze, "Sitten und Gebräuche der Lengua-Indianer," *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft zu Jena*, xxiii. (1905) p. 17; W. Barbrooke Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land* (London, 1911), p. 163.

¹³¹ M. Dobrizhoffer, *Historia de Abiponibus* (Vienna, 1784), ii. 86.

¹³² W. Tetzlaff, "Notes on the Laughlan Islands," *Annual Report on British New Guinea, 1890-91* (Brisbane, 1892), p. 105.

incantations, supposed to possess the power of killing demons, were recited for the purpose of expiating the prodigy.¹³³ To this day in India, when women see a falling star, they spit thrice to scare the demon.¹³⁴ Some of the Esthonians at the present time regard shooting stars as evil spirits.¹³⁵ It is a Mohammedan belief that falling stars are demons or jinn who have attempted to scale the sky, and, being repulsed by the angels with stones, are hurled headlong, flaming, from the celestial vault. Hence every true believer at sight of a meteor should say, "I take refuge with God from the stoned devil."¹³⁶

Shooting stars associated with the souls of the dead.
Supposed relation of the stars to men.

A widespread superstition, of which some examples have already been given, associates meteors or falling stars with the souls of the dead. Often they are believed to be the spirits of the departed on their way to the other world. The Maoris imagine that at death the soul leaves the body and goes to the nether world

¹³³ H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, p. 267.

¹³⁴ W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1906), ii. 22.

¹³⁵ Holzmayer, "Osiliana," *Verhandlungen der gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft zu Dorpat*, vii. (1872) p. 48.

¹³⁶ Guillaïn, *Documents sur l'histoire, la géographie, et le commerce de l'Afrique Orientale*, ii. (Paris, N.D.) p. 97; C. Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli* (Göttingen, 1903), pp. 339 sq.; C. B. Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt* (London, 1878), p. 405; Budgett Meakin, *The Moors* (London, 1902), p. 353.

in the form of a falling star.¹³⁷ The Kingsmill Islanders deemed a shooting star an omen of death to some member of the family which occupied the part of the council-house nearest to the point of the sky whence the meteor took its flight. If the star was followed by a train of light, it foretold the death of a woman; if not, the death of a man.¹³⁸ When the Wotjobaluk tribe of Victoria see a shooting star, they think it is falling with the heart of a man who has been caught by a sorcerer and deprived of his fat.¹³⁹ One evening when Mr. Howitt was talking with an Australian black, a bright meteor was seen shooting through the sky. The native watched it and remarked, "An old blackfellow has fallen down there."¹⁴⁰ Among the Yerrunthally tribe of Queensland the ideas on this subject were even more definite. They thought that after death they went to a place away among the stars, and that to reach it they had to climb up a rope; when they had clambered up they let go the rope, which, as it fell from heaven, appeared to people on earth as a falling star.¹⁴¹ The natives of the Prince

¹³⁷ E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London, 1843), ii. 66. According to another account, meteors are regarded by the Maoris as betokening the presence of a god (R. Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*,² p. 147).

¹³⁸ Ch. Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, v. 88.

¹³⁹ A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 369.

¹⁴⁰ A. W. Howitt, in Brough Smyth's *Aborigines of Victoria*, ii. 309.

¹⁴¹ E. Palmer, "Notes on some Australian Tribes," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiii. (1884) p. 292. Sometimes apparently the Australian natives regard crystals or broken glass as fallen stars, and treasure them as powerful instruments of magic. See E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, iii. 29; W. E. Roth, *North Queensland*

of Wales Islands, off Queensland, are much afraid of shooting stars, for they believe them to be ghosts which, in breaking up, produce young ones of their own kind.¹⁴² The natives of the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain think that meteors are the souls of people who have been murdered or eaten; so at the sight of a meteor flashing they cry out, "The ghost of a murdered man!"¹⁴³ According to the Sulka of New Britain meteors are souls which have been flung into the air in order to plunge into the sea; and the train of light which they leave behind them is a burning tail of dry coco-nut leaves which has been tied to them by other souls, in order to help them to wing their way through the air.¹⁴⁴ The Caffres of South Africa often say that a shooting star is the sign of the death of some chief, and at sight of it they will spit on the ground as a mark of friendly feeling towards the dead man.¹⁴⁵ Similarly the Ababua of the Congo valley think that a chief will die in the village into which a star appears to fall, unless the danger of death be averted by a particular dance.¹⁴⁶ In the opinion of the Masai, the fall of a meteor signifies the death of some one; at sight of it they pray that the victim may be one of

Ethnography, Bulletin No. 5, p. 8.

¹⁴² J. Macgillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake* (London, 1852), ii. 30.

¹⁴³ P. A. Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel* (Hiltrup bei Münster, n. d.), p. 227.

¹⁴⁴ P. Rascher, "Die Sulka," *Archiv für Anthropologie*, xxix. (1904) p. 216.

¹⁴⁵ Dudley Kidd, *Savage Childhood* (London, 1906), p. 149.

¹⁴⁶ J. Halkin, *Quelques Peuplades du district de l'Uelé* (Liège, 1907), p. 102.

their enemies.¹⁴⁷ The Wambugwe of eastern Africa fancy that the stars are men, of whom one dies whenever a star is seen to fall.¹⁴⁸ The Tinneh Indians and the Tchiglit Esquimaux of north-western America believe that human life on earth is influenced by the stars, and they take a shooting star to be a sign that some one has died.¹⁴⁹ The Lolos, an aboriginal tribe of western China, hold that for each person on earth there is a corresponding star in the sky. Hence when a man is ill, they sacrifice wine to his star and light four and twenty lamps outside of his room. On the day after the funeral they dig a hole in the chamber of death and pray the dead man's star to descend and be buried in it. If this precaution were not taken, the star might fall and hit somebody and hurt him very much.¹⁵⁰ In classical antiquity there was a popular notion that every human being had his own star in the sky, which shone bright or dim according to his good or evil fortune, and fell in the form of a meteor when he died.¹⁵¹

Modern European beliefs as to meteors. Various beliefs
as to stars and meteors.

Superstitions of the same sort are still commonly to be met

¹⁴⁷ O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 163.

¹⁴⁸ O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 188.

¹⁴⁹ E. Petitot, *Monographie des Dènè-Dindjé* (Paris, 1876), p. 60; *id.*, *Monographie des Esquimaux Tchiglit* (Paris, 1876), p. 24.

¹⁵⁰ A. Henry, "The Lolos and other Tribes of Western China," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiii. (1903) p. 103.

¹⁵¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* ii. 28.

with in Europe. Thus in some parts of Germany they say that at the birth of a man a new star is set in the sky, and that as it burns brilliantly or faintly he grows rich or poor; finally when he dies it drops from the sky in the likeness of a shooting star.¹⁵² Similarly in Brittany, Transylvania, Bohemia, the Abruzzi, the Romagna, and the Esthonian island of Oesel it is thought by some that every man has his own particular star in the sky, and that when it falls in the shape of a meteor he expires.¹⁵³ A like belief is entertained by Polish Jews.¹⁵⁴ In Styria they say that when a shooting star is seen a man has just died, or a poor soul been released from purgatory.¹⁵⁵ The Esthonians believe that if any one sees a falling

¹⁵² F. Panzer, *Beitrag zur deutschen Mythologie*, ii. 293; A. Kuhn und W. Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche*, p. 457, § 422; E. Meier, *Deutsche Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Schwaben*, p. 506, §§ 379, 380.

¹⁵³ P. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, ii. 353; J. Haltrich, *Zur Volkskunde der Siebenbürger Sachsen* (Vienna, 1885), p. 300; W. Schmidt, *Das Jahr und seine Tage in Meinung und Brauch der Rumänen Siebenbürgens*, p. 38; E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest*, i. 311; J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, p. 31, § 164; Br. Jelínek, "Materialien zur Vorgeschichte und Volkskunde Böhmens," *Mittheilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, xxi. (1891) p. 25; G. Finamore, *Credenze, usi e costumi Abruzzesi*, pp. 47 sq.; M. Placucci, *Usi e pregiudizj dei contadini della Romagna* (Palermo, 1885), p. 141; Holzmayer, "Osiliana," *Verhandl. der gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft zu Dorpat*, vii. (1872) p. 48. The same belief is said to prevail in Armenia. See Minas Tchéráz, "Notes sur la mythologie arménienne," *Transactions of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists* (London, 1893), ii. 824. Bret Harte has employed the idea in his little poem, "Relieving Guard."

¹⁵⁴ H. Lew, "Der Tod und die Beerdigungs-gebräuche bei den polnischen Juden," *Mittheilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, xxxii. (1902) p. 402.

¹⁵⁵ A. Schlossar, "Volksmeinung und Volksaberglaube aus der deutschen

star on New Year's night he will die or be visited by a serious illness that year.¹⁵⁶ In Belgium and many parts of France the people suppose that a meteor is a soul which has just quitted the body, sometimes that it is specially the soul of an unbaptized infant or of some one who has died without absolution. At sight of it they say that you should cross yourself and pray, or that if you wish for something while the star is falling you will be sure to get it.¹⁵⁷ Among the Vosges Mountains in the warm nights of July it is not uncommon to see whole showers of shooting stars. It is generally agreed that these stars are souls, but some difference of opinion exists as to whether they are souls just taking leave of earth, or tortured by the fires of purgatory, or on their passage from purgatory to heaven.¹⁵⁸ The last and most cheering of these views is held by the French peasantry of Beauce and Perche and by the Italian peasantry of the Abruzzi, and charitable people pray for the deliverance of a soul at the sight of a falling star.¹⁵⁹ The downward direction of its flight might naturally suggest a

Steiermark," *Germania*, N.R., xxiv. (1891) p. 389.

¹⁵⁶ Boecler-Kreutzwald, *Der Ehsten abergläubische Gebräuche, Weisen und Gewohnheiten* (St. Petersburg, 1854), p. 73.

¹⁵⁷ E. Monseur, *Le Folklore wallon*, p. 61; A. de Nore, *Coutumes, mythes et traditions des provinces de France*, pp. 101, 160, 223, 267, 284; B. Souché, *Croyances, présages et traditions diverses*, p. 23; P. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, ii. 352; J. Lecœur, *Esquisses du bocage normand*, ii. 13; L. Pineau, *Folk-lore du Poitou* (Paris, 1892), pp. 525 sq.

¹⁵⁸ L. F. Sauv . *Le Folk-lore des Hautes-Vosges* (Paris, 1889), pp. 196 sq.

¹⁵⁹ F. Chapiseau, *Le Folk-lore de la Beauce et du Perche* (Paris, 1902), i. 290; G. Finamore, *Credenze, usi e costumi Abruzzesi* (Palermo, 1890), p. 48.

different goal; and accordingly other people have seen in the transient flame of a meteor the descent of a soul from heaven to be born on earth. In the Punjaub, for example, Hindoos believe that the length of a soul's residence in the realms of bliss is exactly proportioned to the sums which the man distributed in charity during his life; and that when these are exhausted his time in heaven is up, and down he comes.¹⁶⁰ In Polynesia a shooting star was held to be the flight of a spirit, and to presage the birth of a great prince.¹⁶¹ The Mandans of north America fancied that the stars were dead people, and that when a woman was brought to bed a star fell from heaven, and entering into her was born as a child.¹⁶² On the Biloch frontier of the Punjaub each man is held to have his star, and he may not journey in particular directions when his star is in certain positions. If duty compels him to travel in the forbidden direction, he takes care before setting out to bury his star, or rather a figure of it cut out of cloth, so that it may not see what he is doing.¹⁶³

The fall of the king's star.

Which, if any, of these superstitions moved the barbarous

¹⁶⁰ *North Indian Notes and Queries*, i. p. 102, § 673. Compare *id.* p. 47, § 356; *Indian Notes and Queries*, iv. p. 184, § 674; W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 82.

¹⁶¹ W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*,² iii. 171.

¹⁶² Maximilian Prinz zu Wied, *Reise in das Innere Nord-America* (Coblenz, 1839-1841), ii. 152. It does not, however, appear from the writer's statement whether the descent of the soul was identified with the flight of a meteor or not.

¹⁶³ D. C. J. Ibbetson, *Outlines of Panjab Ethnography* (Calcutta, 1883), p. 118, § 231.

Dorians of old to depose their kings whenever at a certain season a meteor flamed in the sky, we cannot say. Perhaps they had a vague general notion that its appearance signified the dissatisfaction of the higher powers with the state of the commonwealth; and since in primitive society the king is commonly held responsible for all untoward events, whatever their origin, the natural course was to relieve him of duties which he had proved himself incapable of discharging. But it may be that the idea in the minds of these rude barbarians was more definite. Possibly, like some people in Europe at the present day, they thought that every man had his star in the sky, and that he must die when it fell. The king would be no exception to the rule, and on a certain night of a certain year, at the end of a cycle, it might be customary to watch the sky in order to mark whether the king's star was still in the ascendant or near its setting. The appearance of a meteor on such a night – of a star precipitated from the celestial vault – might prove for the king not merely a symbol but a sentence of death. It might be the warrant for his execution.

Reasons for limiting a king's reign to eight years. The octennial cycle based on an attempt to reconcile solar and lunar time.

If the tenure of the regal office was formerly limited among the Spartans to eight years, we may naturally ask, why was that precise period selected as the measure of a king's reign? The reason is probably to be found in those astronomical

considerations which determined the early Greek calendar. The difficulty of reconciling lunar with solar time is one of the standing puzzles which has taxed the ingenuity of men who are emerging from barbarism. Now an octennial cycle is the shortest period at the end of which sun and moon really mark time together after overlapping, so to say, throughout the whole of the interval. Thus, for example, it is only once in every eight years that the full moon coincides with the longest or shortest day; and as this coincidence can be observed with the aid of a simple dial, the observation is naturally one of the first to furnish a base for a calendar which shall bring lunar and solar times into tolerable, though not exact, harmony.¹⁶⁴ But in early days the proper adjustment of the calendar is a matter of religious concern, since on it depends a knowledge of the right seasons for propitiating the deities whose favour is indispensable to the welfare of the community.¹⁶⁵ No wonder, therefore, that the

¹⁶⁴ L. Ideler, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, ii. 605 sqq. Ninety-nine lunar months nearly coincide with eight solar years, as the ancients well knew (Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, vii. 18). On the religious and political import of the eight years' cycle in ancient Greece see especially K. O. Müller, *Orchomenus und die Minyer*,² pp. 213-218; *id.*, *Die Dorier*,² i. 254 sq., 333 sq., 440, ii. 96, 483; *id.*, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1825), pp. 422-424.

¹⁶⁵ "Ancient opinion even assigned the regulation of the calendar by the solstices and equinoxes to the will of the gods that sacrifices should be rendered at similar times in each year, rather than to the strict requirements of agriculture; and as religion undoubtedly makes larger demands on the cultivator as agriculture advances, the obligations of sacrifice may probably be reckoned as of equal importance with

king, as the chief priest of the state, or as himself a god, should be liable to deposition or death at the end of an astronomical period. When the great luminaries had run their course on high, and were about to renew the heavenly race, it might well be thought that the king should renew his divine energies, or prove them unabated, under pain of making room for a more vigorous successor. In southern India, as we have seen, the king's reign and life terminated with the revolution of the planet Jupiter round the sun. In Greece, on the other hand, the king's fate seems to have hung in the balance at the end of every eight years, ready to fly up and kick the beam as soon as the opposite scale was loaded with a falling star.

The octennial cycle in relation to the Greek doctrine of rebirth.

The same train of thought may explain an ancient Greek custom which appears to have required that a homicide should be banished his country, and do penance for a period of eight or nine years.¹⁶⁶ With the beginning of a new cycle or great year, as it

agricultural necessities in urging the formation of reckonings in the nature of a calendar" (E. J. Payne, *History of the New World called America*, ii. 280).

¹⁶⁶ As to the eight years' servitude of Apollo and Cadmus for the slaughter of dragons, see below, p. 78. For the nine years' penance of the man who had tasted human flesh at the festival of Zeus on Mount Lycæus, see Pliny, *Nat. hist.* viii. 81 *sq.*; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xviii. 17; Pausanias, viii. 2. 6; compare Plato, *Republic*, viii. p. 565 D E. Any god who forswore himself by the water of Styx was exiled for nine years from the society of his fellow-gods (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 793-804). On this subject see further, E. Rohde, *Psyche*,³ ii. 211 *sq.*; W. H. Roscher, "Die enneadischen

was called, it might be thought that all nature was regenerate, all old scores wiped out. According to Pindar, the dead whose guilt had been purged away by an abode of eight years in the nether world were born again on earth in the ninth year as glorious kings, athletes, and sages.¹⁶⁷ The doctrine may well be an old popular belief rather than a mere poetical fancy. If so, it would supply a fresh reason for the banishment of a homicide during the years that the angry ghost of his victim might at any moment issue from its prison-house and pounce on him. Once the perturbed spirit had been happily reborn, he might be supposed to forgive, if not to forget, the man who had done him an injury in a former life.

The octennial cycle at Cnossus in Crete. King Minos and Zeus. Sacred marriage of the king and queen of Cnossus in the form of bull and cow as symbols of the sun and moon.

Whatever its origin may have been, the cycle of eight years appears to have coincided with the normal length of the king's reign in other parts of Greece besides Sparta. Thus Minos, king of Cnossus in Crete, whose great palace has been unearthed in recent years, is said to have held office for periods of eight years together. At the end of each period he retired for a season to the oracular cave on Mount Ida, and there communed with his divine father Zeus, giving him an account of his kingship

und hebdomadischen Fristen und Wochen der ältesten Griechen," *Abhandlungen der philolog. – histor. Klasse der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, xxi. No. 4 (1903), pp. 24 *sqq.*

¹⁶⁷ Plato, *Meno*, p. 81 a-c; Pindar, ed. Boeckh, vol. iii. pp. 623 *sq.*, Frag. 98.

in the years that were past, and receiving from him instructions for his guidance in those which were to come.¹⁶⁸ The tradition plainly implies that at the end of every eight years the king's sacred powers needed to be renewed by intercourse with the godhead, and that without such a renewal he would have forfeited his right to the throne. We may surmise that among the solemn ceremonies which marked the beginning or the end of the eight years' cycle the sacred marriage of the king with the queen played an important part, and that in this marriage we have the true explanation of the strange legend of Pasiphae and the bull. It was said that Pasiphae, the wife of King Minos, fell in love with a wondrous white bull which rose from the sea, and that in order to gratify her unnatural passion the artist Daedalus constructed a hollow wooden cow, covered with a cow's hide, in which the love-

¹⁶⁸ Homer, *Odyssey*, xix. 178 sq., τῆσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε Μίνως ἐννέωρος βασιλεὺς Διὸς μεγάλου ὀαριστής, with the Scholia; Plato, *Laws*, i. I. p. 624 a, b; [*id.*] *Minos*, 13 sq., pp. 319 sq.; Strabo, ix. 4. 8, p. 476; Maximus Tyrius, *Dissert.* xxxviii. 2; *Etymologicum magnum*, s. v. ἐννέωροι, p. 343, 23 sq.; Valerius Maximus, i. 2, ext. I; compare Diodorus Siculus, v. 78. 3. Homer's expression, ἐννέωρος βασιλεὺς, has been variously explained. I follow the interpretation which appears to have generally found favour both with the ancients, including Plato, and with modern scholars. See K. Hoeck, *Kreta*, i. 244 sq.; K. O. Müller, *Die Dorier*,² ii. 96; G. F. Unger, "Zeitrechnung der Griechen und Römer," in Ivan Müller's *Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, i. 569; A. Schmidt, *Handbuch der griechischen Chronologie* (Jena, 1888), p. 65; W. H. Roscher, "Die enneadischen und hebdomadischen Fristen und Wochen der ältesten Griechen," *Abhandlungen der philolog. – histor. Klasse der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, xxi. No. 4 (Leipsic, 1903), pp. 22 sq.; E. Rohde, *Psyche*,³ i. 128 sq. Literally interpreted, ἐννέωρος means "for nine years," not "for eight years." But see above, p. 59, note ¹.

sick queen was hidden while the bull mounted it. The result of their union was the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull, whom the king shut up in the labyrinth, a building full of such winding and intricate passages that the prisoner might roam in it for ever without finding the way out.¹⁶⁹ The legend appears to reflect a mythical marriage of the sun and moon, which was acted as a solemn rite by the king and queen of Cnossus, wearing the masks of a bull and cow respectively.¹⁷⁰ To a pastoral people a bull is the most natural type of vigorous reproductive energy,¹⁷¹ and as such is a fitting emblem of the sun. Islanders who, like many of the Cretans, see the sun daily rising from the sea, might readily compare him to a white bull issuing from the waves. Indeed, we are expressly told that the Cretans

¹⁶⁹ Apollodorus, iii. 1. 3 sq., iii. 15. 8; Diodorus Siculus, iv. 77; Schol. on Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 887; J. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, i. 479 sqq.; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 40; Virgil, *Ecl.* vi. 45 sqq.; Ovid, *Ars amat.* i. 289 sqq.

¹⁷⁰ K. Hoeck, *Kreta*, ii. (Göttingen, 1828) pp. 63-69; L. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*,³ ii. 119-123; W. H. Roscher, *Über Selene mid Verwandtes* (Leipsic, 1890), pp. 135-139; *id.*, *Nachträge zu meiner Schrift über Selene* (Leipsic, 1895), p. 3; Türk, in W. H. Roscher's *Lexikon der griech. und röm. Mythologie*, iii. 1666 sq.; A. J. Evans, "Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxi. (1901) p. 181; A. B. Cook, "Zeus, Jupiter, and the Oak," *Classical Review*, xvii. (1903) pp. 406-412; compare *id.*, "The European Sky-god," *Folklore*, xv. (1904) p. 272. All these writers, except Mr. Cook, regard Minos and Pasiphae as representing the sun and moon. Mr. Cook agrees so far as relates to Minos, but he supposes Pasiphae to be a sky-goddess or sun-goddess rather than a goddess of the moon. On the other hand, he was the first to suggest that the myth was periodically acted by the king and queen of Cnossus disguised in bovine form.

¹⁷¹ Compare *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, ii. 368 sq.

called the sun a bull.¹⁷² Similarly in ancient Egypt the sacred bull Mnevis of Heliopolis (the City of the Sun) was deemed an incarnation of the Sun-god,¹⁷³ and for thousands of years the kings of Egypt delighted to be styled “mighty bull”; many of them inscribed the title on their *serekh* or cognisance, which set forth their names in their character of descendants of Horus.¹⁷⁴ The identification of Pasiphae, “she who shines on all,” with the moon was made long ago by Pausanias, who saw her image along with that of the sun in a sanctuary on that wild rocky coast of Messenia where the great range of Taygetus descends seaward in a long line of naked crags.¹⁷⁵ The horns of the waxing or waning moon naturally suggest the resemblance of the luminary to a white cow; hence the ancients represented the goddess of the moon drawn by a team of white cattle.¹⁷⁶ When we remember that at the court of Egypt the king and queen figured as god and goddess in solemn masquerades, where the parts of animal-

¹⁷² Bekker's *Anecdota Graeca*, i. 344, s. v. Ἀδιοῦνιος ταῦρος.

¹⁷³ Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelii*, iii. 13. 1 sq.; Diodorus Siculus, i. 84. 4, i. 88. 4; Strabo, xvii. 1. 22 and 27, pp. 803, 805; Aelian, *De natura animalium*, xi. II; Suidas, s. v. Ἀπις; Ammianus Marcellinus, xxii. 14. 7; A. Wiedemann, *Herodots Zweites Buch*, p. 552; A. Erman, *Die ägyptische Religion* (Berlin, 1905), p. 26; E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* (London, 1904), i. 330.

¹⁷⁴ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, i. 25.

¹⁷⁵ Pausanias, i. 26. 1. For a description of the scenery of this coast, see Morritt, in Walpole's *Memoirs relating to European Turkey*, i.² p. 54.

¹⁷⁶ W. H. Roscher, *Über Selene und Verwandtes*, pp. 30-33.

headed deities were played by masked men and women,¹⁷⁷ we need have no difficulty in imagining that similar dramas may have been performed at the court of a Cretan king, whether we suppose them to have been imported from Egypt or to have had an independent origin.

The same myth and custom of the marriage of the sun and moon appear in the stories of Zeus and Europa, of Minos and Britomartis. The conjunction of the sun and moon regarded as the best time for marriages. Octennial marriage of the king and queen as representatives of the sun and moon.

The stories of Zeus and Europa, and of Minos and Britomartis or Dictynna appear to be only different expressions of the same myth, different echoes of the same custom. The moon rising from the sea was the fair maiden Europa coming across the heaving billows from the far eastern land of Phoenicia, borne or pursued by her suitor the solar bull. The moon setting in the western waves was the coy Britomartis or Dictynna, who plunged into the sea to escape the warm embrace of her lover Minos, himself the sun. The story how the drowning maiden was drawn up in a fisherman's net may well be, as some have thought, the explanation given by a simple seafaring folk of the moon's reappearance from the sea in the east after she had sunk into it

¹⁷⁷ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, ii. 130 *sqq.* We are told that Egyptian sovereigns assumed the masks of lions, bulls, and serpents as symbols of power (Diodorus Siculus, i. 62. 4).

in the west.¹⁷⁸ To the mythical fancy of the ancients the moon was a coy or a wanton maiden, who either fled from or pursued the sun every month till the fugitive was overtaken and the lovers enjoyed each other's company at the time when the luminaries are in conjunction, namely, in the interval between the old and the new moon. Hence on the principles of sympathetic magic that interval was considered the time most favourable for human marriages. When the sun and moon are wedded in the sky, men and women should be wedded on earth. And for the same reason the ancients chose the interlunar day for the celebration of the Sacred Marriages of gods and goddesses. Similar beliefs and customs based on them have been noted among other peoples.¹⁷⁹ It is likely, therefore, that a king and queen who represented the

¹⁷⁸ As to Minos and Britomartis or Dictynna, see Callimachus, *Hymn to Diana*, 189 *sqq.*; Pausanias, ii. 30. 3; Antoninus Liberalis, *Transform.* 40; Diodorus Siculus, v. 76. On Britomartis as a moon-goddess, see K. Hoeck, *Kreta*, ii. 170; W. H. Roscher, *Über Selene und Verwandtes*, pp. 45 *sq.*, 116-118. Hoeck acutely perceived that the pursuit of Britomartis by Minos "is a trait of old festival customs in which the conceptions of the sun-god were transferred to the king of the island." As to the explanation here adopted of the myth of Zeus and Europa, see K. Hoeck, *Kreta*, i. 90 *sqq.*; W. H. Roscher, *op. cit.* pp. 128-135. Moschus describes (ii. 84 *sqq.*) the bull which carried off Europa as yellow in colour with a silver circle shining on his forehead, and he compares the bull's horns to those of the moon.

¹⁷⁹ See W. H. Roscher, *op. cit.* pp. 76-82. Amongst the passages of classical writers which he cites are Plutarch, *De facie in orbe lunae*, 30; *id.*, *Isis et Osiris*, 52; Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae compendium*, 34, p. 72, ed. C. Lang; Proclus, on Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 780; Macrobius, *Commentar. in Somnium Scipionis*, i. 18. 10 *sq.*; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* ii. 45. When the sun and moon were eclipsed, the Tahitians supposed that the luminaries were in the act of copulation (J. Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean* (London, 1799), p. 346).

sun and moon may have been expected to exercise their conjugal rights above all at the time when the moon was thought to rest in the arms of the sun. However that may have been, it would be natural that their union should be consummated with unusual solemnity every eight years, when the two great luminaries, so to say, meet and mark time together once more after diverging from each other more or less throughout the interval. It is true that sun and moon are in conjunction once every month, but every month their conjunction takes place at a different point in the sky, until eight revolving years have brought them together again in the same heavenly bridal chamber where first they met.

Octennial tribute of youths and maidens probably required as a means of renewing the sun's fire by human sacrifices. The Minotaur a bull-headed image of the sun.

Without being unduly rash we may surmise that the tribute of seven youths and seven maidens whom the Athenians were bound to send to Minos every eight years had some connexion with the renewal of the king's power for another octennial cycle. Traditions varied as to the fate which awaited the lads and damsels on their arrival in Crete; but the common view appears to have been that they were shut up in the labyrinth, there to be devoured by the Minotaur, or at least to be imprisoned for life.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps they were sacrificed by being roasted alive in

¹⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Theseus*, 15 sq.; Diodorus Siculus, iv. 61; Pausanias, i. 27. 10; Ovid, *Metam.* viii. 170 sq. According to another account, the tribute of youths and maidens was paid every year. See Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 14 sqq., with the commentary of Servius;

a bronze image of a bull, or of a bull-headed man, in order to renew the strength of the king and of the sun, whom he personated. This at all events is suggested by the legend of Talos, a bronze man who clutched people to his breast and leaped with them into the fire, so that they were roasted alive. He is said to have been given by Zeus to Europa, or by Hephaestus to Minos, to guard the island of Crete, which he patrolled thrice daily.¹⁸¹ According to one account he was a bull,¹⁸² according to another he was the sun.¹⁸³ Probably he was identical with the Minotaur, and stripped of his mythical features was nothing but a bronze image of the sun represented as a man with a bull's head. In order to renew the solar fires, human victims may have been sacrificed to the idol by being roasted in its hollow body or placed on its sloping hands and allowed to roll into a pit of fire. It was in the latter fashion that the Carthaginians sacrificed their offspring to Moloch. The children were laid on the hands of a calf-headed image of bronze, from which they slid into a fiery oven, while the people danced to the music of flutes and timbrels to drown the shrieks of the burning victims.¹⁸⁴ The

Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 41.

¹⁸¹ Apollodorus, i. 9. 26; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argon.* iv. 1638 *sqq.*, with the scholium; Agatharchides, in Photius, *Bibliotheca*, p. 443^b, lines 22-25, ed. Bekker; Lucian, *De saltatione*, 49; Zenobius, v. 85; Suidas, s. v. Σαρδάνιος γέλως; Eustathius on Homer, *Odyssey*, xx. 302, p. 1893; Schol. on Plato, *Republic*, i. p. 337^A.

¹⁸² Apollodorus, i. 9. 26.

¹⁸³ Hesychius, s. v. Ταλῶς.

¹⁸⁴ Diodorus Siculus, xx. 14; Clitarchus, cited by Suidas, s. v. Σαρδάνιος γέλως,

resemblance which the Cretan traditions bear to the Carthaginian practice suggests that the worship associated with the names of Minos and the Minotaur may have been powerfully influenced by that of a Semitic Baal.¹⁸⁵ In the tradition of Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, and his brazen bull¹⁸⁶ we may have an echo of similar rites in Sicily, where the Carthaginian power struck deep roots.

Dance of the youths and maidens at Cnossus.

But perhaps the youths and maidens who were sent across the sea to Cnossus had to perform certain religious duties before they were cast into the fiery furnace. The same cunning artist Daedalus who planned the labyrinth and contrived the wooden cow for Pasiphae was said to have made a dance for Ariadne, daughter of Minos. It represented youths and maidens dancing in ranks, the youths armed with golden swords, the maidens crowned with garlands.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, when Theseus landed with Ariadne in Delos on his return from Crete, he and the young companions whom he had rescued from the Minotaur are said to have danced a mazy dance in imitation of the intricate windings

and by the Scholiast on Plato, *Republic*, p. 337^A; Plutarch, *De superstitione*, 13; Paulus Fagius, quoted by Selden, *De dis Syris* (Leipsic, 1668), pp. 169 *sq.* The calf's head of the idol is mentioned only by P. Fagius, who drew his account from a book Jalkut by Rabbi Simeon.

¹⁸⁵ Compare M. Mayer, s. v. "Kronos," in W. H. Roscher's *Lexikon d. griech. u. röm. Mythologie*, iii. 1501 *sqq.*

¹⁸⁶ J. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, i. 646 *sqq.*

¹⁸⁷ Homer, *Iliad*, xviii. 590 *sqq.*

of the labyrinth; on account of its sinuous turns the dance was called "the Crane."¹⁸⁸ Taken together, these two traditions suggest that the youths and maidens who were sent to Cnossus had to dance in the labyrinth before they were sacrificed to the bull-headed image. At all events there are good grounds for thinking that there was a famous dance which the ancients regularly associated with the Cretan labyrinth.

The game of Troy.

Among the Romans that dance appears to have been known from the earliest times by the name of Troy or the Game of Troy. Tradition ran that it was imported into Italy by Aeneas, who transmitted it through his son Ascanius to the Alban kings, who in their turn handed it down to the Romans. It was performed by bands of armed youths on horseback. Virgil compares their complicated evolutions to the windings of the Cretan labyrinth;¹⁸⁹ and that the comparison is more than a mere poetical flourish appears from a drawing on a very ancient Etruscan vase found at Tragliatella. The drawing represents a procession of seven beardless warriors dancing, accompanied by two armed riders on horseback, who are also beardless.

¹⁸⁸ Plutarch, *Theseus*, 21; Julius Pollux, iv. 101.

¹⁸⁹ As to the Game of Troy, see Virgil, *Aen.* v. 545-603; Plutarch, *Cato*, 3; Tacitus, *Annals*, xi. 11; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 43; *id.*, *Tiberius*, 6; *id.*, *Caligula*, 18; *id.*, *Nero*, 6; W. Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*,³ s. v. "Trojae ludus"; O. Benndorf, "Das Alter des Trojaspieles," appended to W. Reichel's *Über homerische Waffen* (Vienna, 1894), pp. 133-139.

An inscription proves that the scene depicted is the Game of Troy; and attached to the procession is a figure of the Cretan labyrinth,¹⁹⁰ the pattern of which is well known from coins of Cnossus on which it is often represented.¹⁹¹ The same pattern, identified by an inscription, "*Labyrinthus, hic habitat Minotaurus,*" is scratched on a wall at Pompeii; and it is also worked in mosaic on the floor of Roman apartments, with the figures of Theseus and the Minotaur in the middle.¹⁹² Roman boys appear to have drawn the very same pattern on the ground and to have played a game on it, probably a miniature Game of Troy.¹⁹³ Labyrinths of similar type occur as decorations on the floors of old churches, where they are known as "the Road of Jerusalem"; they were used for processions. The garden mazes of the Renaissance were modelled on them. Moreover, they are found very commonly in the north of Europe, marked out either by raised bands of turf or by rows of stones. Such labyrinths may be seen in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finnland, the south coast of Russian Lappland, and even in Iceland. They go by various names, such as Babylon, Wieland's House, Trojeborg, Tröburg, and so forth, some of which clearly indicate their connexion with the ancient Game of Troy. They are used for children's games.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ O. Benndorf, *op. cit.* pp. 133 *sq.*

¹⁹¹ B. V. Head, *Historia numorum* (Oxford, 1887), pp. 389-391.

¹⁹² O. Benndorf, *op. cit.* pp. 134 *sq.*

¹⁹³ Pliny, *Nat. hist.* xxxvi. 85.

¹⁹⁴ O. Benndorf, *op. cit.* p. 135; W. Meyer, "Ein Labyrinth mit Versen,"

The dance at Cnossus perhaps an imitation of the sun's course in the sky.

A dance or game which has thus spread over Europe and survived in a fashion to modern times must have been very popular, and bearing in mind how often with the decay of old faiths the serious rites and pageants of grown people have degenerated into the sports of children, we may reasonably ask whether Ariadne's Dance or the Game of Troy may not have had its origin in religious ritual. The ancients connected it with Cnossus and the Minotaur. Now we have seen reason to hold, with many other scholars, that Cnossus was the seat of a great worship of the sun, and that the Minotaur was a representative or embodiment of the sun-god. May not, then, Ariadne's dance have been an imitation of the sun's course in the sky? and may not its intention have been, by means of sympathetic magic, to aid the great luminary to run his race on high? We have seen that during an eclipse of the sun the Chilcotin Indians walk in a circle, leaning on staves, apparently to assist the labouring orb. In Egypt also the king, who embodied the sun-god, seems to have solemnly walked round the walls of a temple for the sake of helping the sun on his way.¹⁹⁵ If there is any truth in this conjecture, it would seem to follow that the sinuous lines of the labyrinth which the dancers followed in their evolutions may have

Sitzungsberichte der philosoph. philolog. und histor. Classe der k. b. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München, 1882, vol. ii. pp. 267-300.

¹⁹⁵ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 312.

represented the ecliptic, the sun's apparent annual path in the sky. It is some confirmation of this view that on coins of Cnossus the sun or a star appears in the middle of the labyrinth, the place which on other coins is occupied by the Minotaur.¹⁹⁶

Conclusions as to the king of Cnossus.

On the whole the foregoing evidence, slight and fragmentary as it is, points to the conclusion that at Cnossus the king represented the sun-god, and that every eight years his divine powers were renewed at a great festival, which comprised, first, the sacrifice of human victims by fire to a bull-headed image of the sun, and, second, the marriage of the king disguised as a bull to the queen disguised as a cow, the two personating respectively the sun and the moon.

Octennial festivals of the Crowning at Delphi and the Laurel-bearing at Thebes. Both represented dramatically the slaying of a water-dragon.

Whatever may be thought of these speculations, we know that many solemn rites were celebrated by the ancient Greeks at intervals of eight years.¹⁹⁷ Amongst them, two deserve to be noticed here, because it has been recently suggested, with some appearance of probability, that they were based on an octennial tenure of the kingship.¹⁹⁸ One was the Festival of the

¹⁹⁶ B. V. Head, *Historia numorum*, p. 389.

¹⁹⁷ Censorinus, *De die natali*, 18. 6.

¹⁹⁸ The suggestion was made by Mr. A. B. Cook. The following discussion of the

Crowning at Delphi; the other was the Festival of the Laurel-bearing at Thebes. In their general features the two festivals seem to have resembled each other very closely. Both represented dramatically the slaying of a great water-dragon by a god or hero; in both, the lad who played the part of the victorious god or hero crowned his brows with a wreath of sacred laurel and had to submit to a penance and purification for the slaughter of the beast. At Delphi the legendary slayer of the dragon was Apollo; at Thebes he was Cadmus.¹⁹⁹ At both places the legendary penance for the slaughter seems to have been servitude for eight years.²⁰⁰ The evidence for the rites of the Delphic festival is fairly complete, but for the Theban festival it has to be eked out by vase-paintings, which represent Cadmus crowned with laurel preparing to attack the dragon or actually in combat with the

subject is founded on his ingenious exposition. See his article, "The European Sky-god," *Folklore*, xv. (1904) pp. 402-424.

¹⁹⁹ As to the Delphic festival see Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.* 12; *id.*, *De defectu oraculorum*, 15; Strabo, ix. 3. 12, pp. 422 *sq.*; Aelian, *Var. hist.* iii. 1; Stephanus Byzantius, s. v. Δελπνίας; K. O. Müller, *Die Dorier*,² i. 203 *sqq.*, 321-324; Aug. Mommsen, *Delphika* (Leipsic, 1878), pp. 206 *sqq.*; Th. Schreiber, *Apollo Pythoktonos*, pp. 9 *sqq.*; my note on Pausanias, ii. 7. 7 (vol. ii. 53 *sqq.*). As to the Theban festival, see Pausanias, ix. 10. 4, with my note; Proclus, quoted by Photius, *Bibliotheca*, p. 321, ed. Bekker; Aug. Boeckh, in his edition of Pindar, *Explicationes*, p. 590; K. O. Müller, *Orchomenus und die Minyer*,² pp. 215 *sq.*; *id.*, *Dorier*,² i. 236 *sq.*, 333 *sq.*; C. Boetticher, *Der Baumkultus der Hellenen*, pp. 386 *sqq.*; G. F. Schömann, *Griechische Alterthümer*,⁴ ii. 479 *sq.*

²⁰⁰ Apollodorus, iii. 4. 2, iii. 10. 4; Servius, on Virgil, *Aen.* vii. 761. The servitude of Apollo is traditionally associated with his slaughter of the Cyclopes, not of the dragon. But see my note on Pausanias, ii. 7. 7 (vol. ii. pp. 53 *sqq.*).

monster, while goddesses bend over the champion, holding out wreaths of laurel to him as the mede of victory.²⁰¹ It is true that in historical times Apollo appears to have ousted Cadmus from the festival, though not from the myth. But at Thebes the god was plainly a late intruder, for his temple lay outside the walls, whereas the most ancient sanctuaries stood in the oldest part of the city, the low hill which took its name of Cadmea from the genuine Theban hero Cadmus.²⁰² It is not impossible that at Delphi also, and perhaps at other places where the same drama was acted,²⁰³ Apollo may have displaced an old local hero in the honourable office of dragon-slayer.

Both at Delphi and at Thebes the dragon seems to have guarded the oracular spring and the oracular tree. The crown of laurel and the crown of oak. The Festival of Crowning at Delphi originally identical with the Pythian games.

²⁰¹ W. H. Roscher's *Lexikon d. griech. und röm. Mythologie*, ii. 830, 838, 839. On an Etruscan mirror the scene of Cadmus's combat with the dragon is surrounded by a wreath of laurel (Roscher, *op. cit.* ii. 862). Mr. A. B. Cook was the first to call attention to these vase-paintings in confirmation of my view that the Festival of the Laurel-bearing celebrated the destruction of the dragon by Cadmus (*Folklore*, xv. (1904) p. 411, note ²²⁴).

²⁰² Pausanias, ix. 10. 2; K. O. Müller, *Die Dorier*,² i. 237 sq.

²⁰³ For evidence of the wide diffusion of the myth and the drama, see Th. Schreiber, *Apollon Pythoktonos*, pp. 39-50. The Laurel-bearing Apollo was worshipped at Athens, as we know from an inscription carved on one of the seats in the theatre. See E. S. Roberts and E. A. Gardner, *Introduction to Greek Epigraphy*, ii. (Cambridge, 1905) p. 467, No. 247.

Both at Thebes and at Delphi the dragon guarded a spring,²⁰⁴ the water of which was probably deemed oracular. At Delphi the sacred spring may have been either Cassotis or the more famed Castaly, which issues from a narrow gorge, shut in by rocky walls of tremendous height, a little to the east of Apollo's temple. The waters of both were thought to be endowed with prophetic power.²⁰⁵ Probably, too, the monster was supposed to keep watch and ward over the sacred laurel, from which the victor in the combat wreathed his brows; for in vase-paintings the Theban dragon appears coiled beside the holy tree,²⁰⁶ and Euripides describes the Delphic dragon as covered by a leafy laurel.²⁰⁷ At all oracular seats of Apollo his priestess drank of the sacred spring and chewed the sacred laurel before she prophesied.²⁰⁸ Thus it would seem that the dragon, which at Delphi is expressly said to have been the guardian of the oracle,²⁰⁹ had in its custody both

²⁰⁴ Apollodorus, iii. 4. 3; Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 494; Pausanias, ix. 10. 5; *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 300 sq. The writer of the Homeric hymn merely says that Apollo slew the Delphic dragon at a spring; but Pausanias (x. 6. 6) tells us that the beast guarded the oracle.

²⁰⁵ Pausanias, x. 8. 9, x. 24. 7, with my notes; Ovid, *Amores*, i. 15. 35 sq.; Lucian, *Jupiter tragoedus*, 30; Nonnus, *Dionys*. iv. 309 sq.; Suidas, s. v. Κασταλία.

²⁰⁶ W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon d. griech. u. röm. Mythologie*, ii. 830, 838.

²⁰⁷ Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1245 sq., where the reading κατάχαλκος is clearly corrupt.

²⁰⁸ Lucian, *Bis accusatus*, I. So the priest of the Clarian Apollo at Colophon drank of a secret spring before he uttered oracles in verse (Tacitus, *Annals*, ii. 54; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* ii. 232).

²⁰⁹ Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1245 sqq.; Apollodorus, i. 4. I; Pausanias, x. 6. 6;

the instruments of divination, the holy tree and the holy water. We are reminded of the dragon or serpent, slain by Hercules, which guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides in the happy garden.²¹⁰ But at Delphi the oldest sacred tree appears, as Mr. A. B. Cook has pointed out,²¹¹ to have been not a laurel but an oak. For we are told that originally the victors in the Pythian games at Delphi wore crowns of oak leaves, since the laurel had not yet been created.²¹² Now, like the Festival of Crowning, the Pythian games were instituted to commemorate the slaughter of the dragon,²¹³ like it they were originally held every eighth year;²¹⁴ the two festivals were celebrated nearly at the same time of the year;²¹⁵ and the representative of Apollo in the one and the victors

Alcian, *Var. hist.* iii. i; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 140; Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 519; Schol. on Pindar, *Pyth.* Argument, p. 298, ed. Boeckh.

²¹⁰ Euripides, *Hercules Furens*, 395 *sqq.*; Apollodorus, ii. 5. II; Diodorus Siculus, iv. 26; Eratosthenes, *Catasterism.* 3; Schol. on Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 742; Schol. on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argon*, iv. 1396.

²¹¹ A. B. Cook, "The European Sky-god," *Folklore*, xv. (1904) p. 413.

²¹² Ovid, *Metam.* i. 448 *sqq.*

²¹³ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.* i. I, p. 2, and ii. 34, p. 29, ed. Potter; Aristotle, *Peplus*, Frag. (*Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum*, ii. p. 189, No. 282, ed. C. Müller); John of Antioch, Frag. i. 20 (*Frag. histor. Graec.* iv. p. 539, ed. C. Müller); Jamblichus, *De Pythagor.* vit. x. 52; Schol. on Pindar, *Pyth.* Argum. p. 298, ed. Boeckh; Ovid, *Metam.* i. 445 *sqq.*; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 140.

²¹⁴ Schol. on Pindar, *l. c.*; Censorinus, *De die natali*, 18. 6; compare Eustathius on Homer, *Od.* iii. 267, p. 1466. 29.

²¹⁵ Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 3, compared with *id.* 15; Aug. Mommsen, *Delphika*, pp. 211, 214; Th. Schreiber, *Apollon Pythoktonos* (Leipsic, 1879), pp. 32 *sqq.*

in the other were adorned with crowns made from the same sacred laurel.²¹⁶ In short, the two festivals appear to have been in origin substantially identical; the distinction between them may have arisen when the Delphians decided to hold the Pythian games every fourth, instead of every eighth year.²¹⁷ We may fairly suppose, therefore, that the leaf-crowned victors in the Pythian games, like the laurel-wreathed boy in the Festival of Crowning, formerly acted the part of the god himself. But if in the beginning these actors in the sacred drama wore wreaths of oak instead of laurel, it seems to follow that the deity whom they personated was the oak-god Zeus rather than the laurel-god Apollo; from which again we may infer that Delphi was a sanctuary of Zeus and the oak before it became the shrine of Apollo and the laurel.²¹⁸

Substitution of the laurel for the oak.

But why should the crown of oak have ceased to be the badge of victory? and why should a wreath of laurel have taken its place? The abandonment of the oak crown may have been a consequence of the disappearance of the oak itself from the neighbourhood of Delphi; in Greece, as in Italy, the deciduous trees have for centuries been retreating up the mountain sides

²¹⁶ Aelian, *Var. hist.* iii. I; Schol. on Pindar, *l. c.*

²¹⁷ On the original identity of the festivals see Th. Schreiber, *Apollon Pythoktonus*, pp. 37 *sq.*; A. B. Cook, in *Folklore*, xv. (1904) pp. 404 *sq.*

²¹⁸ The inference was drawn by Mr. A. B. Cook, whom I follow. See his article, "The European Sky-god," *Folk-lore*, xv. (1904) pp. 412 *sqq.*

before the advance of the evergreens.²¹⁹ When the last venerable oak, the rustling of whose leaves in the breeze had long been listened to as oracular, finally succumbed through age, or was laid low by a storm, the priests may have cast about for a tree of another sort to take its place. Yet they sought it neither in the lower woods of the valley nor in the dark forests which clothe the upper slopes of Parnassus above the frowning cliffs of Delphi. Legend ran that after the slaughter of the dragon, Apollo had purged himself from the stain of blood in the romantic Vale of Tempe, where the Peneus flows smoothly in a narrow defile between the lofty wooded steeps of Olympus and Ossa. Here the god crowned himself with a laurel wreath, and thither accordingly at the Festival of Crowning his human representative went to pluck the laurel for his brows.²²⁰ The custom, though doubtless ancient, can hardly have been original. We must suppose that in the beginning the dragon-guarded tree, whether an oak or a laurel, grew at Delphi itself. But why should the laurel be chosen as a substitute for the oak? Mr. A. B. Cook has suggested a plausible answer. The laurel leaf resembles so closely the leaf of the ilex or holm-oak in both shape and colour that an untrained observer may easily confuse the two. The upper surface of both is a dark glossy green, the lower surface shews a lighter tint. Nothing, therefore, could be more natural than to make the new wreath out of leaves which looked so like the old

²¹⁹ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, vol. i. p. 8.

²²⁰ Aelian, *Var. hist.* iii. 1; Schol. on Pindar, *Pyth.* Argum. p. 298, ed. Boeckh.

oak leaves that the substitution might almost pass undetected.²²¹

Whether at Thebes, as at Delphi, the laurel had ousted the oak from the place of honour at the festival of the Slaying of the Dragon, we cannot say. The oak has long disappeared from the low hills and flat ground in the neighbourhood of Thebes, but as late as the second century of our era there was a forest of ancient oaks not many miles off at the foot of Mount Cithaeron.²²²

Hypothesis of octennial kings at Delphi and Thebes, who personated dragons or serpents. Animals sacred to royal families. Greek stories of the transformation of gods into beasts point to a custom of a sacred marriage in which the actors masqueraded as animals.

It has been conjectured that in ancient days the persons who wore the wreath of laurel or oak at the octennial festivals of Delphi and Thebes were no other than the priestly kings, who personated the god, slew their predecessors in the guise of dragons, and reigned for a time in their stead.²²³ The theory certainly cannot be demonstrated, but there is a good deal of analogy in its favour. An eight years' tenure of the kingship at Delphi and Thebes would accord with the similar tenure of the office at Sparta and Cnossus. And if the kings of Cnossus disguised themselves as bulls, there seems no reason why the kings of Delphi and Thebes should not have personated dragons

²²¹ A. B. Cook, "The European Sky-god," *Folk-lore*, xv. (1904) pp. 423 *sq.*

²²² Pausanias, ix. 3. 4. See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, vol. ii. p. 140.

²²³ A. B. Cook, "The European Sky-god," *Folk-lore*, xv. (1904) pp. 402 *sqq.*

or serpents. In all these cases the animal whose guise the king assumed would be sacred to the royal family. At first the relation of the beast to the man would be direct and simple; the creature would be revered for some such reason as that for which a savage respects a certain species of animals, for example, because he believes that his ancestors were beasts of the same sort, or that the souls of his dead are lodged in them. In later times the sanctity of the species would be explained by saying that a god had at some time, and for some reason or other, assumed the form of the animal. It is probably not without significance that in Greek mythology the gods in general, and Zeus in particular, are commonly said to have submitted to this change of shape for the purpose of prosecuting a love adventure. Such stories may well reflect a custom of a Sacred Marriage at which the actors played the parts of the worshipful animals. With the growth of culture these local worships, the relics of a barbarous age, would be explained away by tales of the loves of the gods, and, gradually falling out of practice, would survive only as myths.

Analogy of the Wolf Society of Arcadia to the Leopard
Society of west Africa.

It is said that at the festival of the Wolf-god Zeus, held every nine years on the Wolf-mountain in Arcadia, a man tasted of the bowel of a human victim mixed with the bowels of animals, and having tasted it he was turned into a wolf, and remained a wolf for nine years, when he changed back again into a man

if in the interval he had abstained from eating human flesh.²²⁴ The tradition points to the existence of a society of cannibal wolf-worshippers, one or more of whom personated, and were supposed to embody, the sacred animal for periods of nine years together. Their theory and practice would seem to have agreed with those of the Human Leopard Societies of western Africa, whose members disguise themselves in the skins of leopards with sharp claws of steel. In that guise they attack and kill men in order to eat their flesh or to extract powerful charms from their bodies.²²⁵ Their mode of gaining recruits is like that of the Greek Wolf Society. When a visitor came to a village inhabited by a Leopard Society, "he was invited to partake of food, in which was mixed a small quantity of human flesh. The guest all unsuspectingly partook of the repast, and was afterwards told that human flesh formed one of the ingredients of the meal, and that it was then necessary that he should join the society, which was invariably done."²²⁶ As the ancient Greeks thought that a man might be turned into a wolf, so these negroes believe that he can be changed into a leopard; and, like the Greeks, some of them fancy that if the transformed man abstains during his transformation from preying on his fellows he can regain his

²²⁴ Plato, *Republic*, viii. p. 565 d e; Polybius, vii. 13; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* viii. 81; Varro, cited by Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xviii. 17; Pausanias, vi. 8. 2, viii. 2. 3-6.

²²⁵ Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, pp. 536-543; T. J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London, 1901), pp. 153-159; compare R. H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (London, 1904), pp. 200-203.

²²⁶ T. J. Alldridge, *op. cit.* p. 154.

human shape, but that if he once laps human blood he must remain a leopard for ever.²²⁷

Legend of the transformation of Cadmus and Harmonia into serpents. Transmigration of the souls of the dead into serpents. Kings claim kinship with the most powerful animals.

The hypothesis that the ancient kings of Thebes and Delphi had for their sacred animal the serpent or dragon, and claimed kinship with the creature, derives some countenance from the tradition that at the end of their lives Cadmus and his wife Harmonia quitted Thebes and went to reign over a tribe of Encheleans or Eel-men in Illyria, where they were both finally transformed into dragons or serpents.²²⁸ To the primitive mind an eel is a water-serpent;²²⁹ it can hardly, therefore, be an accident that the serpent-killer afterwards reigned over a tribe of eel-men and himself became a serpent at last. Moreover, according to one account, his wife Harmonia was a daughter of the very dragon which he slew.²³⁰ The tradition would fit in well with the hypothesis that the dragon or serpent was the sacred animal of

²²⁷ A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, ii. 248.

²²⁸ Apollodorus, iii. 5. 4; Strabo, vii. 7. 8, p. 326; Ovid, *Metam.* iv. 563-603; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 6; Nicander, *Theriaca*, 607 *sqq.*

²²⁹ A. van Gennep, *Tabou et totémisme à Madagascar* (Paris, 1904), p. 326.

²³⁰ Dercylus, quoted by a scholiast on Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 7; *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, iv. 387. The writer rationalises the legend by representing the dragon as a Theban man of that name whom Cadmus slew. On the theory here suggested this Euhemeristic version of the story is substantially right.

the old royal house of Thebes, and that the kingdom fell to him who slew his predecessor and married his daughter. We have seen reason to think that such a mode of succession to the throne was common in antiquity.²³¹ The story of the final transformation of Cadmus and Harmonia into snakes may be a relic of a belief that the souls of the dead kings and queens of Thebes transmigrated into the bodies of serpents, just as Caffre kings turn at death into boa-constrictors or deadly black snakes.²³² Indeed the notion that the souls of the dead lodge in serpents is widely spread in Africa and Madagascar.²³³ Other African tribes believe that their dead kings and chiefs turn into lions, leopards, hyaenas, pythons, hippopotamuses, or other creatures, and the animals are respected and spared accordingly.²³⁴ In like manner the Semang and other wild tribes of the Malay Peninsula imagine that the souls of their chiefs, priests, and magicians transmigrate

²³¹ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, ii. 268 sqq.

²³² David Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, Second Edition (Edinburgh, 1875), p. 213. Compare H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the Amazulu*, Part II., pp. 196, 211.

²³³ See *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Second Edition, pp. 73 sqq.

²³⁴ D. Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, p. 615; Miss A. Werner, *The Natives of British Central Africa* (London, 1906), p. 64; L. Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London, 1898), p. 74; J. Roscoe, "The Bahima," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvii. (1907) pp. 101 sq.; Major J. A. Meldon, "Notes on the Bahima," *Journal of the African Society*, No. 22 (January, 1907), pp. 151-153; J. A. Chisholm, "Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Winamwanga and Wiwa," *Journal of the African Society*, No. 36 (July, 1910), pp. 374, 375; P. Alois Hamberger, in *Anthropos*, v. (1910) p. 802.

at death into the bodies of certain wild beasts, such as elephants, tigers, and rhinoceroses, and that in their bestial form the dead men extend a benign protection to their living human kinsfolk.²³⁵ Even during their lifetime kings in rude society sometimes claim kinship with the most formidable beasts of the country. Thus the royal family of Dahomey specially worships the leopard; some of the king's wives are distinguished by the title of Leopard Wives, and on state occasions they wear striped cloths to resemble the animal.²³⁶ One king of Dahomey, on whom the French made war, bore the name of Shark; hence in art he was represented sometimes with a shark's body and a human head, sometimes with a human body and the head of a shark.²³⁷ The Trocadero Museum at Paris contains the wooden images of three kings of Dahomey who reigned during the nineteenth century, and who are all represented partly in human and partly in animal form. One of them, Guezo, bore the surname of the Cock, and his image represents him as a man covered with feathers. His son Guelelé, who succeeded him on the throne, was surnamed the Lion, and his effigy is that of a lion rampant with tail raised and hair on his body, but with human feet and hands. Guelelé was succeeded on the throne by his son Behanzin, who was surnamed

²³⁵ W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), ii. 194, 197, 221, 227, 305.

²³⁶ A. B. Ellis, *The Ewe-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast*, pp. 74 sq.

²³⁷ This I learned from Professor F. von Luschan in the Anthropological Museum at Berlin.

the Shark, and his effigy portrays him standing upright with the head and body of a fish, the fins and scales being carefully represented, while his arms and legs are those of a man.²³⁸ Again, a king of Benin was called Panther, and a bronze statue of him, now in the Anthropological Museum at Berlin, represents him with a panther's whiskers.²³⁹ Such portraits furnish an exact parallel to what I conceive to be the true story of the Minotaur. On the Gold Coast of Africa a powerful ruler is commonly addressed as "O Elephant!" or "O Lion!" and one of the titles of the king of Ashantee, mentioned at great ceremonies, is *borri*, the name of a venomous snake.²⁴⁰ It has been argued that King David belonged to a serpent family, and that the brazen serpent, which down to the time of Hezekiah was worshipped with fumes of burning incense,²⁴¹ represented the old sacred animal of his house.²⁴² In Europe the bull, the serpent, and the wolf would

²³⁸ M. Delafosse, in *La Nature*, No. 1086 (March 24th, 1894), pp. 262-266; J. G. Frazer, "Statues of Three Kings of Dahomey," *Man*, viii. (1908) pp. 130-132. King Behanzin, surnamed the Shark, is doubtless the King of Dahomey referred to by Professor von Luschan (see the preceding note).

²³⁹ The statue was pointed out to me and explained by Professor F. von Luschan.

²⁴⁰ A. B. Ellis, *The Tshi-speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast*, pp. 205 *sq.*

²⁴¹ 2 Kings xviii. 4.

²⁴² W. Robertson Smith, "Animal Worship and Animal Tribes," *Journal of Philology*, ix. (1880) pp. 99 *sq.* Professor T. K. Cheyne prefers to suppose that the brazen serpent and the brazen "sea" in the temple at Jerusalem were borrowed from Babylon and represented the great dragon, the impersonation of the primaevial watery chaos. See *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, s. v. "Nehushtan," vol. i. coll. 3387. The two views are perhaps not wholly irreconcilable. See below, pp. [111](#) *sq.*

naturally be on the list of royal beasts.

The serpent the royal animal at Athens and Salamis.

If the king's soul was believed to pass at death into the sacred animal, a custom might arise of keeping live creatures of the species in captivity and revering them as the souls of dead rulers. This would explain the Athenian practice of keeping a sacred serpent on the Acropolis and feeding it with honey cakes; for the serpent was identified with Erichthonius or Erechtheus, one of the ancient kings of Athens, of whose palace some vestiges have been discovered in recent times. The creature was supposed to guard the citadel. During the Persian invasion a report that the serpent had left its honey-cake untasted was one of the strongest reasons which induced the people to abandon Athens to the enemy; they thought that the holy reptile had forsaken the city.²⁴³ Again, Cecrops, the first king of Athens, is said to have been half-serpent and half-man;²⁴⁴ in art he is represented as a

²⁴³ Herodotus, viii. 41; Plutarch, *Themistocles*, 10; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 758 sq., with the Scholium; Philostratus, *Imagines*, ii. 17. 6. Some said that there were two serpents, Hesychius and Photius, *Lexicon*, s. v. οἰκουρὸν ὄφιν. For the identity of the serpent with Erichthonius, see Pausanias, i. 24. 7; Hyginus, *Astronomica*, ii. 13; Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 9; compare Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* vii. 24; and for the identity of Erichthonius and Erechtheus, see Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 547; *Etymologicum magnum*, p. 371, s. v. Ἐρεχθεύς. According to some, the upper part of Erichthonius was human and the lower part or only the feet serpentine. See Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 166; *id.*, *Astronomica*, ii. 13; Schol. on Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 23 d; *Etymologicum magnum*, l. c.; Servius on Virgil, *Georg.* iii. 13. See further my notes on Pausanias i. 18. 2 and i. 26. 5, vol. ii. pp. 168 sqq., 330 sqq.

²⁴⁴ Apollodorus, iii. 14. i; Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 438. Compare J. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*,

man from the waist upwards, while the lower part of his body consists of the coils of a serpent.²⁴⁵ It has been suggested that like Erechtheus he was identical with the serpent on the Acropolis.²⁴⁶ Once more, we are told that Cychreus gained the kingdom of Salamis by slaying a snake which ravaged the island,²⁴⁷ but that after his death he, like Cadmus, appeared in the form of the reptile.²⁴⁸ Some said that he was a man who received the name of Snake on account of his cruelty.²⁴⁹ Such tales may preserve reminiscences of kings who assumed the style of serpents in their lifetime and were believed to transmigrate into serpents after death. Like the dragons of Thebes and Delphi, the Athenian serpent appears to have been conceived as a creature of the waters; for the serpent-man Erechtheus was identified with the water-god Poseidon,²⁵⁰ and in his temple, the Erechtheum, where

v. 641.

²⁴⁵ W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon d. griech. und röm. Mythologie*, ii. 1019. Compare Euripides, *Ion*, 1163 sqq.

²⁴⁶ O. Immisch, in W. H. Roscher's *Lexikon d. griech. und röm. Mythologie*, ii. 1023.

²⁴⁷ Apollodorus, iii. 12. 7; Diodorus Siculus, iv. 72; J. Tzetzes, *Schol. on Lycophron*, 110, 175, 451.

²⁴⁸ Pausanias, i. 36. 1. Another version of the story was that Cychreus bred a snake which ravaged the island and was driven out by Eurylochus, after which Demeter received the creature at Eleusis as one of her attendants (Hesiod, quoted by Strabo, ix. 1. 9, p. 393).

²⁴⁹ Stephanus Byzantius, s. v. Κυχρεῖος πάγος; Eustathius, *Commentary on Dionysius*, 507, in *Geographi Graeci minores*, ed. C. Müller, ii. 314.

²⁵⁰ Hesychius, s. v. Ἐρεχθεύς; Athenagoras, *Supplicatio pro Christianis*, 1; [Plutarch], *Vit. X. Orat.* p. 843 b c; *Corpus inscriptionum Atticarum*, i. No. 387, iii.

the serpent lived, there was a tank which went by the name of “the sea of Erechtheus.”²⁵¹

The wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia at Thebes may have been a dramatic representation of the marriage of the sun and moon at the end of the eight years' cycle.

If the explanation of the eight years' cycle which I have adopted holds good for Thebes and Delphi, the octennial festivals held at these places probably had some reference to the sun and moon, and may have comprised a sacred marriage of these luminaries. The solar character of Apollo, whether original or adventitious, lends some countenance to this view, but at both Delphi and Thebes the god was apparently an intruder who usurped the place of an older god or hero at the festival. At Thebes that older hero was Cadmus. Now Cadmus was a brother of Europa, who appears to have been a personification of the moon conceived in the form of a cow.²⁵² He travelled westward seeking his lost sister till he came to Delphi, where the oracle bade him give up the search and follow a cow which had the white mark of the full moon on its flank; wherever the cow fell down exhausted, there he was to take up his abode and found a city. Following the cow and the directions of the oracle he built Thebes.²⁵³ Have we not here in another form the myth of the

Nos. 276, 805; compare Pausanias, i. 26. 5.

²⁵¹ Apollodorus, iii. 14. 1; Herodotus, viii. 55; compare Pausanias, viii. 10. 4.

²⁵² See above, p. [73](#).

²⁵³ Apollodorus, iii. 4. 1 *sq.*; Pausanias, ix. 12. 1 *sq.*; Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, ii.

moon pursued and at last overtaken by the sun? and the famous wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia, to attend which all the gods came down from heaven,²⁵⁴ may it not have been at once the mythical marriage of the great luminaries and the ritual marriage of the king and queen of Thebes masquerading, like the king and queen of Cnossus, in the character of the lights of heaven at the octennial festival which celebrated and symbolised the conjunction of the sun and moon after their long separation, their harmony after eight years of discord? A better name for the bride at such a wedding could hardly have been chosen than Harmonia.

This theory confirmed by the astronomical symbols carried by the Laurel-bearer at the octennial festival of Laurel-bearing. The Olympic festival seems to have been based on the octennial cycle. Mythical marriage of the sun and moon at Olympia.

This theory is supported by a remarkable feature of the festival. At the head of the procession, immediately in front of the Laurel-bearer, walked a youth who carried in his hands a staff of olive-wood draped with laurels and flowers. To the top of the staff was fastened a bronze globe, with smaller globes hung from it; to the middle of the staff were attached a globe of medium size and three hundred and sixty-five purple ribbands,

494; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 178. The mark of the moon on the cow is mentioned only by Pausanias and Hyginus.

²⁵⁴ Apollodorus, iii. 4. 2; Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 822 sq.; Pindar, *Pyth.* iii. 155 sqq.; Diodorus Siculus, v. 49. 1; Pausanias, iii. 18. 12, ix. 12. 3; Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 494.

while the lower part of the staff was swathed in a saffron pall. The largest globe, we are told, signified the sun, the smaller the moon, and the smallest the stars, and the purple ribbands stood for the course of the year, being equal in number to the days comprised in it.²⁵⁵ The choir of virgins who followed the Laurel-bearer singing hymns²⁵⁶ may have represented the Muses, who are said to have sung and played at the marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia; down to late times the very spot in the market-place was shewn where they had discoursed their heavenly music.²⁵⁷ We may conjecture that the procession of the Laurel-bearing was preceded by a dramatic performance of the Slaying of the Dragon, and that it was followed by a pageant representative of the nuptials of Cadmus and Harmonia in the presence of the gods. On this hypothesis Harmonia, the wife of Cadmus, is only another form of his sister Europa, both of them being personifications of the moon. Accordingly in the Samothracian mysteries, in which the marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia appears to have been celebrated, it was Harmonia and not Europa whose wanderings were dramatically represented.²⁵⁸ The gods

²⁵⁵ Proclus, quoted by Photius, *Bibliotheca*, p. 321, ed. Bekker.

²⁵⁶ Proclus, *l. c.*

²⁵⁷ Pindar, *Pyth.* iii. 155 *sqq.*; Diodorus Siculus, v. 49. 1; Pausanias, ix. 12. 3; Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 494.

²⁵⁸ Schol. on Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 7 καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐν τῇ Σαμοθράκῃ ζητοῦσιν αὐτὴν [scil. Ἀρμονίαν] ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς. According to the Samothracian account, Cadmus in seeking Europa came to Samothrace, and there, having been initiated into the mysteries, married Harmonia (Diodorus Siculus, v. 48 *sq.*). It is probable, though

who quitted Olympus to grace the wedding by their presence were probably represented in the rites, whether celebrated at Thebes or in Samothrace, by men and women attired as deities. In like manner at the marriage of a Pharaoh the courtiers masqueraded in the likeness of the animal-headed Egyptian gods.²⁵⁹

Within historical times the great Olympic festival was always held at intervals of four, not of eight, years. Yet it too would seem to have been based on the octennial cycle. For it always fell on a full moon, at intervals of fifty and of forty-nine lunar months alternately.²⁶⁰ Thus the total number of lunar months comprised in two successive Olympiads was ninety-nine, which is precisely the number of lunar months in the octennial cycle.²⁶¹

it cannot be proved, that the legend was acted in the mystic rites.

²⁵⁹ See *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, ii. 133. Mr. A. B. Cook has suggested that the central scene on the eastern frieze of the Parthenon represents the king and queen of Athens about to take their places among the enthroned deities. See his article "Zeus, Jupiter, and the Oak," *Classical Review*, xviii. (1904) p. 371. As the scenes on the frieze appear to have been copied from the Panathenaïac festival, it would seem, on Mr. Cook's hypothesis, that the sacred marriage of the King and Queen was celebrated on that occasion in presence of actors who played the parts of gods and goddesses. In this connexion it may not be amiss to remember that in the eastern gable of the Parthenon the pursuit of the moon by the sun was mythically represented by the horses of the sun emerging from the sea on the one side, and the horses of the moon plunging into it on the other.

²⁶⁰ Schol. on Pindar, *Olymp.* iii. 35 (20).

²⁶¹ Compare Aug. Boeckh, on Pindar, *l. c.*, *Explicationes*, p. 138; L. Ideler, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, i. 366 sq.; G. F. Unger, "Zeitrechnung der Griechen und Römer," in Iwan Müller's *Handbuch der classischen*

Altertumswissenschaft, i. 605 *sq.* All these writers recognise the octennial cycle at Olympia.

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