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EDITED BY

JAMES HASTINGS

119415 R

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF

JOHN A. SELBIE, M.A., D.D.

PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN THE
UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, ABERDEEN

AND

LOUIS H. GRAY, M.A., Ph.D.

SOME TIME FELLOW IN INDO-IRANIAN LANGUAGES IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK

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SEPARATIST SOCIETY. — See COMMUNISTIC SOCIETIES OF AMERICA.

SERAPHIM. — See DEMONS AND SPIRITS (Hebrew).

SERINGAPATAM (Skr. Śīrangapattana, 'city of the holy pleasure-place').—Serlingapatam is a city in Mysore District, Mysore; lat. 12° 25' N.; long. 76° 42' E.; situated on an island in the river Kāveri. In the earliest times Gautama R̥ṣi is said to have had a hermitage here, and he worshipped the god Ranganātha, 'lord of pleasure,' whose temple is the principal building in the fort. The earliest temple is said to have been erected by Tirumalaiya, under the Gangā dynasty, A.D. 894. About A.D. 117 the whole

site was granted by one of the Chola kings to Ramānujāchārya, the celebrated Vaiṣṇava apostle, and in 1454 the Ranganātha temple was enlarged, the materials of 101 Jain temples being used for the purpose. The place is remarkable for the two famous sieges in 1792 and 1799, the British forces being under the command of Lord Cornwallis and General Harris; in the latter attack the Sultān Tipū was slain. His remains and those of his father Haidar 'Alī rest in a mausoleum (*gumbaz*) in the garden known as the Lāl Bāgh, where prayers are still offered.

LITERATURE.—B. L. Rice, *Mysore*, rev. ed., London, 1897, ii. 294 ff.; F. Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, do. 1807, i. 60 ff.; M. Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, Madras, 1869, ii. 241 ff., 365 ff.; G. B. Malleson, *Seringapatam; Past and Present*, do. 1876; *IGI* xxii. 179 l. W. CROOKE.

SERPENT-WORSHIP.

Introductory (J. A. MACCULLOCH), p. 399.
Indian (W. CROOKE), p. 411.

SERPENT-WORSHIP (Introductory and primitive).—The cult of the serpent exists in many forms, whether of a single serpent or of a species, of a serpent embodying a spirit or god, of a real or imaginary serpent represented in an image, of a serpent as associated with a divinity (a chief god or one of many), or of a purely mythical reptile. All these may be traced back to the cult of actual serpents, which, however, easily become a fitting vehicle for a spirit or god. The origin of the cult is to be sought in the effect which all animals more or less had upon the mind of early man—a feeling that they were stronger, wiser, subtler than he; in a word, uncanny. This was especially true of the serpent because of its swift yet graceful and mysterious gliding motion without feet or wings, unlike that of any other animal,¹ its power of disappearing suddenly, the brilliance and power of fascination of its eye, its beauty and strength, the sudden fatal consequences of its bite or of its enveloping folds, the practice of casting its skin, which suggested its longevity or even immortality. All these contributed to arouse feelings of wonder, respect, fear, to produce worship, and also to make the serpent a fit subject of innumerable myths. In the various forms of the cult there is often found a sense of the animal's beneficence, probably because myth easily attributed to it wisdom, secret knowledge, magical power, healing properties, and inspiration. As an animal dwelling in holes in the earth, its chthonic character was suggested—it was the cause of fertility (also because it was thought to give or withhold water), and became the embodiment of a fertility daimon or earth-spirit; hence also a guardian of hidden treasure or metals.² In so far as the serpent is a revealer of the arts of civilization, this is probably because, where it was worshipped, it was often grafted on to a mythic culture-hero or eponymous founder. Totemism sometimes lent its aid as a factor in developing respect for serpents, if not actual cult. Ancestor-worship also assisted, in so far as certain snakes haunting houses or graves were associated with the dead. Myth connected the serpent with the waters, either because some species lived in or near them or in marshy ground, or because the sinuous course and appearance of a serpent resembled those of a river, or with the lightning, because of its swift, darting motion and fatal effects. Some serpents are harmful, others are

¹ Cf. Pr 301^b.

² Perhaps also because the lightning (=serpent) was supposed to produce gold.

Teutonic and Balto-Slavic (E. WELSFORD), p. 419.

harmless; and perhaps this is one main reason why both in cult and in myth some are objects of fear and their evil traits and appearance are exaggerated or associated with demonic beings, while others are beneficent and helpful.¹

Man's fancy and man's dreams about such an animal as the serpent must also be taken into account in considering the origins of the cult.

This is illustrated by an account from Papua, where a native recently dreamt that a large snake living on a volcano accused him of killing snakes and alligators and offered, if he promised never to do so again, to give him a herb to cure all diseases. The native went about announcing this, but some natives still disbelieved and shot an alligator, which remonstrated with them. Snakes and alligators now go unharmed.²

Here the common fancy of the solidarity of animals leading them to avenge the death of a single animal and the consequent respect paid to them are seen. This and other fancies are embodied in a dream, and might easily be the origin of a cult, as they actually are of a prohibition.

Classical writers had various theories as to the origin of the cult, from that of Diodorus that the snake was worshipped because he figured in banners or was figured on banners because he was a god, to the shrewder remarks of Philo Byblius quoted by Eusebius (see § 1 (f)).

Practically every aspect of serpent-worship, myth, and legend, and of human attitude to the serpent, is shared by other reptiles—*e.g.*, the crocodile, to some extent the lizard, and here and there large eels.³

While some form of awe or reverence for the serpent is wide-spread, the actual worship varies in intensity in different regions. Fergusson supposed the cult to have originated among the Turanian peoples of the lower Euphrates and to have spread thence to every part of the old world where a Turanian people settled, while no Semitic or Aryan people adopted it as a form of faith, its presence among these being 'like the tares of a previous crop springing up among the stems of a badly-cultivated field of wheat.'⁴ Fergusson's

¹ See, however, C. Hose and W. McDougall, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, London, 1912, ii. 68 ff.

² G. Murray, *ARW* xv. [1912] 628.

³ See *ERB* i. 490, 506, 514; ii. 352, iii. 563, vii. 230*, viii. 357*, ix. 279, 341*, 346*, 511*, 528*; J. F. McLennan, *Studies in Ancient History*, 2nd ser., London, 1896, pp. 272, 274, 499; Hose-McDougall, *loc. cit.*; R. B. Dixon, *Oceanic Mythology (=Mythology of all Races, vol. ix.)*, Boston, 1916, pp. 55, 120; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, London, 1856, pp. 57, 75; W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, do. 1900, p. 282 ff.; H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the Amazulu*, do. 1884, p. 217; H. Ling Roth, *JAI* xxii. [1898] 27; W. W. Gill, *Myths and Songs from the S. Pacific*, London, 1876, p. 77.

⁴ J. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 3.

theory is hardly borne out even by the facts known to him, still less by newer knowledge now available. More recently Elliot Smith suggests a theory of migration by which, along with megalith-building, terrace culture, and many other things, serpent-worship originated in Egypt about 800 B.C., was spread thence by the Phœnicians to India, the Far East, and the Pacific islands, and eventually reached America.¹ Investigation along the line of this new theory may have fruitful results.

1. **Worship of the serpent.**—The distinction should be noted between the worship of the animal itself and its worship as the embodiment of a god or spirit. Sometimes also a god appears as a serpent, or the animal is the symbol or attendant of a god who is probably the anthropomorphic form of an earlier serpent, such as is often the guardian of a sacred place or temple.

(a) *Australian.*—In Australia the serpent is often a totem and occurs in myth, but is not worshipped, except perhaps by the Warramunga tribe of N. Central Australia.

The Wollungua is a huge mythical totem-snake, father of all snakes, and lives in a water-hole, whence it may emerge to destroy men. The men of this totem do not call it by its real name, lest they should lose their power over it, and they perform ceremonies like those used by others for increasing their totems. By these rites the Wollungua is pleased and will not come forth to destroy. A large keel-shaped mound, resembling it, is made. The men walk round it, stroke it, and then hack it to pieces. At a visit paid to the water-hole the men, with bowed heads, solemnly begged the Wollungua to do them no harm. Here something approaching worship, with prayer and ritual, is indicated.²

Some New South Wales tribes believe in the existence of two snakes, 40 miles long, found on the way to the other world or in it. They are killed and eaten by the dead, but are immediately reproduced. The blacks fear them.³

But among the Australians generally and other low races—Veddas, Andamanese, and Fuegians—there does not appear to be any cult of the serpent.⁴ Bushman paintings show huge snakes and other animals, sometimes with humps, on which baboons, men, and mythical creatures are painted, but we do not hear of a cult.⁵

(b) *Palæolithic.*—How far serpent-worship existed in pre-historic times is uncertain. Serpents are found among the animals figured by artists of the Palæolithic period. Two figured on *bâtons de commandement* may possibly be eels.⁶ But in other instances even the species is recognizable. One of these occurs on an armet, perhaps as a charm;⁷ another is surrounded by an ornamental border.⁸

It is hardly likely that these animals were represented, as in S. Reinach's theory of Palæolithic art, in order to attract them, but the representations might have been for some such magical rite as that of the Arunta. The serpent with the ornamental border might suggest that the reptile was the object of a cult. N. Pflsner,⁹ while disbelieving that Palæolithic man had a

religion, found religious sentiments in anthropoid apes, which, he held, worship serpents and bury them with a supply of insects in their graves as a provision for a future life! In Mesolithic times the serpent had become a symbol, as on the painted pebbles of Mas d'Azi.

(c) *African.*—All over Africa the serpent is worshipped either in itself or as the embodiment of a god.

The cult of the snake at Whydah, Dahomey, may be taken as typical of W. Africa. The heavenly serpent Dañ-sio or Dañ-gh, the rainbow, confers wealth on men, and is represented by a coiled or horned snake of clay in a calabash. It is also represented by the python. The monster python, grandfather of all snakes, dwelt in a temple or 'snake-house,' containing many snakes, and to it kings and people made pilgrimages with many costly gifts. The python-god is immortal, almighty, omniscient; valuable sacrifices and prayers are offered to it and oracles are received from it; and, with the exception of the priests, only the king can see it, and he but once. It is invoked for good weather, fertility of the crops, and increase of cattle. The whole species was revered, and a man who killed such a snake was put to death. The god had a thousand snake-wives or priestesses, and all girls of about twelve whom the older priestesses could capture at the time of millet-sprouting were kept in seclusion and taught the sacred rites, and figures of serpents were traced on their bodies. The serpent was said to have marked them. Later they were put into a hut, where the serpent was supposed to visit and marry them. Girls and women attacked by hysteria were supposed to have been touched by the serpent and thus inspired or possessed. The people had also smaller serpents, not so powerful as Dañ-sio, but adored by them.¹

A similar cult exists among the Brass River people, where the tribal- and war-god Ogediga was a python, and pythons were so sacred as to be allowed to commit all kinds of depredations, while by an article of the treaty of 1858 white men were forbidden to kill them. The python is the tribal- and war-god and has a numerous priesthood, and is supposed to contain one of the many spirits.² The local god Djw'ahnu among the Tshi appears as a serpent attended by other snakes, and human sacrifices were formerly offered to him. If he did not appear, special sacrifices were made to propitiate him.³ The cult also exists among the Mpongwees, Bakali, Ashanti, and Niger tribes. In Fernando P. the chief god is represented by a cobra, which can inflict disease or death, give riches, etc. A skin of one is hung up annually in the market-place, and children are made to touch it, perhaps to put them under its care.⁴

Among the Baganda the god Selwanga was represented by a python with priests and mediums. It was kept in a temple, fed with milk by a woman, and then a medium, possessed by the god, gave oracles interpreted by a priest. Sacrifices were made to it, and sterile women obtained children through its power. The wife of the chief god Mukasa was a pythoness, sister of Selwanga. The Baganda had a similar cult of a serpent Mwanga in a temple on a hill, visited by childless women.⁵ Many other African tribes have a serpent cult.⁶ In Madagascar serpents are looked upon with superstitious fear and are supposed to be emissaries of the god Ramahavavy.⁷

The Voodoo serpent-cult in Haiti and elsewhere reproduces these W. African cults, one of the names of Dañ-sio being Vodunhwe. The will of the god is communicated through a priest and priestess, and the cult takes place at night when the serpent is shown in a cage; offerings are made to it; the worshippers implore its aid; and the priestess, standing in the cage, becomes inspired and gives oracles. Dances and an orgy follow, and sometimes a child is sacrificed—'the goat without horns.'⁸ The Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana reverence a good divinity in the snake Espagado, which must not be hurt in any way, and the snake generally occupies a prominent position in their thoughts.⁹

(d) *Polynesian.*—In New Zealand and other Polynesian islands the snake is seldom met with,

¹ A. B. Ellis, *The Koro-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast*, London, 1890, pp. 60, 148 f.; J. A. Skertchly, *Dahomey as it is*, do. 1874, p. 54 f.; C. de Brosses, *Du Culte des dieux fétiches*, Paris, 1760, p. 26 f.; W. Bosman, *A Description of the Coast of Guinea*, Eng. tr., in J. Pinkerton, *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, London, 1808-14, xvi. 493 f.; R. F. Burton, *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome*, do. 1864, i. 59 f., ii. 92; J. C. M. Boudin, *Études anthropologiques*, pt. II, p. 57 f.

² Burton, i. 81; M. H. Kingsley, *West African Studies*, London, 1899, p. 433; letter of Bishop Crowther, cited in McLennan, p. 52A; A. G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger*, London, 1900, p. 329.

³ Ellis, *The Tshi-speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast*, London, 1887, p. 41.

⁴ T. J. Hutchinson, *Impressions of W. Africa*, London, 1858, p. 196 f.

⁵ J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, London, 1911, pp. 318, 322, 335, *JRAI* xxxix. [1909] 188.

⁶ See *ERE* i. 57^a, 166^a (Agaos), ii. 511^b (Berbers), vi. 491^b (Galla).

⁷ C. S. Wake, *Serpent Worship*, p. 88.

⁸ Boudin, p. 78 f.; S. B. St. John, *Hayti, the Black Republic*, London, 1884, p. 185 f.

⁹ L. C. van Panhuys, *Actes du 1^{er} Congrès internat. d'Hist. des Religions*, Leyden, 1913, p. 65.

¹ G. Elliot Smith, *The Migrations of Early Culture*, Manchester, 1916, *The Influence of Ancient Egyptian Civilization in the East and in America*, London, 1916.

² Spencer-Gillen^b, pp. 226 ff., 495

³ E. Palmer, *JAI* xiii. [1884] 291.

⁴ No reference to it occurs in such works as the following: A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of S.E. Australia*, London, 1904; C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann, *The Veddas*, Cambridge, 1911; E. H. Man's exhaustive art. on the Andaman Islanders in *JAI* xii. [1883] 69 ff., 117 ff., 327 ff.; P. Hyades and J. Deniker in *Anthropologie et ethnologie* (= *Mission scientifique du Cap Horn*, vol. vii.), Paris, 1891.

⁵ G. W. Stow, *The Native Races of S. Africa*, London, 1905, pp. 32, 202; R. N. Hall, 'Bushman Paintings in the Ma-Dobo Range', *Geographical Journal*, xxxix. [1912] 594. The snakes have giraffe heads, and similar snakes are also incised on rocks. The paintings are said to be sacred.

⁶ T. Wilson, 'Prehistoric Art,' in *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1896*, Washington, 1898, pp. 388, 400.

⁷ Cf. below, § 4 (a).

⁸ E. Piette, *L'Anthropologie*, vi. [1895] 408, xv. [1904] 149, 174.

⁹ *La psicologia dell' uomo preistorico*, Palermo, 1895, quoted in *L'Anthropologie*, viii. [1897] 334.

but in Tonga the water-snake is the embodiment of a god and is revered.¹

(e) *Melanesian*.—There are traces of snake-worship in Melanesia.

Among the Koita of British New Guinea harmful mythical beings called *tabu* are seen as snakes, corresponding to the beings called *paipai* which cause sickness among the Roro-speaking tribes. Snakes are also used by sorcerers.² In Fiji the supreme god Ndengei had a serpent as his shrine, and was thought to exist as a vast serpent in a cave, fed by an attendant. Hogs and human victims were formerly offered to him, and he gave oracles through a priest and sent rain. Ratu-mai-Mbulu also lived as a serpent in a cave, where food was offered to him yearly.³ A *niu*, or spirit, in the form of a mythic snake Bunosi, to some extent a creator though born of a human mother, is holy and is worshipped with sacrifice in Lavelai in the Solomon Islands.⁴

In San Cristoval *figona* (spirits) have serpent incarnations, and one of them, Agunua, is supreme and creator. Other snake *figona* are female. Firstfruits are offered to a snake called Kagauraha, a representative of Agunua, while there are other rites and prayers for relief from sickness, from bad seasons, for growth, etc. Kagauraha and her brood live in a special house, from which women are excluded. A pig or human sacrifice is offered, and the serpent gives oracles. In other places certain *figona* incarnate in serpents are worshipped, but are said to be local representations of Agunua, who is 'all of them.'⁵

(f) *Dayak*.—Among the Dayaks the serpent embodies an *antu*, or spirit, and is occasionally worshipped. When a spirit enters into a snake, the animal becomes a deity and spirit-helper of an individual, but there is no tribal cult.⁶ The Kenyahs of Borneo regard Ball Sungei as embodied in a serpent in a river, causing it to swirl and capsize boats. Hence he is feared.⁷

(g) *Ainu*.—Among the Ainu the cult is directed to a mythical snake-king, father of all snakes. Snakes cause the evils of child-birth, and their spirits may possess one who has slain them. Madness is caused by a snake entering the body, and women bitten by snakes become subject to hysteria, and sometimes act as witch-doctors.⁸

(h) *American Indian*.—The American Indians believe in a huge serpent, sometimes worshipped,⁹ but among the northern tribes mainly the subject of myths.

He is horned or feathered,¹⁰ the horn being the thunder-bolt, and he is generally malevolent, though not always so. Sometimes he is a personification of the lightning, more often of the waters, ruling them and their powers, and in Chippewa myth he is connected with the flood. More beneficent beings are in conflict with him, and sometimes slay him—the Great Hare (Algonquins),¹¹ the Thunderer who hates all noxious beings (Iroquois),¹² Manibozho (Chippewas).¹³ Sometimes he is placated to avoid his malignancy, as with the Musquakies, with whom the great Rain-Serpent is the cause of drought and ancestor of all snakes, and to whose fish-totem clan he is propitious.¹⁴ But in the drier regions he is the Rain-Serpent who sends the needed rain to fertilize the maize, and he is one of the gods.

With the Zuñi dramatic ritual symbolizes the coming of Kóloowisi, the Plumed Serpent, of whom an image is carried in procession. Water and grain are made to drop from it, and the water, symbolizing rain, is drunk by candidates for initiation; the grain is planted separately from the rest of the seed.¹⁵ Among the Hopi the serpent is called Palidukon, and the fertilizing of the maize by him is dramatically represented.¹⁶

¹ W. Mariner, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, London, 1817, ii. 189; J. Williams, *Narr. of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, do. 1858, p. 547.

² C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*, Cambridge, 1910, pp. 183, 302.

³ B. Thomson, *The Fijians*, London, 1908, p. 114; T. Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, do. 1858, p. 217 f.; cf. *ERE* vi. 14^b. For the cult in Banks Islands and the New Hebrides see *ERE* viii. 533^b and cf. ix. 337^b; in New Guinea, ix. 346^a; in New Caledonia, ix. 338.

⁴ G. C. Wheeler, *ARW* xv. [1912] 348 ff.

⁵ C. E. Fox and F. H. Drew, *JRAI* xlv. [1915] 185 ff.; cf. *ERE* viii. 533.

⁶ H. Ling Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and British N. Borneo*, London, 1896, i. 188; Hose-McDougall, ii. 90 f., 114.

⁷ Hose-McDougall, ii. 15; for Annam see *ERE* i. 541^b.

⁸ J. Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folklore*, London, 1901, pp. 301, 356 ff.; *ERE* i. 251.

⁹ See *ERE* i. 324^b.

¹⁰ For horned snakes and their rationale see *ERE* iii. 508^b, 563^b, vi. 793^a.

¹¹ H. B. Alexander, *N. American Mythology* (= *Mythology of all Races*, vol. x.), Boston, 1916, p. 44.

¹² J. G. Müller, *Gesch. der american. Urreligionen*, Basel, 1855, p. 47.

¹³ E. G. Squier, *American Review*, new ser., ii. [1848] 392 ff.; Müller, p. 131.

¹⁴ M. A. Owen, *Folk-lore of the Musquakie Indians*, London, 1904, pp. 36, 110 f. For the Rain-Serpent revered by the Kickapoo see *ERE* i. 324^b.

¹⁵ M. C. Stevenson, *RS RBEW* [1904], p. 94 ff.

¹⁶ See *ERE* vi. 785^b, 786^a, and, for such divine serpents among the Huichols, vi. 829^a.

Corresponding to the Rain-Serpent is the snake Sisiutl of the Kwakiutl (N.W. Pacific coast)—a serpent with a horned head at each end of its body, and a human horned head in the middle. To touch, see, or eat it is certain death, but it brings power to those who enjoy supernatural help. It is frequently represented in carving and painting.¹

Most of the tribes pay some form of cult and give offerings to the rattle-snake, the species almost exclusively honoured and universally represented in early and later art.² Where it is not actually worshipped, it is respected and not killed.

The Delawares, Leni Lenap, and others call it 'Grandfather,' and among the Algonquians it was the king of snakes, who gave prosperous breezes and was the symbol of life in their picture-writing.³

The most curious aspect of snake-worship is that of the Hopi and kindred tribes. Perhaps originally a form of totem-ancestor-worship, the cult is now a dramatic prayer for rain and growth, but the worship is paid to mythic ancestors, the snake-youth and snake-maid, Teuamana, who are personated in the rite.

Rattle-snakes, the elder brothers of the snake-clan, are collected and ceremonially washed after prayer. Symbols representing clouds, rain, and lightning, and corn and other seeds are set out in the *kiva*, where a secret ceremonial is performed with hundreds of snakes. In the public ceremony the priests of the snake fraternity carry the snakes in their mouths, and these are sprinkled with sacred meal as a prayer-offering. The snakes are then sent off to the cardinal points, in order that they may carry the prayers for rain to the powers below. The members of the clan claim immunity from snake-bite, because the snake is their totem. This snake-dance has no connexion with the cult of the Plumed Serpent already referred to.⁴ The Natchez also venerated the rattle-snake as a form of the Great Spirit and placed its image in the temple of the sun.⁵

Among the animal mounds of Wisconsin one represents a serpent, 1000 ft. in length. It is conspicuously situated, and, like all the other mounds, was fitted for the performance of ceremonies before a large multitude.⁶

(i) *Mexican*.—In Mexico, before and after the Aztec immigration, the snake was an important religious symbol.

Living rattle-snakes were kept in the temples and fed with the flesh of human sacrificial victims.⁷ Several of the higher gods were partially of serpent origin or had been associated with older serpent-gods. Huizilpochtli, an anthropomorphic humming-bird deity, was born of Coatlicue, whose name signifies 'serpent,' and snakes were associated with his image and ritual.⁸ In times of danger his image was covered with a snake-skin, and the priest carried a wooden snake as his symbol on his festival. The walls of his temple had snakes carved in relief, and its circuit was called *coatepanthi*, 'the circuit of snakes.'⁹ Perhaps the snake-aspect of this god was derived from the serpent-cult of the Otomí, whose highest god, Mixcoatl, was a serpent-divinity.¹⁰ In one of his aspects Quetzalcoatl seems to be identical with the Plumed Serpent of the Hopi, and a snake-god of Yucatan, Cuculcan, may have been merged into him. His name means 'feathered serpent'; his image had a snake beside it; and the entrance to his temple represented the gory jaws of a huge serpent. When he left Mexico for the fabled land of Tlapalan, he journeyed in a boat of serpent skins.¹¹ At the least of the god Tlaloc little hills of paper and wooden snakes were placed on his altar, and his image held a golden serpent.¹² The goddess Chihuacoatl, or 'serpent woman,' was said to have borne twins at the beginning of the fourth world-age, from whom the earth was peopled. Hence twins were called 'snakes.' She was also called Tonantzin, 'our mother,' and was represented with a great male serpent beside her.¹³

¹ F. Boas, 'Social Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians' (*Report of U.S. National Museum*), Washington, 1895, p. 871.

² D. G. Brinton, *The Myths of the New World*³, Philadelphia, 1896, p. 130; W. H. Holmes, *2 RBEW* [1888], p. 289.

³ Brinton, p. 142.

⁴ J. G. Bourke, *The Snake Dance of the Moguis of Arizona*, London, 1884; J. W. Fewkes, *JALP* xvi. [1901] 82 f., *15 RBEW* [1897], p. 304, *19 RBEW*, pt. 2 [1900], pp. 624, 965 ff., 1005 ff.; M. C. Stevenson, *11 RBEW* [1894], for the dance among the Sia. Cf. *ERE* vi. 785 f.

⁵ Müller, p. 62.

⁶ G. F. Wright, *The Origin and Antiquity of Man*, London, 1913, p. 148 ff.

⁷ Bernal Diaz, quoted by Southey, notes to *Madoc in Poetical Works*, London, 1860, v. 432; F. Lopez de Gómara in S. Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimages*, Glasgow, 1905-07, xv. 536.

⁸ Joseph Acosta, in Purchas, xv. 312 f.

⁹ *Ib.* p. 319 f.; *NR* iii. 321.

¹⁰ Müller, p. 485.

¹¹ W. Prescott, *Hist. of Mexico*, London, 1909, i. 383; Müller, pp. 486, 577 ff.; *NR* iii. 281, 449; Lopez de Gómara, in Purchas, xv. 547.

¹² Müller, p. 502.

¹³ *Ib.* pp. 484, 514; Brinton, p. 143; *NR* iii. 352.

(j) *Mayan*.—The Mayan god Votan was probably in one aspect a variety of the Flumed Serpent, and his image represented him as a bird above and a serpent below. This culture-god was said to have built 'the city of the serpents' and to have written a book proving that he was one of the Chanés, or serpents.¹ In Mayan MSS and carvings the rattle-snake alone is represented as a symbol and is called the 'serpent-king.'²

(k) *Central American*.—Among the peoples of Central America living snakes were worshipped.

Human victims are said to have been offered to a living serpent-god by the Zacatecas.³ Near Uxmal is a spring where, according to Indian belief, an old woman sits and exchanges water for little children, whom she gives to a serpent to eat. She is perhaps the anthropomorphic form of a serpent-god to whom children were offered.⁴ All over this region, in Honduras and Nicaragua, the remains of temples show colossal feathered serpents, sometimes with a human head in the jaws, as at Uxmal, sculptured on the walls and cornices, and sometimes running the whole length of the building. Quetzalcoatl or Cuculcan is also depicted holding feathered serpents or with these coiled round his body. Such serpents are also seen painted on rocks in Nicaragua.⁵

(l) *Peruvian*.—In Peru the pre-Inca race venerated serpents and painted them on temples and houses, and offered human hearts and blood to them. They were also represented on the temples of the Inca kingdom, where reverence for snakes was wide-spread, and the spotted wood-snake was kept in the temple of Pachacamac.⁶ The god of riches, Urcagua, was regarded as a snake, in which form he was said to have appeared, and his snake-image in the form of a horned and hairy rattle-snake was revered in a building called the 'snake-house.'⁷

(m) *S. American Indian*.—The native Indians of S. America have always shown certain reverence for serpents.

Among the Caribs, who believed that the spirits of the dead transmigrated into snakes, images of snakes existed. Rakumon, one of the men drawn from the thigh of the first man and god Loguo, became a snake with a human head and twined himself round trees, the fruit of which he ate and gave to others. Afterwards he became a star. Star and snake are connected in Carib myth—the star shows by its position the time of the year's fruitfulness, the snake symbolizes the renewing of vegetation through the fertilizing rain.⁸ The serpent is also a common symbol in the ruins of the old temples of the more civilized tribes—e.g., the Muyscas, among whom the priests in processions wore masks of snakes and crocodiles.⁹ The Chibchas believed in a large snake which issued from a lake, and they made offerings of gold and emeralds to it. A snake-cult was also observed by neighbouring tribes, and the Canari believed themselves descended from a snake dwelling in a lake, to whom offerings of gold were made.¹⁰ The great boa was worshipped by tribes in Brazil, and one tribe living near the borders of Peru kept one in a pyramidal temple, fed it with human flesh, and prayed to it.¹¹ Of the snake called the manima a 16th cent. traveller in Brazil says that the natives to whom it showed itself regarded themselves as blessed and believed that they would live long.¹² The tribes of the Issa-Japura district believe that the anaconda is evil and the embodiment of the water-spirit, the *yaca-mama*, mother of the streams, who bars their passage. Hence they go in fear of the reptile, which occupies in Amazonian folk-belief the place of the sea-serpent elsewhere.¹³ Many myths and tales about serpents exist among the various tribes.¹⁴

(n) *Chinese*.—In China serpents, like other animals, occasionally have temples dedicated to them, this cult being apparently connected with the belief in metamorphosis;¹⁵ but on the whole they are feared.

¹ Müller, p. 487 f.; *JR* v. 159.

² Brinton, p. 180.

³ Müller, p. 483 f.

⁴ J. L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, London, 1841, p. 425.

⁵ E. G. Squier, *Nicaragua*, New York, 1852, i. 317 f., ii. 36; Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, London, 1856, i. 302, ii. 304 f., 312; T. Gann, 19 *RBEW*, pt. 2 [1900], p. 683 f. See also *JRAI* xlii. [1912] 17 ff. For other Central American serpent-gods see *ERE* iii. 308 f.

⁶ Acosta, in Purchas, xv. 307, 388; Garcilasso de La Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Yncas*, ed. O. R. Markham, London, 1869-71, *passim*.

⁷ Müller, p. 366; Brinton, p. 142.

⁸ Müller, pp. 210, 221.

⁹ J. B. von Spix and C. F. P. von Martius, *Reise in Brasilien*, Munich, 1823-51, iii. 258, 1272; Müller, p. 436.

¹⁰ T. A. Joyce, *South American Archaeology*, London, 1912, pp. 23, 66, 156.

¹¹ Müller, p. 258; Garcilasso de La Vega, in Purchas, xvii. 388.

¹² Purchas, xvi. 497.

¹³ T. W. Whiffen, *The North-West Amazons*, London, 1915, p. 281.

¹⁴ E. Nordenskiöld, *Indianerleben: el Gran Chaco*, Leipzig, 1912, pp. 110, 288; cf. *ERE* ii. 836 f., 837 b.

¹⁵ J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religion of the Chinese*, New York, 1910, p. 124.

Their forms are frequently the embodiments of evil spectres, which cause misfortune, illness, and death, or are instruments of punishment. Snakes cause illness by sending their souls into the bodies of men, and sick people are alleged to vomit vipers. The serpent is also a common wer-animal;¹ in early times snakes with human or partly human form—a human face, a wolf's body, birds' wings, and moving like a snake—were known. Transformation of men into snakes and of snakes into men is a very old belief. In many stories, however, in spite of the generally evil aspect of the serpent, apparitions of snakes have proved to be propitious.² The dragon as the giver of rain is worshipped in time of drought, and also in spring and autumn by certain mandarins by command of the emperor. He has a temple in Peking, and is regarded as a great benefactor and the venerated symbol of good. In the ritual, when rain is prayed for, a large image called the 'Dragon King' is carried in procession, and incense is offered to it. Boats in the shape of a dragon also play an important part in the Dragon Boat festival and in the procession of the Five Rulers. The symbol of the dragon is a common religious and artistic motif: the five-clawed dragon was the emblem of the imperial power, the protecting deity of the emperor, whose body was called the dragon's body, his throne the dragon's throne, etc. The true dragon is never all visible at once, but only his head or tail, the rest of his body being enshrouded in clouds.³

(o) *Japanese*.—The Japanese frequently worship the serpent as a mysterious being, often the embodiment of a spirit or god.

It has an important place in mythic history as progenitress of the Mikado's ancestry. Myth hardly distinguishes between snake and anthropomorphic god, the forms being interchangeable. Some divinities still assume serpent form—e.g., the goddess Bentem, to whom certain snakes are sacred and are her servants and confidants—and where certain snakes live famous temples have been built.⁴

(p) *Cretan*.—There are traces of a former serpent-divinity in Crete.

Images of a goddess, with snakes twined round the body and head-dress, have been found. Sometimes votaries holding snakes dance before her. She is probably an earth-goddess, lady of the wild creatures, and an anthropomorphic transformation of an older serpent-divinity. It is unlikely that the figures represent snake-charmers, as has been supposed.⁵ On the Mycenaean cylinders of Cyprus the goddess of Paphos is associated with a pillar entwined by a serpent, and Pausanias describes an image of Artemis holding serpents.⁶

(q) *Egyptian*.—Among worshipful animals the serpent predominated in Egypt, either because of its supposed good qualities or through fear of some species; and the cult of the cobra and asp occurs in the earliest times.

The figure of the serpent appears as a personal or house-protecting amulet all through Egyptian history. The cobra or *uraeus* was a symbol of fire or the solar disk; hence this serpent decked the forehead or crown of the solar god and of kings, his representatives, was carried by priests and priestesses of Ra, or itself occurred crowned on standards. It was identified with the flaming eye of the god; hence 'eye' and 'asp' became synonymous, and two eyes or serpents were called 'daughters of the sun-god.'⁷ The sun-god is also figured as a serpent or a double asp, and, like the solar orb, the *uraeus* was sometimes represented with wings. Serpents guarded the groves and gates of Amenti, breathing fire against the wicked, as well as the pylons of the heaven of Osiris. A serpent was the embodiment of certain goddesses—e.g., Bannut, goddess of fertility and the harvest, perhaps because snakes found in corn-fields were regarded as local spirits in snake form and were fed; Mertseker, goddess of the necropolis at Thebes; Buto and Nekheh, guardians of Upper and Lower Egypt. It was associated with Isis and Nephthys, because these goddesses were later identified with Uazet, the *uraeus*-goddess, who was gradually absorbed into all the goddesses. Hence all goddesses were adorned with or represented by the *uraeus*, or as a serpent a goddess is associated with a god.⁸ Qeb, god of the earth, was master of snakes and had a serpent's head.⁹ Live serpents were kept as guardians or sacred animals in shrines and temples behind a sacred veil or in a small cell. These serpents were mummified

¹ See art. LYCAONTHROPI, § 1.

² De Groot, *The Religious System of China*, Leyden, 1892-1910, iv. 215 f., v. 626 ff.

³ J. Doobittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, London, 1866, i. 281, 292, ii. 55 f., 117, 264 f.

⁴ W. E. Griffis, *The Religions of Japan*, London, 1895, p. 31 f.; *Kojiki*, tr. B. H. Chamberlain, Yokohama, 1883, *passim*; *ERE* ix. 238 f.

⁵ ESA x. [1904] 223; *PEFS* [1916] 207; C. H. and H. B. Hawes, *Crete the Forerunner of Greece*, London, 1911, pp. 102, 123, 139; S. Reinach, in *L'Anthropologie*, xv. [1904] 274; cf. *ERE* i. 142.

⁶ Paus. viii. xxxvii. 4.

⁷ W. Max Müller, *Egyptian Mythology* (= *Mythology of all Races*, vol. xii.), Boston, 1918, p. 29.

⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, London, 1904, i. 92, 100, 441 f.

⁹ Max Müller, p. 42.

or, like those sacred to Amon, buried in the temple.¹ Offerings of fruit, cakes of flour and honey, flowers, and incense were made to serpent-divinities. *Uraei* figured as temple-guardians, often in the form of a cornice or frieze. In heaven was supposed to exist the serpent Sati or Bata, the serpent of millions of years,² into which the soul of the dead identified with Osiris could transform or identify itself.³ Divine beings have sometimes a serpent's head. The serpent was much represented in later times as its cult increased, sometimes in pairs, and then often with the heads of Sarapis and Isis. Stars were regarded as snakes or these were their symbols.⁴ Generally the serpent was regarded as an *ἀναβάς δαιμόν* connected with life and healing. So even now 'it is believed that each quarter in Cairo has its peculiar guardian-genius or Agathodæmon, which has the form of a serpent.'⁴ In early times dwarf figures like Bes tear up and devour serpents—symbols of hostile powers; and the heavenly gods are said in one myth to have left the earth because of the serpents who drove them away—primeval reptiles of the abyss or a serpent of the earth-god or a serpent created by Isis.⁵ There is also a confused reference here to a serpent of great size embodying darkness and evil, enemy of Ra and the gods and destroyer of souls. This is Apap, referred to from early times, and probably a reminiscence of the python.⁶ Apap dwelt in the ocean over which travelled the divine boat of Ra, which he sought to upset, or in that part of Hades through which the god travels daily. Ra daily attacks and slays him, and the destruction is described with grim realism.⁷ The dead fought Apap and other demonic serpents with Ra's aid, and protected by amulets and formulas of repulsion.⁸ In other forms of the myth gods (often with serpents' heads) attack and bind Apap under the earth or sea. Apap tended to be identified with Set, attacked by Horus. These myths may be connected with the Babylonian myth of Bel and Tiamat. Apap was also devourer of the souls of the wicked, and was head of all powers hostile to the sun. Serpents of demon aspect met the soul on its way to the other world, but against those the *Book of the Dead* provided a way of escape. Horus, as protector against venomous snakes, was called 'stopper of snakes' and is represented holding snakes in his hand. Hence amulets of the god in this aspect were worn as protectives.⁹

(r) *Babylonian*.—In Babylonia there is little trace of worship of the serpent.

Herodotus¹⁰ speaks of a live serpent worshipped there, but this may be a reminiscence of the conquest of Tiamat by Bel-Merodach.¹¹ Ea had the serpent as symbol and was called 'god of the river of the great snake'—i.e. the deep or the Euphrates. The names of the river in early inscriptions show the connexion of the serpent with Ea and also with Innina, his daughter, whose name is interchangeable with that of the snake, the anthropomorphic transformation of which she probably was.¹² Serpents abounded in marshes at the mouth of the river. Serakh, god of corn, was a snake-god. Sala, consort of Rimmon, had a name meaning 'goddess of reptiles.' Certain goddesses associated with the under world are depicted with serpents in their hands.¹³ Among what appear to be emblems of gods on boundary-stones recording sales of land a snake is a prominent figure—possibly symbolizing Ea.¹⁴

On the whole the serpent tended to assume or already generally had an evil aspect in Babylonia.

This is seen especially in the myth of Tiamat, of Sumerian origin, and in 'the evil serpent' or 'serpent of darkness,' often identified with her, or 'the great serpent with seven heads.' Tiamat represented the primeval, anarchic waters, as a monster dragon or raging serpent, which Merodach conquered and slew or, in another version, subdued and bound.¹⁵ Among her forces were 'the dragon, the great serpent, the devouring reptiles.' Traces of this myth are found in the OT as a survival or borrowing. The serpent is associated with the deep, is called by various names—Leviathan, Behemoth, Rahab, as well as dragon or serpent—and is represented as conquered by Jahweh,¹⁶ or as bound by Him or set in the sea and again to be conquered.¹⁷ This being is apparently identified with historic

nations (Babylon, Egypt, Assyria), and is sometimes duplicated,¹ and it has many heads. Other references to 'the dragon that is in the sea' may imply Tiamat's consort, Kingu.² Monstrous forms of reptiles and serpents are mentioned by Berosus as existing in early times in Babylon. Horned serpents occur in Chaldean monuments, and winged dragons on the lintel of a doorway of the palace of Sennacherib. The demonic or evil aspect of the serpent is seen also in the myths of Labbu and of Etana, and in the serpent which steals the plant of life from Gilgamesh, while demons were often given a serpent form.³ The seal with an erect serpent between two seated figures on either side of a sacred tree still lacks interpretation, though some have supposed it to represent a Babylonian version of the Fall story.⁴ Serpents were believed to guard holy places and were set up on entrances of temples and palaces.

(s) *Canaanite and Hebrew*.—In Canaanite and Hebrew serpents of brass or terra-cotta and actual serpents' heads have been found. These suggest a cult, and perhaps a pit in which was a serpent of brass may have been a serpent shrine.⁵

Ashtar, like the Cretan goddess, is represented with serpents in her hands. These brass serpents recall the Hebrew brazen serpent, which has been variously explained as a pre-Israelite image of a serpent embodying the spirit of a well,⁶ adopted by the Hebrews; as an early Hebrew image connected with healing worshipped down to the days of Hezekiah, who destroyed it; as a totem of the family of David,⁷ or the symbol of a serpent tribe; or as originally a representation of Tiamat, later misunderstood and associated with healing.⁸ Was it the image of an actual serpent or of a spirit (*jinn*) embodied in a serpent? Probably the latter, as the fiery serpents of the etiological myth explaining its origin⁹ suggest demonic beings in serpent form, such as are still believed in by the Arabs. The cult of every form of creeping thing and abominable beast portrayed on the walls of the Temple may have been a recrudescence of an earlier Hebrew cult or a borrowing from exterior sources.¹⁰ Serpents or dragons, as in Arab belief, were doubtless also connected with wells, giving or withholding the waters, and in Syria springs are named after serpents, or as in Palmyra a female serpent-demon dwells in a spring and can hinder its flow.¹¹

The fiery flying serpents of Nu 21⁸ and Dt 8¹⁵ are still known to Eastern superstition, and are mentioned by Herodotus¹² as inhabiting the desert. A serpent of this kind is threatened against Philistia, and is mentioned as a creature of the land of trouble and anguish.¹³

The talking serpent of Gn 3 represents a primitive stage of thought, while the story supplies an etiological myth answering the questions, Why are serpents and men at enmity?, and Why does the serpent crawl instead of walk? It is doubtful whether the serpent was intended in the original story to be evil. More likely he was a divine being, with superior knowledge and a kindly desire to help man to knowledge denied him by other divinities. A later recession made his act have evil consequences, and therefore he himself had evil intentions. The story doubtless arose with a people to whom the serpent was sacred, and who were impressed with its wisdom.

Frazer connects the story of the Fall with myths of the origin of death (the 'perverted message' group) and of the cast skin (the serpent casting its skin renews its youth and never dies, and hence was considered immortal).¹⁴ He assumes that in the earlier form of the story there were two trees, one of life and one of death. God wished man to eat the former and so become immortal, but man, misled by the serpent, ate the fruit of the other tree and so forfeited immortality. The serpent ate of the tree of life and so lived for ever.¹⁵

The connexion of the serpent with the devil is nowhere hinted at in OT, but appears first in Wis 24, and was a Rabbinic conception,¹⁶ with profound influence on Christian and Gnostic thought. The idea of a chaotic force, personified—e.g., as a dragon (Tiamat)—hostile to creative divinities, was more or less combined with this. Hence such a conception as Rev 12, esp. v. 9. Here is also the idea of a dragon hostile to a heavenly goddess and her son (Leto, Apollo, Python; Isis, Horus, Typhon or Set; Marduk, Tiamat—here the goddess is lacking). These various ideas recur in Christian and Gnostic literature, and language is exhausted to express the evil character of the devil-serpent or dragon. Partly because of the myth of the

¹ Elian, *de Nat. An.* x. 81, xi. 17; Herod. ii. 74.

² H. Brugsch, *Religion und Mythologie der alten Ägypter*, Berlin, 1885-88, p. 180; W. R. Cooper, *Trans. of Victoria Institute*, p. 340; Budge, ii. 377.

³ A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 71; *Plut. de Is. et Osir.* 74.

⁴ E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London, 1836, i. 289.

⁵ Max Müller, pp. 62, 64, 761, 791.

⁶ G. Maspero, *The Dawn of Civilization*, Eng. tr., London, 1894, p. 84.

⁷ *Litany of the Sun*, ch. 2; *Hymn to Ra*; *Books of the Overthrowing of Apop*; cf. *ERE* vii. 266.

⁸ *Book of the Dead*, ch. 32, 39.

⁹ See, further, *ERE* v. 245.

¹⁰ Cf. H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, Göttingen, 1895, p. 320 f.

¹¹ A. H. Sayce, *The Religion of the Babylonians (HL)*, London, 1897, pp. 134, 139, 234; cf. *ERE* viii. 636^a for Ea as 'the great serpent of heaven.'

¹² Perrot-Chézy, ii. *Chaldée et Assyrie*, pp. 367, 804; *Diod. Sic.* ii. ix. 5.

¹³ H. C. Rawlinson, *WAI*, London, 1870, iii. pl. xlv.

¹⁴ See *ERE* iv. 128^b, 598.

¹⁵ Ez 32^a, 29^a; cf. Job 38.

¹⁶ Ps 74¹⁴, Is 61⁹.

¹ Is 27¹.

² These mythical references are still found in Rev 12⁹ (possibly influenced also by the Greek myth of Python and Leto) 13², 4. 11 16¹³ 20².

³ *ERE* ii. 315 f., vi. 644^a; M. Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, Boston, 1898, p. 262 f.

⁴ See *ERE* v. 714^b; Perrot-Chézy, p. 97.

⁵ H. Vincent, *Canaan d'après l'exploration récente*, Paris, 1907, pp. 117, 174 f.; *ERE* i. 792^b; *PEFSSt* [1908], pp. 42, 222, [1906], p. 119.

⁶ Cf. the serpent stone at a well (I K 19⁹).

⁷ W. R. Smith, *JPA* ix. [1880] 9.

⁸ *EBJ*, col. 3388.

⁹ Nu 21⁸.

¹⁰ W. R. Smith², p. 168 f.

¹¹ Is 14² 30⁸; cf. 2 Esd 15²⁹; for the connexion with the seraphim see *ERE* iv. 595^b.

¹² See § 6 (7).

¹³ J. G. Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, London, 1918, i. 45 f.

¹⁴ A. F. Gfrörer, *Gesch. des Urochristentums*, Stuttgart, 1838, vol. i. pt. i., 'Das Jahrhundert des Heils,' p. 388.

dragon cast into the abyss, partly because of the existing conception of death as a devouring monster, Hades is often described or depicted as a dragon.

(f) *Phœnician and Arabian*.—For the Phœnicians we have the evidence of Eusebius, quoting Philo of Byblus:

Taautos (the Egyptian Thoth), and after him the Phœnicians and Egyptians, divinized dragons and serpents, because they of all reptiles have the strongest respiration and a certain fiery nature. Their swiftness and variety of movements, in spite of possessing no feet, their longevity, their power of renewing their youth, all contributed to the respect in which they were held. The Phœnicians called the serpent Agathodaimon, and it was adopted into the mysteries and temples. Sacrifices were offered to serpents, and they were regarded as great divinities and mediators.¹ This evidence is supported by the fact that Tyrian coins show the serpent in connexion with trees, pillars, and altars,² while Asklepios, the Greek serpent-god of healing, was identified with Eshmun, a Phœnician god with similar functions.³

In Arab belief the *jinn* are embodied in snakes, especially those haunting houses and thickets, appearing and disappearing suddenly.⁴ The prophet says in the book *Mishkâtâ 'l-Masabêh* that such snakes are *jinn*, some infidels, some believers. They must be asked to leave; if they refuse, they are infidels and may be killed.

(u) *Greek*.—In Greece serpents were regarded as guardians of graves, sanctuaries, and dwellings, and were kept there or represented in symbol.

Snakes were sacred because heroes or the dead generally might appear as serpents; certain gods had once been snakes or might become visible as such; and snakes were associated with them in myth, ritual, and art. The snake as a chthonian animal—'a son of the earth'⁵—was associated with fertility, and had been early revered as house-spirit, *οικουρὸς ὄφις*, or earth daemon, or *ἀγὰρὸς δαίμων*, promoting fertility, and hence worshipped or at least fed.⁶ Eponymous founders regarded as heroes were thought of as snakes or as having twynature, like Cecrops,⁷ Kychreus of Salamis,⁸ and Erechtheus of Athens.⁹

The presence of snakes in sanctuaries and in the rites of certain divinities suggests that these had once been worshipped as snakes.

Snakes were kept in shrines sacred to Asklepios (whose name may be connected with *ἀσκήλατος*, *ἀσκήλατος* = 'snake')¹⁰ and were fed by virgin priestesses. They gave omens of health and plenty.¹¹ In these shrines the snake (=the god) suggested a cure to the sufferer in dreams or gave fruitfulness to women, and the child was believed to be begotten by the god. Asklepios appears as a snake in myths and art as well as in the sorcery of Alexander of Abonoteichos,¹² and in stories of the founding of temples. The snake is also his symbol, twined about his staff, or side by side with him. Asklepios had once been a divine snake, giving fertility and health before he became anthropomorphic. He was brought from his sanctuary at Epidaurus to Sicily in the form of a snake, and an embassy went from Rome to Epidaurus and brought back a serpent which caused a plague to cease and received divine honours.¹³

In some of his aspects Zeus had snake form, as certain bas-reliefs show—Zeus Ktesios, the fertility-giver, Zeus Melichios, and Zeus Sospolis, who as a child was placed by Eleithyia before the army of Eris when the Arcadians invaded it, and vanished into the ground as a snake. A sanctuary was afterwards built on the spot.¹⁴ Snakes fed by a naked virgin priestess lived in Apollo's shrine at Epirus and were said to be descended from the Pytho, and to be play-things for the god. If they took the honey-cakes with which they were fed, the year would be fruitful; if not, the reverse.¹⁵ Demeter had the snake Kychreus as her attendant at Eleusis, probably an old local snake-god, and as goddess of the Phigalians in Arcadia she had snakes twined in her hair, and her chariot was drawn by winged snakes. The Erinyes, as chthonic beings, are called *ὄφιακαί*, and had the form of snakes, or snakes were coiled in their hair.¹⁶ In so far as they originated from ghosts, their snake form is obvious.

¹ Philo, *ap. Eus. Præp. Evang.* i. 10.

² T. Maurice, *Indian Antiquities compared with Persia, Egypt, Greece*, London, 1796-1806, vi. 273.

³ W. W. F. von Baudissin, *ZDMG* lix. [1905] 459 f.; see also art. PHŒNICIANS.

⁴ W. R. Smith², pp. 120, 129, 133; E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, London, 1883, pp. 28, 35; cf. *ERE* i. 669f.

⁵ Herod. i. 78.

⁶ Cf. J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge, 1912, p. 283; cf. *ERE* vi. 404b.

⁷ Aristoph. *Wasps*, 438; see *ERE* iii. 270.

⁸ Paus. i. xxxvi. 1.

⁹ See Herod. viii. 41; *Vita Apollon.* vii. 24; *Orph. Hymn.* xxxii. 11.

¹⁰ O. Gruppe, *Die griech. Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, Munich, 1897-1906, ii. 1444.

¹¹ *Ellian, de Nat. An.* xi. 2.

¹² See *ERE* i. 306a.

¹³ Paus. ii. xi. 8, iii. xxiii. 7; Ovid, *Metam.* xv. 5; Livy, x. 47.

¹⁴ Paus. vi. xx. 3, 5.

¹⁵ *Ellian, de Nat. An.* xi. 2.

¹⁶ Eur. *Iphig. in Taur.* 286; *Æsch. Eum.* 126, *Choeph.* 1044 ff.

Zeus as a serpent violated Persephone, who then gave birth to Dionysus (Sabazios),¹ a god with occasional snake form,² in whose rites women put snakes in their hair or round their bodies, or rent them asunder.³ The god was doubtless embodied in the snakes, for 'the symbol of the Dionysiac orgies is a consecrated serpent.'⁴ In Roman myth the parallel was the violation of the Bona Dea by her father Faunus, and a consecrated serpent was placed beside her image in her ritual.⁵ Sabazios, the god of Asia Minor kindred to Dionysos (or some personal name of whom was read in Greek as 'Dionysos'), was represented as a snake along with Cybele.

Some divine beings were represented as partly snake in form—besides those already mentioned, Typhon, Boreas, Hecate (also with serpents in her hair), and the giants.⁶

Snakes kept in shrines were fed with honey or honey-cakes, as the ghosts were also propitiated with the same food.⁷

(v) *Roman*.—Among the Romans a serpent-cult is mainly connected with the animals as embodying the genius, and snakes were kept in large numbers in temples and houses.⁸ The Greek cult of the serpent Asklepios probably influenced the Romans, as the embassy to Epidaurus just mentioned suggests. A more native aspect of the cult is seen in the serpent-cave at Lanuvium, whither virgins were taken yearly to prove their chastity. If the serpent accepted the offerings brought by them, their chastity was proved and also a fertile season ensured, as at Epirus.⁹

A survival of an older cult or totem-clan rite is probably to be seen in the yearly procession of men with coils of live serpents before the image, hung with serpents, of St. Domenico of Foligno at Coccillo, near the territory of the ancient Marsi snake-clan. The people claim immunity from snake-bite as well as power over serpents, as did the Marsi.¹⁰

(w) *Celtic*.—Among the Celts details of a serpent-cult are lacking.

A horned serpent is figured with twelve Roman gods on a Gallo-Roman altar, and the serpent frequently occurs along with images of Celtic gods who hold serpents in their hands or present a torque to two ram-headed serpents.¹¹ These gods are probably all forms of an underworld god; hence the chthonic character of the animal as his symbol or vehicle may be suggested. The ram-headed serpent accompanies a goddess of fertility on a monument at Epinal.¹² What myth was told of such twynatured serpents is unknown, but the ram has been supposed to be connected with a cult of the dead or with the god of the underworld.¹³ Serpents were entwined round oaks in the Druidic world described by Lucan. The serpent also occurs on a group of Scottish monuments regarded as of the Christian period, either alone or with the doubly bent rod.¹⁴ These symbols are probably derived from the pagan period, but their meaning is unknown.

W. Stukeley, in his works on Avebury and Stonehenge, advocated the theory that the megaliths there were connected with serpent-worship, but archeologists see no reason for dissociating these from similar remains known to be burial-sites. A similar theory has been connected with a so-called 'serpent-mound' near Oban.

Dragons and serpents are mentioned frequently in Celtic myth and story in association with lochs or sacred trees, and in many saintly legends they are overcome by the saints. A white serpent is king of the snakes in Celtic lore.¹⁵

(x) *Ophite*.—Reference may here be made to the cult or symbolism of the snake among the groups of Gnostics collectively known as Ophites.

With some of these the serpent was a symbol of evil. This was the case with some groups described by Irenæus, with

¹ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2; Amobius, v. 21; Diod. Sic. iv. 4, v. 75.

² Eur. *Bacch.* 1017.

³ *Id.* 101, 887; Athen. v. 28; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* ii. 12; Galen, *de Antid.* i. 6, xiv. 45.

⁴ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* ii. 12.

⁵ Macrobi. i. xii. 24; Plut. *Cæsar*, 9.

⁶ Hyginus, *Fab.* 166; Lucian, *Philops.* 22; Paus. v. xix. 1, viii. xxix. 3.

⁷ Herod. viii. 41; Paus. ix. xxxix. 11; Aristoph. *Clouds*, 506; Lucian, *Dial. Mort.* iii. 2; Philostr. *Vita Apollon.* viii. 19.

⁸ Pliny, *HN* xxix. 72.

⁹ *Ellian, de Nat. An.* ix. 16; Propert. *Eleg.* iv. 8.

¹⁰ M. C. Harrison, *FL* xviii. [1907] 187; Pliny, *HN* vii. 2.

¹¹ *RA* xxx. [1897] 318, xix. [1882] 322.

¹² J. L. Courcelle-Seneuil, *Les Dieux gaulois, d'après les monuments figurés*, Paris, 1910, p. 80.

¹³ See J. A. MacCulloch, *Religion of the Ancient Celts*, Edinburgh, 1911, p. 166.

¹⁴ J. Romilly Allen, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, with introd. by J. Anderson, Edinburgh, 1903, pt. i. p. xxxiii, and plates.

¹⁵ For the serpent's egg in Celtic lore see *ERE* iii. 297a, 413b.

whom the son of Ialdabaoth was *Nous ἀφιδιόμορφος*, from whom were derived spirit, soul, and mundane things, and the cause of all wickedness. Hence, as the enemy of mankind, he was not honoured by these groups of Ophites.¹ In the system of Justin, Naas, or the serpent, is the principle of evil, commits adultery with Eve, and afflicts the spirit of Elohim in man.² The Severians also regarded the serpent as evil and the vine as the product of intercourse between it and earth—perhaps the reflexion of a pagan myth.³

Others regarded the serpent as good, thus reverting unconsciously to the belief adumbrated in the Semitic Fall myth of the wise serpent, because his action produced good results in disobedience to the Demiurge, or he represented an intelligent principle—*e.g.*, in the case of the spot which identified Sophia and the serpent.⁴ To the Perates the Son and the serpent were identical, and the Naassenes worshipped Naas as the moist principle which is good and in which all things subsist.⁵ An actual cult of a serpent was probably limited to a few extremists—*e.g.*, some described by Epiphanius: the others regarded the serpent merely as a symbol of higher powers.

Epiphanius says of this group: 'They keep a living serpent in a chest, and at the time of the mysteries entice him out by placing bread before him. The door being opened, he comes forth and having ascended the table he twines himself round the bread. This they call a perfect sacrifice. They not only break and distribute this among the votaries, but whoever desires may kiss the serpent. This they call the Eucharist, and they conclude by singing a hymn through him to the Supreme Father.'⁶

On Ophite gems the serpent is frequently represented in various aspects; *e.g.*, the Egyptian god Chnubis, identified with Iao Sabaoth, is depicted as a serpent with a human head.

In the apocryphal *Acts of Philip* the apostle is said to have preached in Ophitryma (Hierapolis), 'where they set up images of serpents and worshipped them,' and his persecutors are 'children of the serpent,' or Echidna, who is identified with the devil. Finally Philip and John expel the serpent—a distorted reading of fact, for the serpent-cult must have continued in Hierapolis long after apostolic days.⁷ This serpent-cult was probably connected with that of Cybele. On coins of Hierapolis snake-emblems appear, or Cybele presents a cup to a snake, and in the *Acts* serpents are called 'sons of the goddess'—*i.e.*, her sacred animals or representatives. Wine was offered to a viper in the temple.⁸ Possibly the Gnostic reverence for the serpent was influenced by the pagan cult of a goddess associated or identified with a snake.

2. The serpent as embodiment of the dead.—Certain snakes haunt houses and burial-places, and partly for this reason they are thought to embody ghosts of the dead, returned to their old abodes or lingering round the grave.

(a) *Lower races.*—This is a common Bantu belief, and with the Zulus the *amatongo* are the dead in snake form, the reptiles having come out of their bodies. If a man sees a snake on his son's grave, he says, 'This is my son,' and snakes in houses are identified with the dead by marks or scars once borne by these. They cause a happy feeling to the living, who sacrifice to them and feed them with milk.⁹ Among the Thonga woods where ancestral chiefs are buried are tabu, and the dead frequently appear as snakes. Sacrifice is made to them from time to time.¹⁰ Among the Eastern Bantu spirits sometimes take this form for mischief. Such a snake is killed, because this slays the ghost or prevents its further embodiment, but an apology is made to it.¹¹ The Suk regard the appearance of a snake in a house as denoting that the ghost is hungry, and that, if it is not fed, all in the house will die. But such a snake may be killed outside the hut.¹² The El Kiboron, a Masai tribe, think that the bones of married men become a snake and return to the hut, where they are fed with milk.¹³ Ghost-snakes are fed with honey and milk by the Aikuyu, and, if one is accidentally killed, the elders are summoned, a sheep is killed, and all must partake of it, the culprit wearing part of the skin lest his wife and children die.¹⁴ The Nandi kill snakes in houses, but, when one is found on a woman's bed, it is the spirit of an ancestor and an omen that her next child will be safely born. It is fed with milk.¹⁵ Among

the Bahima the bodies of dead princes and princesses are thought to produce snakes, which are cared for in temples by the priests.¹ The Kafirs venerate the python, because it embodies the spirit of a dead chief; to slay a python was punishable by death.² Medicine-men and the rich among the Masai become snakes when the body decays, reappear in their huts, and are fed with milk.³

The belief occurs sporadically in N. America, the Moquis holding that men of the Rattle-snake clan become rattle-snakes at death, and the Apaches that snakes are connected with the elders or dead men of the tribe.⁴ The snake is sometimes identified with the soul, as when coming out of a dead person's mouth. Several S. American tribes also have this belief. Women who look upon the Jurupari mysteries of Brazilian tribes become serpents or crocodiles at death, instead of going to paradise.⁵

Among the Tami of New Guinea spirits may be called up as snakes which give oracles through a seer, and among the Papuans of Geelvink Bay, who make images of the dead in which the spirit resides and communicates with the living, those of dead women are represented holding a serpent with both hands.⁶ In Kiriwina (E. New Guinea) a chief may appear as a snake in a hut and is honoured but also asked to go, as his appearance is a bad omen.⁷ In central Melanesia the dead may appear as snakes—*e.g.*, in a sacred place—and are held sacred, and in the Pelew Islands such snakes are never killed. According to New Britain belief, the dead are men by day and snakes by night.⁸

In Indonesia soul-substance, as distinct from soul, may animate snakes which come out of holes from the under world.⁹ The Dayaks believe that spirits (*untu*) appear as snakes, and, if they enter a house, it is to carry off the living. But they are fed, and anything found in their mouths is kept as a charm.¹⁰ With the Iban of Borneo, who believe in a man's *ngarong*, or secret spirit-helper, usually an ancestor, the *ngarong* may be a snake, and all of the same species are revered by the individual who is helped.¹¹

(b) *Japanese, Chinese, and Arabian.*—Ancestral snakes are also believed in by the Chams and Assamese,¹² and in older Japan and China there are legends of snakes appearing from graves or in coffins, as if the belief also existed there.¹³ This is also an occasional Arab belief, for in Upper Egypt at Shaikh Haredi, the tomb of a saint of that name, in cases of sickness a virgin was sent to it and a serpent came forth, hung about her neck, and was carried to the sick man's bedside. Another account says that several women visit the place once a year, and the serpent twines round the neck of the loveliest.¹⁴ In ancient Egypt it was the privilege of the dead to assume any form by means of 'words of power,' and among them were those of serpent or crocodile.¹⁵

(c) *Greek and Roman.*—Among the Greeks the snake was the symbol of the grave and of the spirit contained in it, especially spirits of worshipful heroes, often represented in art and tradition as snakes or accompanied by snakes, their doubles. The idea was doubtless derived from the fact that snakes haunted tombs. In legends snakes were seen close to the dead or crawling from their beds, or the dead turned into snakes (Cadmus and Harmonia).¹⁶ There was also a theory that the marrow of the dead became a snake.¹⁷ A woman or goddess (Hygeia, daughter of Asklepios) feeding a snake with milk is a common Greek artistic motif, recalling the savage custom of thus feeding spirit-snakes and perhaps arising from a similar custom in Greece. Analogous to this among the Romans was the symbolizing of the *genius* or *juno*—the guardian-spirit or other self—as a snake, and the keeping of game snakes in large numbers in temple and houses.¹⁸ The snake is already figured on Etruscan monuments, and it was painted on the walls of Roman houses, sometimes approaching

¹ J. Roscoe, *JRAI* xxxvii. [1907] 101 f.

² Stow, p. 148.

³ Hollis, p. 307. For the Nyanja belief, resembling the Egyptian (see below), see *ERE* ix. 420 b.

⁴ J. G. Bourke, *FL* ii. [1884] 436 f.

⁵ *ERE* i. 338 b, ii. 836 a.

⁶ G. Bamler, in R. Neuhaus, *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, Berlin, 1911, iii. 516; J. G. Frazer, *The Belief in Immortality*, London, 1913, p. 308.

⁷ G. Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians*, London, 1910, p. 238 f.

⁸ R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, Oxford, 1891, p. 178 i.; P. Rascher, *AA* xxix. [1904] 209 f.

⁹ *ERE* vii. 238 b.

¹⁰ E. Dunn, *Anthropos*, i. [1906] 182.

¹¹ Hose-McDougal, ii. 90; E. H. Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo*, London, 1911, p. 143.

¹² E. Aymonier, *RHR* xxiv. [1891] 287; *ERE* i. 532 a, iii. 348 b.

¹³ *Nihongi*, tr. W. G. Aston, London, 1896, i. 210; De Groot, *Rel. System of China*, iv. 218.

¹⁴ F. L. Norden, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia*, Eng. tr., 2 vols., London, 1757, ii. 23 f.; R. Pococke, *A Description of the East*, in Pinkerton's *Voyages*, xv. 269.

¹⁵ E. A. W. Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, London, 1899, p. 230.

¹⁶ Plut. *Cleomenes*, 39; Porph. *Vita Plot.* 103, ed. Didot; Ovid, *Metam.* iv. 563 f.

¹⁷ Plut. *loc. cit.*; Ovid, *Metam.* xv. 389; Pliny, *HN* x. 84 [84]; cf. *ERE* vi. 653 a.

¹⁸ W. W. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, London, 1899, p. 104; Pliny, *HN* xxix. 72; Servius, *ad Aen.* v. 95.

¹ *Iren. adv. Hær.* i. xxviii. 3 (ed. Harvey).

² Hippolytus, *Refut. omn. Hær.* v. 20 f.

³ *Epiph. adv. Hær.* 45.

⁴ *Iren. i. xxviii. 8.*

⁵ *Hipp. v. 11 f.; v. 4.*

⁶ *Epiph. i. 37; cf. art. OPHITISM.*

⁷ *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, ed. R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, Leipzig, 1891-1903, ii. pt. 2; W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, Oxford, 1895-97, i. 87.

⁸ *Acta Ap. Apoc.* ii. 51.

⁹ Callaway, *Religious System of the Amazulu*, pp. 8, 12, 196 ff., etc.; E. Casalis, *Les Bassoutos*, Paris, 1859, p. 246; D. Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, Edinburgh, 1875, pp. 47, 120.

¹⁰ H. A. Junod, *The Life of a S. African Tribe*, Neuchâtel, 1912-13, ii. 351 ff.

¹¹ D. Macdonald, *Africana*, London, 1882, i. 62; J. Macdonald, *JAI* xxii. 114.

¹² M. W. H. Beech, *The Suk*, Oxford, 1911, p. 20.

¹³ M. Merker, *Die Masai*, Berlin, 1904, p. 202; cf. also *ERE* viii. 482 a.

¹⁴ C. W. Hobley, *JRAI* xli. [1911] 408.

¹⁵ A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi*, Oxford, 1909, p. 90.

an altar. Doubtless all this was connected with an older belief in the ghost embodied in a snake. Æneas, seeing the snake coming out of his father's tomb and tasting his offering, was perplexed as to whether it was the *genius loci* or an attendant on his father.¹ In some cases life was supposed to be dependent on the safety of the house-snake; e.g., when the tame serpent of Tiberius was devoured by ants, he drew the augury from it that he must guard against attack from the multitude.²

(d) *Russian*.—In Russia the presence of snakes in a cottage is a good omen. They are fed with milk, and to kill them is a sin. This is apparently a relic of the time when a belief in ancestral snakes existed among the Slavs, Lithuanians, and Wends.³

3. Serpents in the mysteries.—The ritual use of a serpent in Asiatic and Greek mysteries is connected with the aspect of certain divinities as snakes.

In the initiation to the rites of the Phrygian Sabazios, whose symbol and embodiment was a snake, a golden snake was let down into the bosom of the candidate and taken away again from the lower parts. Clement of Alexandria calls this 'the serpent gliding over the breast'—this serpent crawling over the breasts of the initiated being the deity.⁴ This rite was also adopted in the Dionysiac mysteries.⁵ In these a snake was carried in a *cista*, the snake being the god himself. The *cista*, with the snake emerging from vine leaves, is represented on coins of the cities of Asia Minor of the Roman period, and Clement speaks of the *cista* in which was a snake, the symbol of Dionysos Bassareus, having previously spoken of the box in which the Kabeiroi exhibited the φαλλός of Dionysos to the Tyrrhenians to worship.⁶ In the Arretophoria, performed for the fertility of women and fields, 'sacred things which may not be named were carried about, made of cereal paste, i.e. images of snakes and of the forms of men,' viz. φαλλοί.⁷ Snake and φαλλός are here parallel as symbols of a deity, under both of which Dionysos was represented.⁸ In the Eleusinia, according to Clement of Alexandria, some object was taken by the initiate from a *cista*, put into a basket, and from the basket again put into the chest.⁹ This object has been conjectured to be a φαλλός, for a representation of the mystic basket shows a φαλλός among fruit, and Dieterich thinks that what was done with the snake—drawing it through the bosom—was also done with the φαλλός.¹⁰

The rite was one expressive of sexual and mystic union with the god, as Zeus or Sabazios as a serpent had entered εἰς κόρυς κόρυον. The god was hailed as Ἰσοκρότης, according to an Orphic hymn. 'In relation to the god both men and women were as female.' In such a rite snake and φαλλός were one and the same, and women imitated the divine action. Such rites may have given rise to the stories of sons born of human mothers by divinities in the form of a serpent.¹¹

The *cista* of the mysteries of Isis may also have contained a snake.¹²

Besides the above, certain facts point to the connexion between serpent and φαλλός.¹³ In Algonquian myth, at creation, the φαλλός of Gechee Manito-ah being in his way, he wrung it off and threw it into the bush, where it became Wau-kau-thee, the Rain-Serpent.¹⁴ Elsewhere in America the φαλλός 'was correlated or identical with the serpent.'¹⁵ If the boundary-stones in Babylon were phallic, the presence of the serpent wreathed round them is significant. The figure of Nergal as a monster on a Babylonian plaque shows the φαλλός as a serpent, and 'the serpent of conception' is spoken of in certain texts.¹⁶ In India the serpent—e.g., in the Saiva cult—is associated with sexual powers, and in the temple of Visvesvara at Benares the *lingam* is sometimes represented with a serpent coiled round it.¹⁷ C. Schoebel, following certain Talmudists, Agrippa of Cologne, and others, identifies the tree of knowledge, serpent, and φαλλός in the narrative of Gn 3.¹⁸ The connexion of snake and φαλλός is perhaps one

reason, added to the snake being regarded as an earth-spirit, why it is so commonly associated with fertility, as so often noted above.¹

4. The serpent in magical rites.—It is not surprising that such a mysterious animal as the serpent should be used in magical rites, and in some languages the word for 'serpent' has derivatives or cognates referring to magic or intercourse with demons, while the serpent is often a symbol of culture-gods and gods of wisdom, and is connected with healing.

(a) The common idea that the representation of a noxious being will drive off that being or other noxious creatures is perhaps one explanation of the brazen serpent story in Nu 21st.

In Egypt a serpent-head amulet guarded its wearer from snake-bite in this world and the next. The *uræus* on the crown was supposed to throw itself on the king's enemies, and to have compelling power over the gods when the *uræus* crown was placed by Nut on the head of the deceased.² In Athens snake-amulets are placed on the newly-born to protect them against snake-demons.³ Perhaps the golden serpents which Clement of Alexandria condemns as a female decoration were really worn as amulets.⁴ Gregory of Tours tells of a bronze serpent found in a Paris sewer on the removal of which snakes infested the city.⁵ Among savages, too, amulets resembling snakes, or a snake tattooed on the body, protect against snake-bite.⁶ In Romagna serpents, head downward, and interlaced, are painted on walls to keep away the evil eye.⁷

(b) The skin of the snake forms a part of the American Indian 'medicine-bag,' and medicine-men among the Nandi receive power from snakes carried in their bag.⁸ A wand in the form of a snake was used by Egyptian magicians, and also in the death ritual to heal the wound made by the adze in opening the eyes and lips of the deceased.⁹ Buried with him, such a wand gave him power over the dead.¹⁰ The skin of a serpent is also mentioned as a magico-medical remedy by Marcellus in the 4th cent., and it has still such properties in modern Tuscany.¹¹

(c) Eating a serpent's flesh, or anointing with its fat, or applying part of its body to the wound, was a remedy against snake-bite among Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Jews, American Indians, Abipones, Thonga, and other races, and is also found in folk-medicine in many lands still—an example of the principle that like cures like.¹²

Hence fennel cured snake-bite because snakes ate it.¹³ Again, part of the war medicine of the American Indians was a fragment of a serpent, to give skill in war. Its blood was given to women in child-bed, because, the snake being immortal, the blood had vital influences.¹⁴ Here, too, the virtue of the 'serpent's egg' and of the so-called adder's stone may be noticed.¹⁵

(d) The serpent is associated with healing rites over a wide area, for no very obvious reason, but perhaps because of its supposed wisdom.

This is seen in the case of the Greek Asklepios and other divinities and in the Semitic association of serpents with healing springs. In Madagascar a god of healing was patron of serpents, and his priest carried a serpent in the procession of the god.¹⁶

As the snake sloughed its skin, this became a folk-explanation of its connexion with Asklepios. The sloughing symbolized the healing art.¹⁶

(e) Omens are often drawn from the sight of serpents, and it is often considered unlucky to see one, as among the Kenyahs and Thonga and many other peoples.¹⁷

¹ See art. PHALLISM.

² See art. CROWN, vol. iv. p. 341; H. M. Tirard, *The Book of the Dead*, London, 1910, p. 28.

³ Gruppe, p. 902.

⁴ Clem. Alex. *Pæd.* ii. 13.

⁵ Greg. of Tours, *Hist. ecclési. des Français*, French tr., Paris, 1874, viii. 33.

⁶ See *ERE* iii. 395b, i. 538; cf. Brinton, p. 133.

⁷ Leland, p. 168. In Annam serpents are painted on the body to prevent snake-bite (*ERE* i. 538b).

⁸ Hollis, p. 51.

⁹ Tirard, p. 26.

¹⁰ Leland, p. 238.

¹¹ Pliny, *HN* xxix. 71; Gruppe, p. 1274; *ERE* viii. 253a (Arabs); *JE* xi. 203 (Jews); M. Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, Eng. tr., London, 1822, ii. 290 f.; Junod, ii. 317, 419.

¹² Pliny, *HN* xix. 23.

¹³ Brinton, pp. 133, 140.

¹⁴ See *ERE* iii. 297a, 113b. For love-philtres made from serpents' flesh see *ERE* i. 542a.

¹⁵ J. Sibree, *The Great African Island*, London, 1880, p. 268.

¹⁶ J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, London, 1898, iii. 66; see also art. DISEASE AND MEDICINE.

¹⁷ Hose-McDougall, ii. 78, 79; Junod, ii. 489; *ERE* i. 526b, 541b.

¹ Verg. *Æn.* v. 84; cf. F. B. Jevons, *Plutarch's Romane Questions*, London, 1892, p. xviii f.; *ERE* ii. 24b.

² Suet. *Tiberius*, 72.

³ See art. SERPENT-WORSHIP (Teutonic and Balto-Slavic).

⁴ Arnobius, *adv. Gentes*, v. 21; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* ii. 16; Firmicus Maternus, *de Err. prof. Rel.* ii. 11; cf. Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 27.

⁵ See art. MYSTERIES (Greek, Phrygian, etc.), § 1 (c).

⁶ L. Anson, *Numismata Græca*, London, 1911, pt. i. p. 936; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* ii. 19; cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.

⁷ Schol. on Lucian, *Dial. Mer.* ii. 1; cf. J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, London, 1903, p. 122.

⁸ Gruppe, p. 1423. ⁹ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* ii. 21.

¹⁰ Dieterich, *Die Mithrasliturgie*, p. 125 f.

¹¹ Cf. Dieterich, p. 123 f., *de Hymnis Orphicis*, Marburg, 1891, p. 38; Gruppe, pp. 866, 1423; Ramsay, i. 94, 298; see also below, § 6.

¹² Cf. Ovid, *Amor.* ii. 13; Juvenal, vi. 537; see also art. MYSTERIES (Egyptian).

¹³ Cf. E. Gerhard, *Griech. Mythologie*, Berlin, 1854-55; *ERE* v. 829.

¹⁴ Owen, p. 36.

¹⁵ Brinton, p. 177, *Nagualism*, Philadelphia, 1894, p. 49 f.

¹⁶ See § 1 (v); Perrot-Chapiez, p. 363 f.; *ERE* ii. 644, note 11.

¹⁷ Crooke, *P&B* ii. 124; M. Monier-Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hindūism*, London, 1891, p. 459; J. H. Rivett-Carnac, *JASB* iii. [1879] 13.

¹⁸ *Le Mythe de la femme et du serpent*, Paris, 1876.

(f) Power over snakes is sometimes ascribed to sorcerers, or the snake is used by them as a 'sending'—a creature sent forth to produce disease, to wound, or to kill.¹

Serpents were thus sent as agents of his anger by the Malagasy deity already mentioned.² In Calabar a tribe levied toll on all who passed. Refusal to pay resulted in a snake being sent after them, which tied their legs, and the people then came and robbed them. Medicine-leaves also protect houses in Calabar, and fetiches among the Baganda; and, if any robber approaches, snakes rush out at him.³ Bushmen sorcerers are said to be able to whistle up snakes, which coil round their neck in the presence of spectators.⁴ The Chiriguano believe that they would never die unless, *inter alia*, bitten by a snake—really a sorcerer in that form.⁵

(g) Charms and magic formulæ are often used as remedies for snake-bite or as protection against snakes.⁶

(h) As certain snakes are susceptible to musical, rhythmical sounds or movements, these are used by snake-charmers to exhibit their power over them.

This has occurred in Africa and in many Eastern lands from ancient down to modern times; among the American Indians charming was used by magicians to prove their intercourse with unseen powers and the power given them by these so that they handled snakes with impunity.⁷ Possibly snake-charmers produce some cataleptic or hypnotic state in the animals.⁸ The supposed immunity of the charmer should be compared with that seen in the case of the Hopi, the devotees in the Dionysiac mysteries, the Payli and Ophiogenes, and the *kebeet* among the Abipones.⁹

5. Demoniac and mythical serpents and dragons.

—Although the serpent is frequently worshipped, its harmful character and the repulsion which it arouses, its frequent large size and strength, and the mystery of its movements have often caused a sinister character to be given it, and made it an embodiment of demoniac powers. Because of the brightness of its eye and its power of fascination over animals the serpent was commonly supposed to have the evil eye. The larger species, possibly also the dim memory of extinct species or species no longer found in any region, affected man's imagination, and both fear and fancy gave rise to a belief in mythical serpents or dragons of vast size and powers, and often the cause of various natural phenomena. They have frequently many heads; they have wings and feet; and they breathe fire and smoke. Demoniac and mythical serpents are often the object of belief where a cult of serpents exists, showing that very different emotions are aroused by serpents of various kinds.

Some examples of demoniac and mythical serpents have already been referred to. The Sea Dayaks of Sarawak tell of a huge snake which came down from heaven and fed on the rice. A man slew it and ate its flesh; the result was the deluge.¹⁰ Another myth tells how the python was once the most poisonous of snakes, and killed a man who took fish from its fish-pond. Thinking afterwards that he had come to life, it vomited its poison into the sea, where a snake, *Ular Berang*, swallowed some of the poison, and the sea-snakes took the rest. The *Ular Berang* is rarely seen, but is very dangerous.¹¹ Certain snakes, like other animals, possess *badis*—i.e. a bad spirit or mischief of a dangerous kind—while the *badis* of some large trees is a more individual spirit which may appear as a snake.¹² Both in Burma and in Borneo dangerous snakes are held to be embodiments of evil spirits.¹³ Among the Negrito tribes of Borneo eclipses are caused by a python trying to swallow sun and moon or to embrace the latter.¹⁴ According to the Ibans, the Flood was the result of men's wounding a huge python. Soon

after the rain caused a flood which drowned every one except a woman.¹ The American Indian myth of the great horned serpent²—the embodiment of lightning or of the waters, and slain by a god or hero—is perhaps a variant of the myth of chaos, represented by a monster, and overcome by a god. In Musquakie myth a huge snake with hard, white scales, deer's horns, and spitting fire, rose from a lake, but was vanquished by the hero, *Hot Hand*.³ In the arid south-west region, where the cañons are quickly flooded, men are said to have lived underground at one time, but to have been driven to earth's surface by a huge snake which caused a deluge.⁴ In other American Indian myths (Ojibwa, etc.) serpents who have slain the hero's brother cause a deluge when the hero avenges them.⁵ On the other hand, in British New Guinea, Raudalo, king of snakes, put an end to the deluge by pursuing the waters to their accustomed bed.⁶ A Toba Battak myth tells how a great serpent lay on the primeval ocean and engulfed the earth at its creation by turning it over. But the Heavenly Maid caused eight suns to dry up the waters and then pinned the serpent to a rock.⁷ The Thonga believe in the vast snake, *Buwumati*, dwelling in lakes invisibly and heard crying when rain falls. If any one should chance to see it, he dies.⁸ The Mexican sun-god *Tonatiuh* cut in pieces the coloured wood-snake, as *Manco Capac* in Peru and *Bochica* in Bogota slew the serpents of the waters.⁹ The Ayni believe that evil spirits are incarnated in serpents, as do also the *Ibibios* of S. Nigeria.¹⁰

The monstrous demoniac serpents of Babylon and Egypt have already been described.¹¹ But Egyptian myth knew also of a beneficent serpent, its body overlain with gold, and 30 cubits in length, living on an island, where it apparently was the guardian of the dead, just as serpents guarded the under world and are figured on tombs as guardians. A human-headed *uraeus* of large size is sculptured on an Ethiopian temple.¹² In Greece *Typhon*, son of *Tartaros* and *Gaia*, was demon of the whirlwind and possessed 100 serpent-heads. He attacked *Zeus*, who felled him with a thunderbolt and set *Atina* upon him. His consort was *Rechidna*, half-woman, half-serpent, whose progeny were the *Sphinx*, *Chimæra*, *Hydra*, and the *Dragon of the Hesperides*.¹³ *Hydra*, with nine heads, dwelt in the swamps of *Lerna*, laying waste all the land till *Heraclès* slew it. *Heraclès* also slew the dragon or snake of the *Hesperides*, which is represented as twined round a tree from below which issues a well; therefore it is guardian of the waters.¹⁴ *Jason*, *Persæus*, and *Cadmus* were also slayers of dragons in Greek myth. *Python*, a dragon born of *Gaia*, sought to kill *Leto* because he learned that her son would be fatal to him. *Zeus* interferred, but *Leto's* son *Apollo* slew the *Python* at *Delphi*, where he buried the body and instituted the *Pythian* games.

Behind this lies the myth of the cult of a prophetic snake at *Delphi*, embodiment of a goddess. The combat with *Apollo* has been explained as the seizing of the oracle by a tribe of *Apollo*-worshippers, who changed the shrine to his. The shrine in N. Greece where serpents, the god's play-things, were fed by virgin-priestesses may also have been an ancient shrine of a snake-goddess.¹⁵

Ancient Persia, in its dualistic scheme, regarded some animals—e.g. the serpent—as of the evil creation, while certain others were created to destroy them. It also embodied the evil power in a mythic dragon created by *Angra Mainyu* to destroy the faithful—the dragon *Azi Dahaka*, three-headed and immensely strong, sometimes also identified with *Babylon* (*Bawri*) or the *Arabians*.¹⁶ He was conquered by *Atar*, son of *Ahura Mazda*, a personification of fire,¹⁷ or, in another myth, by *Thraëtaona*, who bound him on *Mt. Demavend*. At the end of time he will escape and destroy a third of mankind, cattle, and sheep, as well as water, fire, and vegetation, but will be slain by *Keresäspa*.¹⁸

¹ Hose-McDougall, ii. 144; cf. H. Ling Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*, i. 301.

² See § 1 (A).

³ Owen, p. 4; cf. *ERE* vi. 885* for a Huron mythical serpent.

⁴ Alexander, *N. American Mythology*, pp. 161, 299 ff.; cf. *ERE* iv. 547*.

⁵ *Id.* pp. 274, 301; Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, i. 302.

⁶ A. Ker, *Papuan Fairy Tales*, London, 1910, p. 30; cf. W. W. Gill, *Journ. of the Polynesian Soc.*, xxi. [1912] 61 (Cook Island version); G. Turner, *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago*, London, 1884, p. 288.

⁷ J. Warneck, *Religion der Batak*, Leipzig, 1909, p. 28; cf. *ERE* vii. 796* for the dragon of the Laos. The *Bunun* of Formosa have also a myth connecting a huge serpent with a deluge (Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, i. 282).

⁸ Junod, ii. 818.

⁹ Müller, p. 568.

¹⁰ *L'Anthropologie*, iv. [1893] 431; P. A. Talbot, *Geog. Journal*, xlv. [1914] 296.

¹¹ For a Hitite mythical serpent see *ERE* vi. 725*.

¹² W. M. F. Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, London, 1895, ii. 818;

G. Maspero, *Contes populaires de l'Égypte ancienne*, Paris, 1882, p. 133 f.

¹³ Hyginus, *Fab.* ch. 151, 152.

¹⁴ J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, p. 431.

¹⁵ *Id.* pp. 428, 433, 436; L. R. Farnell, *CGS* iii. 91, iv. 181; W. S. Fox, *Greek and Roman Mythology* (= *Mythology of all Races*, vol. 1.), Boston, 1910, p. 178; *ERE* ix. 493*.

¹⁶ *SBE* iv. 2 [1895] 253 f., xxiii. [1883] 60.

¹⁷ *Yashit*, xix. 47 f.

¹⁸ *SBE* v. [1890] 119; *Dinkart*, ix. 13. 5; cf. ix. 15. 1 ff.; *Bundahis*, xxix.; cf. Rev 87² 91³ 202⁷; see also *Yasna*, ix. 11; *Yashit*, xix. 40 f.

¹ Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 282; Junod, ii. 467 (Thonga); *ERE* i. 261* (Ainus); de Groot, *Rel. System of China*, v. 851 (China); cf. art. LYCANTHROPY, vol. viii. p. 218*.

² Sibree, p. 263.

³ From information supplied by the Rev. J. K. MacGregor; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 15.

⁴ T. Hahn, *Tsunt-i-Goam*, London, 1881, p. 80.

⁵ G. E. Church, *Aborigines of S. America*, London, 1913, p. 237.

⁶ Tirard, p. 99; Seligmann, *The Vedās*, p. 197 f.

⁷ Brinton, p. 131; Müller, p. 277 (Brazil); *ERE* i. 792*.

⁸ Cf. *ERE* i. 494*.

⁹ Dobrizhoffer, ii. 67.

¹⁰ I. H. N. Evans, *JRAI* xliii. [1913] 469 f.; E. Dunn, *Anthropos*, i. 17.

¹¹ N. Anandale and H. C. Robinson, *Fasciuli Malayenses*, London, 1909-06, pt. 1, p. 88.

¹² *Id.* pp. 100, 104.

¹³ *ERE* iii. 25*, vii. 250*.

¹⁴ W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, London, 1906, ii. 203, 224. A dragon-like monster is supposed to swallow candidates for initiation in New Guinea (see *ERE* viii. 526*, ref.).

In Firdausi's *Shāh Nāmāh* Azi Dahāka is an Arab king with a dragon-like face and two snakes on his shoulders, the product of the kisses of Iblis. These were fed with human flesh. The poem follows closely the Armenian Zoroastrian version of the myth, in which Hrudēn (Thraētaona) is the conqueror of Azi.¹

Dragons exist frequently also in Hindu, Teutonic, Slavic, and Celtic myth and folk-tale, in Mandæan and Manichean mythology—in both cases derived from Babylonian or Persian belief—and also in Gnosticism.²

In the *Pistis Sophia* the disk of the sun is described as a great dragon with his tail in his mouth—an Egyptian conception;³ and dragons form the rudder of the ship of the moon. The outer darkness, where souls incapable of redemption are cast, is a great dragon encircling the earth, with its tail in its mouth, and containing twelve chambers of punishment. So in a Gnostic system described by Epiphanius⁴ the archon of the lowest heaven is a dragon encircling the earth and swallowing souls which have not knowledge. Both in Gnostic and in Catholic prayers for deliverance of the soul on its upward way there is mentioned the opposing dragon or serpent. The dragon as Hades in *Pistis Sophia* is probably a reminiscence of the Egyptian Apap. In the *Apocalypse of Baruch* there is a huge dragon in the third heaven and also in Hades. Its belly forms Hades, and the dragon devours the wicked.⁵

The Gnostic idea of the dragon or serpent as an evil world-principle, identical with the devil, encircling the earth and holding it in his power,⁶ may be referred to in the *Hymn of the Pearl*, ascribed to Bardesanes. The pearl is in the sea, hard by the serpent.⁷ The sea is the mythic chaotic deep, which, encircling the world, is sometimes compared in Babylonian mythology to a snake—the river of the snake.⁸ This idea is also found in Egypt, where the myth of Apap bound in the deep is also figured as that of the ocean itself representing Apap bound, girdling the earth and keeping it together, yet ever trying to burst his bands and destroy it.⁹ A Ptolemaic writer, Horapollo, says that the Egyptians represented the universe as a serpent devouring its tail—a subject depicted also in Gnostic gems.¹⁰ In Rabbinic belief Leviathan was coiled round the earth, and the sea appeared to Alexander, when carried into the air by griffins, as a snake encircling the earth.¹¹ So, too, the *mō-gardā's-ormr* of the Edda, the serpent encircling the earth, is probably the ocean.¹² The Sias believe in cosmic serpents, one for each quarter and one for each earth and heaven.¹³ The serpent was one of the symbols of the elements in Mithraism.¹⁴

6. Myths about serpents.—(a) *Earthquakes.*—The previous idea of the serpent coiled round the earth is perhaps connected with a series of myths in which earthquakes are caused by serpents or dragons which support the earth or swell underground, and whose movements shake the earth.¹⁵

In Polynesian myths the sea-serpent, by standing erect, raised the sky from the earth—the two having previously cleaved together.¹⁶

(b) *The serpent and the waters.*—In many myths a dragon or huge serpent lays waste the land, until the king offers his daughter in marriage to the knight who will slay it. Or a maiden must be given to it at intervals; at last it is the turn of the king's daughter, and then the monster is slain by a hero or saint or divinity. In some of these tales the serpent lives in a lake and keeps back the water-supply. In others a water-spirit does this, or the spirit is embodied in a serpent. Such tales are found in ancient Babylon and Greece, in all European countries, as well as among Negroes, Mongolians, Japanese, Ainu, Kabyles, Eskimo, and American Indians.¹⁷ They have a basis in fact—in the terror inspired by huge serpents, perhaps propitiated by human sacrifice. Instances of such sacrifices occur sporadically, and divine serpents fed with human flesh have already been referred

¹ Cf. *ERE* i. 800a, iv. 620b.

² Cf. § 1 (a).

³ Cooper, p. 375.

⁴ *Adv. Her.* 26. 40.

⁵ See, further, art. *MOUTH*, vol. viii. p. 869a.

⁶ Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, in *Apoc. Gospels, Acts, and Revelations*, Edinburgh, 1873, p. 407; Origen, c. *Celsum*, vi. 25, 35.

⁷ A. A. Bevan, 'The Hymn of the Soul,' in *TS*, vol. v. no. 3, Cambridge, 1897.

⁸ Sayce, p. 116.

¹⁰ Cooper, p. 335.

¹¹ *EBE*, col. 1132; J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr., London, 1882-88, ii. 794.

¹² Grimm, *loc. cit.*

¹³ Stevenson, *11 RBEW*, p. 69.

¹⁴ *ERE* viii. 768b; see 355a, 359b, 360a, for a Malay cosmic snake.

¹⁵ *Id.* i. 491b, v. 128b, vi. 14b; *ZE* xvii. [1885] 32 (Bogobos); J. E. Erskine, *Journ. of a Cruise among the Islands of the W. Pacific*, London, 1853, p. 47 (Fiji).

¹⁶ Turner, *Samoa*, pp. 284, 288, 292.

¹⁷ *ERE* vi. 645b (Bab.), 855 (Japan); Ovid, *Metam.* i. 862 f. (Perseus and Andromeda); the numerous variants are cited in MacCulloch, *CF*, p. 381 ff.

to. The association of huge serpents with water is in accordance with wide-spread belief.

Bushman belief connected a monstrous horned snake with the waters, and in Hottentot myth fountains contain a snake, and they dry up if it is killed.¹ Arab belief associated the *jinns* in serpent form with medicinal waters, and in *Neh* 21³ a 'dragon's well' is mentioned, probably a sacred pool with serpent guardian.² In the Greek myth of Cadmus the dragon guarded the well of Dirce, and the Styx was also believed to be guarded by dragons. In Annam the spirit of the waters appears as a serpent, which also takes human form.³ Celtic myth knows of dragons and serpents in lochs,⁴ just as in Guiana and Zulu tales a serpent lives in a pool sacred to him.⁵

Other myths speak of a serpent-race, like the Indian Nāgas, dwelling under water, and capable of assuming human form.⁶ The *dracs* of French folk-lore and water-dwelling snakes in Montenegrin belief are hostile to men, like those of Cambodian and Laotian belief.⁷

(c) *The serpent and creation.*—Sometimes the serpent figures as the origin of the world (cf. the Tiamat myth) or as creator.

In the Netherland Islands the serpent which pushed up heaven from earth was cut in pieces, which became the islands, and its blood the stars. In Bushman myth snakes were struck by Cagn and became men. A Saliva myth tells how the Caribs sprang from the flesh of serpents. Among the S. Massim a huge snake cut to pieces is said to have been changed into the reefs.⁸

In the Solomon Islands Kahausibware, a spirit in snake form, made men and animals, but was chopped to pieces by a woman, when good things became bad and death entered. The Sioux myth of the first man tells how their feet grew in the ground like trees till a great snake set them free as men.⁹

(d) *Origin.*—The origin of snakes themselves is sometimes mythically related.

They were made from fragments of the god Angoi, slain by another god (S. E. Borneo); from the breast of the child of a sky-maiden and a mortal, cut in two (fugao of the Philippines, Mandaya); or from a bark-cloth twisted and filled with thorns (E. Africa).¹⁰

(e) *Rainbows and eclipses.*—The rainbow is regarded as a great snake among the Semang (who think that the places where it touches earth are unhealthy to live in), the Shoshone, the Australian aborigines, the Dahomans, the ancient Persians, and many other races.¹¹ Eclipses are often regarded as caused by the efforts of a serpent or dragon to swallow the sun or moon.¹²

(f) *The serpent and immortality.*—The serpent was believed to have no fear of old age,¹³ or to be immortal, because it casts its skin,¹⁴ apparently renewing its life. According to many 'origin of death' stories, man was meant to be immortal by the same process, but the serpent received the boon because the messenger sent to man told the serpent this secret, or snakes heard the message and men did not, or because the creator was angry with them.¹⁵ Hence the cast skin of a serpent is a powerful 'medicine.' Among the Lenguas of Para-

¹ Stow, p. 131; Hahn, pp. 53, 77.

² W. R. Smith², p. 163; cf. *Jos. BJ* v. iii. 2.

³ E. S. Hartland, *LP* i. 121 f.; cf. *ERE* vii. 796a (Laotians).

⁴ MacCulloch, *Religion of the Ancient Celts*, p. 188.

⁵ See § 7 (a), (b).

⁶ W. R. S. Ralston, *Russian Folk-tales*, London, 1873, p. 118 (Slavic); P. Rascher, *AA* xxix. 284 (New Britain); Keysser, in Neuhaus, *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, iii. 202.

⁷ Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, in G. W. Leibnitz, *Scriptores Rerum Brunsvicorum*, Hanover, 1710, i. 987; M. E. Durham, *JRAI* xxxix. 97.

⁸ A. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*², London, 1899, i. 170 (Bushman); J. Gumilla, *Hist. naturelle, civile et géographique de l'Orénoque*, Avignon, 1758, i. 152 (Saliva); Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 382.

⁹ *ERE* viii. 586a (Solomon Islands); see also § 1 (e); G. Catlin, *The N. Amer. Indians*, new ed., London, 1876, i. 280.

¹⁰ Dixon, p. 176 i.; Macdonald, *Africana*, i. 294.

¹¹ Skeat-Blagden, ii. 203, 224; Howitt, p. 431; Alexander, *N. Amer. Mythology*, p. 139; Crooke, *PR*², ii. 144; Purchas, xv. 304 (Peru).

¹² See *ERE* i. 492, viii. 360, also art. *PRODIGES AND PORTENTS*; for the snake as the bridge to paradise see *ERE* ix. 457b.

¹³ Plutarch, *de Is. et Osir.* § 74.

¹⁴ See § 1 (f).

¹⁵ The tales are found in New Britain, Bismarck Archipelago, Annam, Borneo, among the Arawaks and the Tamanachiers of the Orinoco; see Frazer, *The Belief in Immortality*, p. 69 f., *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, i. 66 ff.; I. H. N. Evans, *JRAI* xliii. 426; Dixon, p. 117 f.

guay all animals, except fish and serpents, are thought to share immortality with men.¹

In a wide-spread myth a hero restores a friend by using a plant which he has seen a serpent use to bring back another serpent to life, as in the Greek story of Polyidus and Glaucus.²

(g) *The serpent and the language of birds.*—A common belief existed that eating the flesh or heart of certain snakes, especially of a fabulous white snake, gave the eater wisdom or a knowledge of beast language. As the serpent was regarded often as an embodiment of supernatural wisdom, to eat its flesh caused transference of that to the eater. The serpent was supposed to know beast and bird language, as Democritus thought, because it was generated from the mixed blood of birds.

This belief forms the theme of innumerable folk-tales and existed in ancient times. The gift could also be conferred by a grateful serpent licking the ear of a man, as in the Greek myth of Melampus, or in other ways.³ In many quarters the snake is believed to give inspiration through its spirit, or to cause possession,⁴ and in all parts of the world—Central America, Mexico, among the Haldas and Tingits, in New Ireland, New Zealand, and the Solomon Islands—representations of a man holding a snake, a lizard, or a frog with its tongue to his tongue are found.⁵ The idea is probably that of receiving inspiration from the animal.

(h) *The serpent and the magic stone.*—There is a wide-spread belief in the king of serpents who wears a jewelled crown—a magical possession which men try to win.⁶

On such a huge serpent wearing a golden crown the earth was founded, according to a Borneo myth.⁷ That the serpent has in its head a jewel or magic stone much coveted by adventurous men, who try to obtain it, is the subject of many tales in India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and among the American Indians.⁸ In Sinhalese myth the stone is dropped by the serpent to give it light; in a similar Nigerian myth, to attract its prey, when the seeker is able to obtain it by craft.⁹ Among the Koro-speaking tribes of British New Guinea a sorcerer obtains a black stone from a snake after ritual preparation and by worrying it till it drops the stone, when he runs off with it, pursued by the snake. The stone kills any one touched by it. This bears some resemblance to the Gaulish method of obtaining the 'serpent's egg.'¹⁰ Other tales speak of a magic ring in a serpent's mouth which, once obtained, grants every wish.¹¹ The Dayaks keep anything found in the mouth of an ancestral snake as a charm.¹²

Somewhat analogous is the Andamanese belief that a small snake produces streams of oxide of iron and white clay by emitting a fluid when disturbed.¹³

(i) *The serpent and treasure.*—Another common belief is that dragons lie upon gold, or guard treasure, or have magic possessions—a common Teutonic and Scandinavian belief, shared by the Arabians (the winged serpents guarding incense-trees), and by the Greeks (the dragon-guardian of the golden apples of the Hesperides), Romans, Chanés of S. America, and the tribes of E. Africa.¹⁴

Because of this mythical connexion with treasure, as well as because deities or heroes with some serpent-attribute—Quetzal-

coatl, Kneph, Ea, Indra, Cadmus—were pioneers of civilization and taught men mining and agriculture, A. W. Buckland thought that serpents may have played some part in aiding man to discover metals, and hence were worshipped.¹

(j) In a number of stories having a very different provenance, but showing a certain parallelism, a small worm or snake taken into a house grows to monstrous form and is with difficulty got rid of.² Or the snake enters the body of a person, causing great discomfort.³

7. *Woman and the serpent.*—In folk-tale and myth, and occasionally in ritual, woman is brought into relation with the serpent, which is often her lover or husband. This is but one aspect of the world-wide myths in which an animal marries a woman, though frequently the animal is a god in disguise or a being now human, now animal, often as a result of enchantment. But in many instances, especially among savages, the snake is a snake *sans phrase*, because of the method of thought by which no clear distinction is drawn between human and animal forms,⁴ possibly also because of the connexion of snake and φαλλός.

(a) Of the first series the European examples are mainly variants of the Beauty and the Beast cycle, and the serpent is a youth bewitched to serpent form till a maiden releases him from the enchantment by kissing him or burning his snake-skin.⁵

Greek mythology contains similar stories, though here the serpent is usually a god in disguise.⁶ A similar myth was told of Faunus in Roman mythology, possibly because serpents were kept in the temple of the Bona Dea.⁷ Both Greek and Roman legend related that gods as serpents were fathers of well-known personages by human mothers.

Olympias, wife of Philip, was approached by the god Ammon as a serpent, and gave birth to Alexander the Great. A serpent was found lying by her as she slept, and, as Olympias was given to the cult of Dionysos, in which serpents figured, the germ of the legend may be found in this.⁸ The mother of Aristomenes had united with a god in serpent-form, as also the mother of Aratus. In her case the serpent was Asklepios, and a figurine of her sitting on a serpent existed in the temple of Asklepios at Sicyon.⁹ Augustus was the son of a serpentiform deity, and his mother could never get rid of the spots left by the serpent on her body.¹⁰ A similar legend was told of the mother of Scipio the elder.¹¹ Possibly all such stories arose from the use of serpents in the cult of Dionysos, or from the fact that barren women visited the temple of Asklepios.¹²

According to Athenagoras, Kore, daughter of Rhea, had a monstrous aspect and horns. Then he tells how Zeus did violence to Rhea, who changed herself to a δράκαινα to escape him, when he now became a dragon. In that form also he violated Kore.¹³ Reinach sees here two parallel traditions, and thinks that Zeus and Kore had both serpent form and that Zagreus was hatched from an egg as a horned serpent.¹⁴ Parallels from savage folk-tales exist.

In a New Guinea tale a youth is enabled to take serpent form and obtains a girl, afterwards resuming human shape. Or a serpent can take human form and marry human brides.¹⁵ In a Zulu tale Kóloowisi, the serpent-god, catches a girl, but takes human shape, renouncing his serpent-skin.¹⁶ In Polynesian legend such tales are told of a huge eel which can take human

¹ W. B. Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land*, London, 1911, p. 125.

² Hyginus, *Fab.* 136; Pliny, *HN* xxv. 5; Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Berlin, 1870, no. 16; for numerous variants see *CP*, p. 82; J. Bolte and G. Polivka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, Leipzig, 1918, i. 126 ff.; Frazer, *Pausanias*, iii. 66.

³ Philostr. *Vita Apoll.* i. 20, iii. 9; Pliny, *HN* x. 70; Apollodorus, i. 9. 11; for folk-tale variants see Bolte-Polivka, i. 151 ff.; Frazer, *AR* i. [1868] 166 ff.

⁴ See § x; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 318 ff.

⁵ W. H. Dall, 'On Masks, Labrets, and Certain Aboriginal Customs,' *3 REEW* [1884], pp. 103, 111 ff.; A. W. Buckland, *JAI* xxi. [1892] 29.

⁶ Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* ii. 686 f., 1219 f., *Household Tales*, tr. M. Hunt, London, 1884, ii. 77; F. S. Krauss, *Sagen und Märchen der Südslaven*, Leipzig, 1883-84, nos. 62, 107; *ERE* i. 526 b.

⁷ Dixon, p. 159 f.

⁸ Crooke, *PR*, ii. 143; Dixon, p. 328; Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 303; De Laborde, *Relation des Caraïbes*, Paris, 1674, p. 7; *ERE* i. 526 b, iii. 395 a, 503 b.

⁹ W. L. Hildburgh, *JRAI* xxxviii. [1908] 200; Leonard, *The Lower Niger*, p. 192; cf. Grimm, iv. 1492.

¹⁰ Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 282; cf. art. CHARMS AND AMULETS (Celtic), vol. iii. p. 412.

¹¹ Dixon, p. 163.

¹² E. H. Man, *JAI* xii. 155.

¹³ Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* ii. 689 f., iii. 978 f.; Herod. iii. 107; Phædrus, iv. 19; Nordenskiöld, p. 288; Macdonald, *Africana*, i. 360.

¹ A. W. Buckland, *Anthropological Studies*, London, 1891, p. 104 f.

² W. Mapes, *de Nugis Curialium*, ed. T. Wright, London, 1850, dist. ii. cap. 6; F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, Heilbronn, 1879, p. 66; W. Henderson, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the N. Counties of England*, London, 1879, p. 287; F. H. Cushing, *Zulu Folk-tales*, New York, 1901, p. 93; G. Turner, *Samoa*, p. 243; Codrington, p. 403.

³ Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 382 (New Guinea); Junod, ii. 229 (Thonga).

⁴ See art. METAMORPHOSIS, § 3.

⁵ W. Webster, *Basque Legends*, London, 1879, p. 167; A. de Gubernatis, *Novelline popolari*, Milan, 1883, no. 14; Ralston, *The Songs of the Russian People*, London, 1872, p. 174, *Russian Folk-tales*, p. 116; J. H. Knowles, *Folk-tales of Kashmir*, London, 1888, p. 491.

⁶ Arnobius, *adv. Gentes*, v. 22; Diod. Sic. iv. 4, v. 75.

⁷ Macrobi. i. 12. 24; cf. *Plut. Cas.* 9.

⁸ *Plut. Alex.* 3; Lucian, *Dial. Mort.* 13; cf. *ERE* vii. 193 a.

⁹ *Paus.* ii. x. 3, iv. xiv. 7.

¹⁰ *Suet. August.* 94; Dio Cass. xlv. i. 2.

¹¹ Livy, xxvi. 19; *Aul. Gell.* vii. 1.

¹² See § i (f).

¹³ Athen. *Leg. pro Christianis*, ch. 20; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* ii.; cf. C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, Königsberg, 1829, p. 547 ff.

¹⁴ S. Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, Paris, 1905-12, ii. 60.

¹⁵ H. H. Romilly, *From my Verandah in New Guinea*, London, 1889, p. 78; Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 897.

¹⁶ Cushing, p. 93.

form.¹ Similar tales of snakes that can take human shape and marry girls are told among the Kafirs, Formosans, and Negroes of Jamaica.² A Rabbinic idea was that, through intercourse of the serpent with Eve, her descendants were corrupted, the serpent having then almost the form of a man.³

(b) In the second group the serpent has no human form, and the tales, mainly of savage provenance, are extremely realistic and disgusting.

Examples occur among the tribes of New Guinea, the Admiralty Islanders, Eskimo, American Indians, and Guaranos.⁴ Echoes of such stories are found in early Christian literature—e.g., the *Acts of Thomas*, where a dragon or snake loved a girl. In the *Visio Pauli* faithless virgins must endure the embraces of serpents in hell.⁵

(c) These tales may be connected with actual custom and belief.

The python god Dah-gbi of the Ewe has many priestesses, and is supposed to marry young novices secretly. According to one writer, the girl is placed in a pit with serpents and told that one will take human form—really one of the priests.⁶ The Onyekolom compel a woman to marry, saying that, if she does not, she will marry the great snake Aké.⁷ Among the Akikuyu, at the worship of the snake-god, who requires wives, women and girls go to the huts built for him, where, however, the priests visit them. The children are fathered on the god.⁸ Girls at initiation among the Basutos are taken to a stream where they are told a great serpent will visit them.⁹ The Hottentots believe in a serpent with human organs which visits women in sleep, and a somewhat similar belief is found among the Macusi.¹⁰ A 16th cent. treatise on Brazil says that barren women among the Indians were struck on the hips with a snake, with which soothsaying was also observed, as a means of their having children.¹¹ Some Australian tribes believe in a serpent which attacks women.¹² In many other instances the serpent seems to be associated with the fruitfulness of women¹³—e.g., in Greece women slept in the temple of Asklepios and thought themselves visited by the serpent-god in their dreams, and their offspring was believed to be the result of this visit. Again, virgin or married priestesses are often associated, though not exclusively, with serpent shrines or ritual, in some instances probably because the serpent representing an earth-goddess was best served by women. The shrines of the pre-Apollonic Pytho and of Gaia, later consecrated to Apollo in N. Greece, the shrine at Lanuvium, that at Shaikh Haredi in Egypt, the temple of the python in Uganda, as well as the ritual of the Thesmophoria, and the wives of the serpent in Dahomey, are cases in point. The ritual with serpents in the Dionysiac mysteries and 'the snake gliding over the breast,' with the meaning already referred to, doubtless give rise to some of the Greek myths. It is also certain that women had serpents as pets among the Greeks and Romans, and that lascivious practices were followed with them. Perhaps these snakes as well as those at Dahomey were trained to these practices.¹⁴

(d) Conversely a man is sometimes the lover of a snake-mistress.

The Koranas believe that the first man and a snake lived together.¹⁵ In Hudson's Island the sea-serpent as woman and earth as man united, and their progeny was the race of men.¹⁶ The Snake clan of the Pueblo Indians is believed to be descended from a snake (alternatively snake and woman) and a man who gained access to the *kiva* of the Snake people. When they assumed snake form, he seized the fiercest, which changed to a beautiful girl, the Snake Maid—a personification of underworld life which fertilizes the maize. The snakes to which she gave birth changed to men and women, ancestors of the Snake

clan.¹ In Japan stories of men's wives that are also serpents or dragons at times exist in the early mythology and in popular belief.² So in the Greek story the mistress and bride of Menippus is a lamia or serpent, and disappears when discovered by Apollonius.³ In some folk-tales and ballads a girl is enchanted so that she appears as a reptile until a youth kisses her, when she is retransformed, as in the parallel tales where the hero is thus bewitched.⁴ Hindu folk-love has examples of beings (e.g., the *nagas*) who are women by night and serpents by day.⁵ In other instances we have a composite being, half-woman, half-serpent in the lower part of the body. Herodotus cites a myth regarding the origin of the Scythians, progeny of Heracles and Echidna, who was a serpent from the waist down.⁶ Such composite beings are known also in India, but the typical example is found in the well-known tale of Mélusine, who, married to Raymond, asked that she should spend one day each week in seclusion. One day he spied upon her and saw her in a bath, half-woman, half-serpent, and, when he called her 'odious serpent,' she left him for ever. In one version she had been cursed by her mother, a fay, to assume this form every Saturday.⁷ The story belongs to the 'supernatural bride' cycle, but Mélusine has parallels in Greek nymphs who are serpents from the waist downwards, in Egyptian art, and in the sirens—half-woman, half-fish—the form also of the Semitic Derceto or Atargatis, of Triton, and of Oannes.⁸

The converse form, in which divine beings have snake-faces, is of frequent occurrence in Egypt, as well as *vice versa*. They are also referred to in the so-called Mithras liturgy; and in some mediæval representations of the Fall the serpent has a human head and arms, or even two such heads, to address Adam and Eve at once.⁹ Among the Araucanos the servants of Pillan, the chief god, are snakes with men's heads.¹⁰

(e) The fondness of snakes for milk has perhaps given rise to a belief in their sucking the breasts of women, but in certain cases the practice may have been an erotic perversion.

The Hottentots believe that serpents come by night for women to suckle them, and bite them if they refuse.¹¹ The Mayas believe in an imaginary snake Ekoneil which glides into houses of nursing mothers, covers their nostrils with its tail, and sucks their breasts.¹² In Welsh tradition the wings of mythical flying snakes arose because they had drunk women's milk spilt on the ground and had eaten sacramental bread.¹³ The story of Caradoc, which forms part of the French Perceval cycle, relates how a serpent fastened on his arm and sucked away his life. He was saved by a young maiden presenting her breast to the serpent, which took the nipple in its mouth. Cador then cut off its head, but with that also the nipple, which was magically replaced by one of gold.¹⁴ A close parallel exists in a Gaelic folk-tale, and less close in a Scots ballad,¹⁵ but it is probable that the source is Celtic, as the name of the wife of the Welsh Karadawe is Tegau Eurrion, Tegau 'with the golden breast.' The Egyptian goddess Neit is represented with a crocodile at either breast, and in French mediæval architecture serpents are represented sucking the breasts of women. Women are seen by visitors to hell suckling serpents as a punishment for refusing nourishment to their children.¹⁶ Some frescoes in Byzantine churches show a parallel to this.¹⁷ Lucian says that in Macedonia women pressed serpents in their hands and gave them the breast.¹⁸

(f) In some instances menstration is ascribed to the bite of a reptile or other animal.

¹ Bourke, *Snake-Dance of the Moquis*, p. 177; Fewkes, *REB* (1897), p. 304.

² Joly, p. 377; *Kojiki*, ed. Chamberlain, p. 127.

³ Philostratus, *Vita Apollon.* bk. 4; cf. Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, pt. iii, sec. 2, mem. 1, subs. 1; and Keats, *Lamia*.

⁴ See E. S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales*, London, 1891, p. 240 f.; MacCulloch, *CF*, p. 257; W. Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, London, 1839, p. 345 f.

⁵ Crooke, *PR*, ii. 137; J. F. Campbell, *My Circular Notes*, London, 1876-79, ii. 186.

⁶ Herod. iv. 8.

⁷ T. Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology*, reprint, London, 1900, p. 430 f.; S. Baring-Gould, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, do. 1884, p. 471 ff.

⁸ J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, p. 281; *A Guide to the Egyptian Collections in the British Museum*, London, 1909, p. 273; *ERE* ix. 843. Cf. the third world-power in the Gnostic system of Justin (half-female, half-serpent), and Error (half-woman, half-serpent) in Spenser's *Færie Queene*, i. i. 14.

⁹ Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 12 f., 71; A. N. Didron, *Christian Iconography*, Eng. tr., London, 1886, ii. 140.

¹⁰ R. E. Latham, *JRAI* xxxix. 347.

¹¹ Hahn, p. 81.

¹² *FLJ* i. [1883] 256.

¹³ E. Owen, *Welsh Folk-Lore*, Oswestry, 1896, p. 249.

¹⁴ Gaston Paris, 'Caradoc et le Serpent' in *Romania*, xxviii. [1899] 214 ff.

¹⁵ J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the W. Highlands*, Edinburgh, 1890, i., Intro. p. lxxxix; F. J. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Boston, 1882-98, pt. i., p. 176 f., no. 301.

¹⁶ In the *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Apoc. of Esdras*, and *Apoc. of Mary*.

¹⁷ L. Henzey, *Annuaire de l'Assoc. pour l'encouragement des études grecques*, Paris, 1871, p. 118.

¹⁸ Floss-Bartels, i. 484 ff.

¹ Gill, p. 77.

² G. N. Theal, *Kafir Folk-lore*, London, n.d., p. 29, cf. p. 47; *FLJ* v. [1887] 152 f. (Formosa); W. Jekyll, *Jamaican Song and Story*, do. 1907, p. 102; cf. *ERE* i. 321.

³ *JE*, s.v. 'Fall.'

⁴ Romilly, pp. 107, 120; J. Meier, *Anthropos*, ii. [1907] 654; H. Rink, *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, Edinburgh and London, 1875, p. 186 ff.; C. G. Leland, *Algonquin Legends of New England*, Boston, 1885, pp. 286, 274 ff.; E. Petitot, *Traditions indiennes du Canada nord-ouest*, Paris, 1886, pp. 16, 407; *ERE* i. 321 b; W. H. Brett, *Legends and Myths of the Aboriginal Tribes of British Guiana*, London, 1880, p. 64. Cf. also H. L. Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art*, London, 1903, p. 140; *Ælian, de Nat. An.* xii. 39; cf. vi. 17; Ralston, *Songs*, p. 173 f.

⁵ C. S. Boswell, *An Irish Precursor of Dante*, London, 1908, p. 231, suggests an origin of these ideas in travel tales of Indian serpents, preserved by Greek naturalists.

⁶ W. W. Reade, *Savage Africa*, London, 1863, p. 540; see § x.

⁷ *JAI* xxix. [1899] 22.

⁸ Cf. J. G. Frazer, *GB*, pt. iv., *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, London, 1914, i. 67 f.

⁹ Casalis, p. 288.

¹⁰ Hahn, p. 81; H. H. Floss and M. Bartels, *Das Weib*, Leipzig, 1905, ii. 334.

¹¹ Purchas, xvi. 467.

¹² A. Featherman, *Social Hist. of the Races of Mankind*, London, 1881-91, ii. 75.

¹³ See above, § x.

¹⁴ Boudin, p. 68 ff.; C. A. Böttiger, *Sabina*, Leipzig, 1806, ii. 188 f.

¹⁵ Hahn, p. 82.

¹⁶ Turner, *Samoa*, p. 228.

This is shown by images from New Guinea in which a crocodile or snake enters or emerges from the female organ.¹ Among the Chiriguano, at a girl's first menstruation, women try to drive off with sticks 'the snake which has wounded her.'² Among the Macusi girls at this time are not allowed to go into the woods lest they be amorously attacked by serpents. Basuto girls at this period dance round the image of a snake.³ Certain families at Kumano in Japan send their female children to the mountains to serve the god Susa-no-wo. When they show signs of puberty, a dragon is said to come and glare at them.⁴ In Portugal menstruation is traced to a serpent, or women are thought liable to the bite of a lizard at this period.⁵ Cognate with these beliefs is the superstition current in Germany in the 18th cent. that the hair of a menstruous woman, if buried, becomes a snake, and the gypsy custom whereby unfruitful women become fruitful by spitting on and sprinkling with menstrual blood the place where they have seen a snake.⁶ It is also believed among the Orinoco tribes that serpents try to have connexion with menstruous women; hence they are forbidden to go into the forest. Such a woman who died of jaundice was believed to have thus exposed herself to the attack of a snake.⁷ Among the Matacos a cure for snake-bite is to drop menstrual blood into the wound.⁸

Reinach suggests that the hostility between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman, i.e. the daughters of Eve (Gn 3¹⁵), originally referred to some such myth of the origin of menstruation.⁹ The rationale of such myths is probably to be found in the connexion between snake and φάλαξ, the latter drawing blood at devirgination; menstrual blood was supposed to be produced by a similar wounding by a snake.

8. Children and serpents.—The test of the legitimacy of children by the Psylli¹⁰ is paralleled by Greek myth.

When Alcmena bore Heracles and Iphicles, respectively sons of Zeus and Amphitryon, the latter placed two serpents in the bed to see which was his son. Iphicles fled—a proof that he was son of a mortal.¹¹ In another version Hera sent the serpents to destroy the infant Heracles, who strangled them.¹²

In many tales which suggest a source for these myths serpents appear friendly to children, and visit or play with them.

Pausanias tells how a prince at Amphiclea, suspecting a plot against his child, put him in a vessel. A wolf tried to reach him, but a serpent coiled round the vessel and kept watch. The father killed it; but, learning the truth, he made a funeral-pyre for it.¹³ Vopiscus¹⁴ tells of a snake attached to a boy and regarded as his familiar, and Spartianus¹⁵ has a similar tale. Pliny tells a story of an asp in Egypt regularly fed. The son of the house died through the bite of one of its young ones, whereupon the asp killed it.¹⁶ O. W. Holmes¹⁷ cites some 17th cent. instances of the alleged friendliness of snakes for children. In Calabar a woman found a snake in her child's cradle, which the priests declared to be Olaga, a local god.¹⁸ House-snakes in Germany were supposed to watch infants in the cradle and sip milk out of their bowl.¹⁹ Numerous parallels to Grimm's *Märchen* with this incident of the snake and child exist and are doubtless connected with the fact that house-haunting snakes are regarded as spirits of ancestors.²⁰

9. Serpent origin of men.—Tribes, clans, and rulers were sometimes supposed to be descended from serpents, as in the instances of the Hopi Snake clan and the Scythians, already cited.

The Psylli were an African clan known to classical writers; in their bodies was a virus deadly to serpents, its smell rendering them senseless. To test the legitimacy of their children, they exposed them to serpents, and, if these did not avoid them, the children were illegitimate, i.e. not of the clan. Serpent-descent is indicated here.²¹ In Senegambia there is a Python clan, and each child is supposed to be visited by the

python within eight days after birth.¹ In the case of the El Kiboron clan of the Masai, who do not kill snakes, and the married men of whom are supposed to become snakes after death, it is believed that snakes never bite members of the clan—another indication of serpent descent.² A clan in Phrygia was called Ophiogenes, because they were descended from the eponymous goddess Alia and a serpent—probably the god Sabazios in that form.³ At Parium another clan bore the same name, probably for a similar reason, and the males of the clan could heal a person bitten by a snake by touching him. The saliva of some of them had the same effect.⁴ Whether the name Ophiusa, formerly applied to Rhodes and Cyprus, and the stories that Tenos, Crete, and Seriphus once swarmed with serpents, denote that serpent clans dwelt there is uncertain. The Caribs were descended from a water-spirit, with both human and serpent form, and a girl, whose child was ancestor of the Carib race.⁵ The Hudson Bay islanders believe that men are descended from earth (the male) and a serpent.⁶ If the name Eve (Havvah) is equivalent to 'serpent,' the belief in serpent descent may have been held by the Hebrews or some branch of them.⁷

Probably such legends are connected with totemism, since, where this exists, the snake is often a totem, and the immunity from snake-bite attributed to some of the clans referred to may be explained from the belief that the snake species would not hurt its fellow-clansmen, who also would protect it. The healing of snake-bite by such people,⁸ as well as their power of handling snakes with impunity (as among the Hopi), is curious. But some of the myths may be related to a cult of a serpent as chief god, from whom men believe themselves descended.

The Peruvians were progeny of the divine sun-serpent and his consort, and a similar myth existed among the Mexicans.⁹ Kings and rulers also had a serpent origin in some instances—from a serpent-god or an ancestor conceived as a serpent. In Abyssinia the royal line began with the serpent Arwe; the semi-human serpent Cecrops was first king of Athens and ancestor of the Cecropidae; and the Mikados of Japan were also believed to have serpent descent.¹⁰

These myths should be compared with those of serpent and woman unions,¹¹ with others in which a serpent has human children,¹² and with a third group telling how serpents and other reptiles were once men, afterwards transformed to reptile shape.¹³ In others, again, women give birth to snakes, and in the Welsh laws of Hoel (A.D. 928) a woman declaring a man to be father of her child says, 'May I be delivered of a snake, if it be not true.'¹⁴

LITERATURE.—Articles in *ARW*, *passim*; W. W. von Baudissin, *Studien zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, Leipzig, 1876-78, i. 255 ff.; J. C. M. Boudin, *Études anthropologiques*, 'Culte du serpent,' pt. ii., Paris, 1864; P. Cassel, *Drachenkämpfe*, Berlin, 1868; W. R. Cooper, 'Observations on the Serpent Myths of Ancient Egypt,' in *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, London, vol. vi. (1872); J. E. Deane, *The Worship of the Serpent traced throughout the World*, do. 1833; J. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, do. 1868; A. de Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, 2 vols., do. 1872; T. Höpfer, *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter*, Vienna, 1914; E. Küster, *Die Schlange in der griech. Kunst und Religion*, Giessen, 1913; C. F. Oldham, *The Sun and the Serpent*, London, 1905, *Ophiolatritia*, do. 1889; F. L. W. Schwartz, *Die altgriech. Schlangengöttheiten*, Berlin, 1858; E. B. Tylor, *PC*, 2 vols., London, 1903; C. S. Wake, *Serpent Worship and other Essays*, do. 1888; A. Wiedemann, *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter*, Leipzig, 1912. See also art. ANIMALS, vol. i. p. 525 f., FALL (Ethnic), vol. v. p. 714 f.

J. A. MACCULLOCH.

SERPENT-WORSHIP (Indian).—I. Importance and variety of the cult.—The cult of the serpent in India is of special importance; in no

¹ Ploss-Bartels⁸ i. 484 ff.

² *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, new ed., Paris, 1780-83, viii. 383.

³ H. H. Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, London and Philadelphia, 1897-1910, ii. 287.

⁴ W. G. Aston, *Shinto*, London, 1905, p. 206.

⁵ Ploss-Bartels⁸ i. 484; H. H. Ellis, ii. 287.

⁶ H. H. Ellis, ii. 287; H. von Wilschick, *Volks Glaube und religiöser Brauch der Zigeuner*, Münster, 1891, pp. 66, 138.

⁷ F. S. Gilg, *Saggio di Storia Americana*, Rome, 1780-84, ii. 182 f.

⁸ Nordenskiöld, p. 107.

⁹ *Cultes, mythes et religions*, ii. 898.

¹⁰ See below, § 9.

¹¹ W. S. Fox, *Greek and Roman Mythology*, p. 79.

¹² Hyginus, *Fab.* 30. ¹³ Paus. x. xxxiii. 5.

¹⁴ *Aurelianus*, c. 4. ¹⁵ *Severus*, c. 1.

¹⁶ Pliny, *HN* x. 86 [74].

¹⁷ *Etica Venner*, Cambridge, Mass., 1861, ch. xvi.

¹⁸ Communicated by Rev. J. K. MacGregor.

¹⁹ Grimm, *Teut. Myth.* ii. 686; cf. Claus Magnus, *Hist. de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555), bk. xxi. cap. 48.

²⁰ Grimm, *Household Tales*, ii. 76. For the variants see Bolte-Polivka, ii. 459.

²¹ Varro, in Priscian. x. 32; Pliny, *HN* vii. 14.

¹ *REth* iii. [1885] 397. ² Merker, p. 202.

³ Elian, *de Nat. An.* xiii. 39; Ramsay, ii. 593.

⁴ Strabo, xiii. i. 14. ⁵ Brett, p. 64.

⁶ Turner, *Samoa*, p. 288.

⁷ Nöldeke, *ZDMG* xiii. [1888] 487; J. Wellhausen, *Reste arab. Heidenthums*, Berlin, 1897, p. 154; H. Gressmann, *ARW* x. [1907] 359 f.

⁸ See art. NUBA, vol. ix. p. 402b.

⁹ McLennan, p. 527; see also above, § 1.

¹⁰ Fergusson, p. 33; Diod. Sic. i. 28; Griffin, p. 31.

¹¹ See above, § 7.

¹² Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 408 (S. Massim).

¹³ Leland, p. 110; cf. *ERN* i. 320b; Skeat, pp. 54, 285; Lang, i. 170, ii. 36.

¹⁴ Wheeler, *ARW* xv. 348 (Solomon Islands); De Groot, *Rel. System of China*, iv. 217; Seligmann, *Melanesians*, p. 397 (S. Massim); A. W. Haddon and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Eccl. Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, 1869-73, i. 253.

other part of the world is it more widely distributed or developed in more varied and interesting forms. This results from the wide distribution of the reptile.

India is the only country in the world inhabited by all the known families of living snakes. The chief characteristic of the reptile fauna of the Indian region is the great variety of the generic types and the number of their species, the latter amounting to no fewer than 450, which is nearly one-third of the total number of species known in the world, referable to about 100 genera, of which the majority do not range beyond the limits of India.¹

2. Origin of serpent-worship.—The abundant distribution of these reptiles and the serious loss of life caused by them sufficiently explain the fear with which they are regarded and the respect and worship paid to them. The animal is dreaded and revered on account of the mysterious dangers associated with it, its stealthy habits, the cold fixity of its gaze, its sinuous motion, the protrusion of its forked tongue, and the suddenness and deadliness of its attacks. It haunts houses, old ruins, fields, and pools. It is particularly dreaded by women, whose habits of walking barefoot in fields in the early dawn and groping in the dark corners of their huts render them specially exposed to its malice. Its long life and its habit of changing its skin suggest ideas of immortality and resurrection, or of purification, one festival being held at the time when its skin is sloughed.²

Attempts have been made to prove that serpent-worship was introduced into India by Scythian and other invaders from Central Asia. J. Tod,³ relying on authorities now obsolete, traced its origin to a so-called Tak or Takshak tribe of Central Asia. But an examination of the latest authority on the Scythians⁴ shows that, while a serpent barrow and the use of the snake as an ornament or symbol are found among this people, there is no indication of a general cult of the reptile. On the whole, the wide distribution and loss of life caused by the snake in India warrant the conclusion that the cult is probably local.

3. Distribution of serpent-worship.—During the census of 1891 some attempt was made to collect statistics of the numbers of the followers of the various serpent-cults, but without much success, because these merge in other types of animism prevailing among the lower classes.

In the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 35,366 persons were recorded as worshippers of the *nāga*, and 122,991 as worshippers of the snake-hero, Gūgā Pir, with other groups less numerically important; in the Panjāb 35,344 persons were said to worship Gūgā.⁵ The results from other Provinces equally failed to indicate the wider distribution of the worship.

Some of the more important types of cult, according to their local distribution, are the following.

(a) *North-West Frontier.*—

In Abisāra, the modern Hazāra country, Strabo speaks of two enormous snakes, probably kept in a temple as objects of worship.⁶ A Kāfir legend tells of the destruction by Imra of an enormous snake in the Bashgul valley, whose tracks are to this day indicated by some light quartz veins, which show distinctly against the darker ground of the rocks; a tarn was formed by the blood flowing from the snake's severed head.⁷ In Baluchistan the mountain known as Koh-i-Mārsin, 'peak of snakes,' and the petrified dragons of Bisūt and Bāmiān indicate an ancient cult.⁸

(b) *Kāsmīr.*—In Kāsmīr and the neighbouring hills there is evidence of wide-spread worship.

1 G. Watt, *Dict. of the Econ. Products of India*, London and Calcutta, 1889-93, vi. 1. 429; IGI I. [1907] 269 ff.; J. Fayerer, *The Thanatophidia of India*, London, 1874.

2 J. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 259; PR² ii. 123 ff.

3 *Annals and Antiquities of Rājasthān*, popular ed., London, 1914, p. 86.

4 E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge, 1913, pp. 323 f., 410, 427 f., and other passages noted in the index.

5 *Census of India*, 1891, xvi. *N.W. Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1894, pt. i. 211 f., xix. *Punjab*, Calcutta, 1892, pt. i. 104 f.

6 xv. 28; J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Class. Literature*, London, 1901, p. 341.

7 G. S. Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush*, London, 1896, p. 288.

8 A. W. Hughes, *Balochistan*, London, 1877, p. 5; C. Masson, *Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab*, do. 1842-48, ii. 357, 395.

The early legends are full of tales of snake-gods, especially in connexion with water-springs.¹ The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang (or Yuan Chwang) states that, as Kāsmīr is protected by a dragon, it has always assumed superiority among neighbouring people.² Abul Faḡhī, the historiographer of Akbar, records that 'in seven hundred places there are graven images of snakes which they worship and regarding which wonderful legends are told.'³ Legends still abound of dragons, particularly in connexion with springs.⁴ It was at one time supposed that all Kāsmīr temples were originally surrounded by artificial lakes as abodes for the Nāga water-deities, but this theory is now abandoned.⁵

(c) *The Panjāb.*—In the Panjāb, both in the plains and in the hill country, snake-worship has prevailed from ancient times.

Zilian⁶ tells how Alexander the Great found in many places snakes kept in caves and worshipped; the people implored the king to spare them, and he consented to do so; one of enormous size is described.⁷ The city of Taxila (Skr. *Takshāṣṭā*, 'hewn stone,' or more probably 'rock of Takshaka,' the great Nāga king, or 'rock of the Takkas,' a snake-worshipping tribe) was apparently the site of a snake-cult which has been localized at a fountain near Ḥaṣan Abdāl.⁸ The tradition of snake-worship still exists among the Gaur Tagā tribe of N. India, which claims descent from the Takkas.⁹ Another centre of the snake-cult is Safidon in the Jind State, the name of which is supposed to mark the snake holocaust by Janamejaya (Skr. *sarpa-dāmana*, 'snake-subduing').¹⁰ Serpents, again, are connected with the widely spread legends of Rājā Rāsāli and Niwāl Dāi.¹¹ The famous iron pillar at Delhi, erected about A.D. 415, is said to have sunk into the earth so as to rest on the head of the serpent Sesa, which supports the world; the king Prithivī Rājā, to make its position certain as a pledge of the permanence of his dynasty, ordered it to be taken up, when blood and flesh of the snake's head were found adhering to it—an omen which foretold his ultimate defeat.¹² In the Panjāb plains snake-worship is widely spread.¹³ In the Chamba State it is associated with the cult of Devi, the mother-goddess; she is not connected with springs like the *nāgas*, or serpent deities, but it is common to find a Nāga and a Devi temple side by side and common attributes are assigned to both. There is in Mandī, another hill State, a close connexion between the cult of Siva and that of the *nāgas*, the latter being his, or Kālī's, favourite servants. In Kullī the rainbow is called Buḡhī Nāgan or Nāgin, 'the old female snake,' which points to the *nāga* being regarded as a rain- or water-god, as is usually the case in the Simla hills; but in Chamba he is described as a whitish-coloured snake that frequents house-walls, is said to drink milk; and, being regarded as a good omen, he receives worship (*pūjā*) and incense is offered to him.¹⁴ In the Panjāb hills the cult of the cobra, and in one place that of harmless snakes, is prevalent. The Nāga temples, according to C. F. Oldham, are not dedicated to the serpent, but to the Nāga Rājās, the ancient rulers of the race.¹⁵ The Gaddis, Girthis, and the people of Churāḥ worship the snake; the people of Kansur pray thus to Nāges Deotā: 'O thou, who livest within the wall, who livest in holes, who canst go into a vessel, who canst swiftly run, who livest in the water, on the precipice, upon trees, in the waste land, among the meadows, who hast power like the thunderbolt, who livest within the hollow trees, among the rocks, within the caves, be victorious!'¹⁶

(d) *United Provinces.*—In the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh among the chief centres of the cult may be named Mathurā, Abichhatra, and Benares.

Mathurā was a scene of *nāga*-worship, as is indicated by the local statuary and the legends of Kṛṣṇa as a slayer of dragons.¹⁷

1 Kalhana, *Rājataranginī*, tr. M. A. Stein, London, 1900, i. 6, 37 f., ii. 462.

2 S. Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, London, 1884, i. 148; T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, London, 1904-05, i. 261.

3 *Am-i-Akbari*, tr. H. S. Jarrett, Calcutta, 1891, ii. 354.

4 W. R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, London, 1895, pp. 170, 239, 294 f., 299 n.; cf. § 7 (a).

5 Lawrence, p. 170; V. A. Smith, *A Hist. of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Oxford, 1911, p. 46.

6 *περι Ἰνδίας ἱστορίας*, iii. xxx.

7 McCrindle, p. 145.

8 McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, London, 1896, p. 343;

Beal, i. 137; Watters, i. 241 f.

9 H. M. Elliot, *Supplement to the Glossary of Indian Terms*, Roorkee, 1860, p. 420 ff.

10 R. C. Temple, *Legends of the Panjāb*, Bombay, 1884, i. 414 ff.

11 *Id.* i. Introductory, xvii; *FLJ* iii. [1885] 61.

12 W. H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, Oxford, 1915, p. 499; H. C. Fanshawe, *Delhi, Past and Present*, London, 1902, p. 264 f.

13 D. C. O. J. Ibbetson, *Punjab Ethnography*, Calcutta, 1883, p. 114 f.

14 H. A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, i. [Lahore, 1911] pp. 331, 400, 419.

15 *The Sun and the Serpent*, p. 84 ff., with numerous photographs of snake-shrines.

16 H. A. Rose, *Glossary*, ii. 269, 294, 214, 454; *NINQ* ii. [1884-85] 91; *Census of India, 1901*, xvii. *Punjab*, pt. i. pp. 119 f., 129; *do.* 1911, xiv. pt. i. p. 120.

17 Smith, p. 138 f.; F. S. Growse, *Mathurā*, Allahabad, 1883, p. 57 f.

At Jait, in the Mathurā District, there is an image of a five-headed *nāga*, whose tail was said to extend seven miles underground, until the belief was dispelled by excavation.¹ Ahichhatra, 'umbrella of the dragon Ahi,' the great ruined city in Rohilkhand, like many other places of which the names are connected with the *nāgas*—Nāgpur, Nāgaur, Nāgöd, etc.—has a legend of an Ahi whose claim to kingship was attested by a snake shading him with its expanded hood.² In Benares Śiva-Mahādeva is worshipped as Nāgēśvar, 'Lord of *nāgas*,' with a serpent twined round his image; the Nāg Kṛān, or 'serpent-well,' lies in one of the oldest parts of the city and is surrounded by snake symbols.³ In Dehra Dūn the local folk-lore is full of tales of the *nāgas*.⁴ The Agarwālā caste of traders perform the worship of Āstika or Āstika Muni, a sage descended from the snake, and call themselves *nāga-upasāka*, 'snake-worshippers.'⁵ Similar worship is performed by many other castes and tribes.⁶ In Oudh Nigohān, in the Lucknow District, is a centre of the cult.⁷ There are numerous traces of *nāga*-worship in the Himālayan districts of the United Provinces, but now chiefly connected with the special cults of Viṣṇu and Śiva.⁸

(e) Bengal.—

In Bengal the goddess Manasā (Skr. *manas*, 'mind'), or Bishahri (Skr. *viśaharī*, 'remover of venom'), holds the foremost place. If her worship is neglected, some one in the family is sure to die of snake-bite; she is worshipped by placing an earthen pot marked with vermilion under a tree; clay images of snakes are arranged round it, and a trident is driven into the ground; sometimes the plant named after her is taken as her emblem; sometimes she dwells in a *pīpal-tree* (*Ficus religiosa*); in places where snakes abound a special shrine or a separate room is dedicated to the goddess; her sister, Jagat Gaurī, has also power over cobras and other snakes, and Ananta Deb is king of the snakes in Orissa.⁹

(f) Central Provinces and Central India.—In the Central Provinces and Central India the snake-cult is widely spread.

At Sāgar worship is offered to Nāg Deo, the serpent-god, sometimes at a shrine, sometimes at the snake's hole, by adorning him and making an image of him with butter and cow-dung on the house wall; people of the Nāth tribe carry about snakes during the Nāgachāmī festival and receive fees for allowing them to be worshipped.¹⁰ The Kāwars greatly dread a mythical snake with a red crest on his head, the mere sight of which is believed to cause death; it lives in deep pools in the forest known as Sesaṅkūṇḍā, and when it moves, it sets fire to the grass along its track; if a man crosses its path, he becomes black in colour and suffers excruciating pains, which end in death, unless he is relieved by the *baiga*, or medicine-man; in one village where the reptile recently appeared the owner never dared to visit his field without first offering a chicken.¹¹ The cobra is specially worshipped by the *barāis*, or betel-growers, who associate the tendrils of the plant with Vāsukī, queen of serpents; and the cobra is the tutelary god of the nomadic Kalkāris.¹² In Central India almost every village has a platform built over a snake's hole, to the occupant of which is offered a wicker cover which protects the snake; a brilliant coloured picture represents the snake when it is absent; some persons tie a thread of fourteen knots round the wrist and arm and go to worship at the abode of the snake, making an image of the reptile in sacred grass, which they worship; Bhils and Bhillāas worship the python and never injure it; there are legends of families said to be immune from snake-bite and able to cure it.¹³ In the month of June, the first month of the rains, snakes frequently appear; in this month the Gonds try to kill a cobra, and will then cut off the head and tail, and offer them to Nāg Deo, inside the house, while they cook and eat the body, supposing the eating of the snake's body will protect them from the effects of eating any

poisonous substance throughout the year.¹ In Berār the cult prevails more among the people of the plains than among those of the hills, metal or clay images of snakes are worshipped, sometimes on an ant-hill, and should a cobra be seen, it is regarded as a good omen; twigs of sacred trees are fixed round the ant-hill, a yellow thread is wound round them, and within the circle offerings of grain and milk are laid; the simplest form of worship is pouring milk on an ant-hill.²

(g) Assam.—In Assam the most remarkable form of serpent-worship is that of U Thlen, a gigantic snake which demands to be appeased by the sacrifice of human victims, and for whose sake, even in recent times, murders have been committed.

It lived once in a cave near Cherrapunji, and was tamed by a man who used to place lumps of meat in its mouth. Finally this hero, having heated a piece of iron red-hot, induced the reptile to devour it, and so killed it. He cut up the body, and sent pieces of it throughout the country, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever this edict was obeyed, the land became free of the *thlens*. But one small piece remained which no one could be induced to eat, and from this sprang a multitude of *thlens*, which still infest the neighbourhood.

When a *thlen* takes up its abode in a family, there is no means of getting rid of it, though it occasionally departs of its own accord, and often follows property when it is given away or sold. The *thlen* attaches itself to property, and brings wealth to its owner, but on condition that it is supplied with human blood. The murderer cuts off the tips of the hair and the finger-nails of the victim with silver scissors, and extracts in a bamboo tube a little blood from the nostrils, which is offered to the *thlen*. This offering must be constantly repeated. In order to drive it from a house, all the money, ornaments, and other goods must be thrown away, and no one dares to appropriate such things lest the *thlen* should follow them. Persons who are supposed to keep *thlens* are regarded with awe, and no one will even mention their names lest ill luck should follow. The superstition is probably of very ancient date, and it is supposed to be connected with the primeval snake-cults of Eastern and Further India.³

Among the Meitheids the ancestor of one clan, Pākhangba, manifests himself as a snake. 'When it appears it is coaxed on to a cushion by the priestess in attendance, who then performs certain ceremonies to please it.' Among the same tribe the *nōngshā*, or stone-dragons, symbolize the luck of the State.⁴

Among the Lushais a man acquires the right to heaven by slaying certain animals; when a snake coils round the antlers of a *sāmbhar* stag, the man sitting on the coils is conveyed to heaven.⁵ The Rabhās worship a serpent-god which once dwelt in a cave and was propitiated by the annual sacrifice of a boy and a girl.⁶

(h) South India.—In no part of India is the cult more general than in S. India.

Here we find the *kāvū*, or snake-grove, which resembles the *nāgavana* of N. India.⁷ A clump of wild jungle trees luxuriantly festooned with graceful creepers is usually to be found in the S.W. corner of the gardens of all respectable Malayālī Hindus. The spot is left free to Nature to deal with as she likes. Every tree and bush, every branch and twig is sacred. This is the *viśhatam kāvū* (poison shrine) or *nāgakotta* (snake shrine). Usually there is a granite stone (*chitra kutakalu*) carved after the fashion of a cobra's head set up and consecrated in this waste spot. Leprosy, itch, barrenness in women, deaths of children, the frequent appearance of snakes in the garden, and other diseases and calamities brought about by poison, are all set down to the anger of the serpents. If there be a snake shrine in the garden, sacrifices and ceremonies are resorted to. If there be none, then the place is diligently dug up, and search is made for a snake stone, and if one is found it is concluded that the calamities have occurred because of there having been a snake shrine at the spot, and because the shrine had been neglected. A shrine is then at once formed, and costly sacrifices and ceremonies serve to allay the serpents' anger.⁸

¹ Russell, iii. 101.

² Report on the Census, 1881, Berar, p. 48.

³ P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, London, 1914, pp. 98 ff., 175 ff.; *Census of India, 1901*, iv. Assam, pt. i. 49; *FL* xx. [1909] 419; *P.N.Q.* i. [1885-84] 63.

⁴ T. C. Hodson, *The Meitheids*, London, 1908, p. 100 ff.

⁵ *Census of India, 1911*, iii. Assam, pt. i. p. 140 f.

⁶ *Ib.* i. 145.

⁷ Somadeva, *Kathā-saritsāgara*, ed. C. H. Tawney, Calcutta, 1880, i. 312.

⁸ W. Logan, *Manual of Malabar*, Madras, 1837, i. 183. For references to snake shrines and stones in S. India see E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of S. India*, Madras, 1909, ii. 206, v. 173, vii. 385 (with a photograph); J. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, Eng. tr., Oxford, 1906, p. 641 f.; T. K. Gopal Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*, Madras, 1904, p. 145 ff.; L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, do. 1910-12, ii. 81 ff. (with illustrations); P. Percival, *The Land of the Veda*, London, 1854, p. 207 ff. (with illustrations); *FL* viii. [1897] 284 f.; V. Nagam Aiyar, *Travancore State Manual*, Trivandrum, 1906, i. 169, ii. 59; *Census of India, 1901*, xxvi. Travancore, do. 1903, pt. i. 99; C. Achyuta

¹ Growse, p. 74 f.

² Cf. § 7 (e); A. Führer, *Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the N.W. Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1891, p. 28. For other examples see E. S. Hartland, *Ritual and Belief*, London, 1914, p. 325.

³ M. A. Sherring, *The Sacred City of the Hindus*, London, 1868, pp. 75, 87 ff.

⁴ *IGI* xi. [1908] 212.

⁵ W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the N.W. Provinces and Oudh*, Calcutta, 1896, i. 181; *NINQ* ii. 157, 202.

⁶ Crooke, *TC* i. 109, 122, 131, iv. 352.

⁷ *NINQ* iii. [1893-94] 179, iv. [1894-95] 130.

⁸ E. T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan District of the N.W. Provinces of India*, ii. [Allahabad, 1884] p. 835 f.

⁹ *Census of India, 1901*, vi. Bengal, pt. i. p. 195 f.; W. J. Wilkins, *Modern Hinduism*, London, 1887, p. 225 f.; *NINQ* i. [1891-92] 166; H. H. Risley, *Tribes and Castes in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1891, i. 41, 84; W. Ward, *View of the Hist., Lit. and Religion of the Hindoos*, Serampore, 1815, ii. 140 f.; J. Wise, *Notes on the Races, Castes, and Trades of Eastern Bengal*, London, 1888, pp. 183, 219, 260.

¹⁰ See below, § 13 (f).

¹¹ *Saugor Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1907, i. 43.

¹² *Eth. Surv. Central Provinces*, vii. [Allahabad, 1911] 44; R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces*, London, 1918, iii. 399.

¹³ *Eth. Surv. Central Provinces*, i. S. iv. 27; Russell, ii. 195 f., iii. 299.

¹⁴ Russell, iii. 25, 483 f.

Serpent-worship in S. India is of early date, if the Aioi of Ptolemy¹ take their name from Skr. *ahī*, 'a snake.'² An inscription at Banavāsi, in Kanara, records the erection of a cobra stone in the middle of the 1st century A.D.³

In Tanjore the worship of the cobra is common at the present day. People of the higher castes consider it a sin to kill a cobra, this offence being followed by childlessness, while children may be obtained by its worship. The Vellālas make an old woman cry aloud in the backyard that a sacrifice will be offered to the cobra next day, with a prayer that the offering may be accepted. Generally in the evening cooked jaggery, rice, and an egg, with a burnt offering of butter, are laid out for its acceptance.⁴ In Bellary the worship was formerly more common than at present; snake stones may be seen in every village, but few of them seem to receive much attention. Vows, however, are made before them to procure children, and, if a child is afterwards begotten, it is given an appropriate name—Nāgappa, Nāgammā, etc.⁵

(i) *The Deccan and W. India.*—In the Deccan and W. India the cult assumes various forms.

One of the favourite guardian-deities in the Deccan is Nāgobā, 'father snake.'⁶ In Gujārāt, to make amends for chance injury to a snake resulting in barrenness or loss of children, childless women worship an image of the serpent on the bright fifth of every Hindu month; this is done for one or three years, and at the final service a cobra is drawn on the ground with rice, and a silver snake is laid on the drawing; the woman and her husband bathe, dress in white clothes, and worship; after this the wife brings an iron image of a cobra at a place where four roads meet.⁷ At Thān in Kāthiāwār the twin snake-brethren are worshipped.⁸ Khāmbda in Kāthiāwār owes its fame to the shrine of the Khāmbdio Nāg, or snake; it is supposed to guard the village, which therefore needs no gates; snakes are frequently seen near the gateway and are never molested.⁹ Bhuji, the chief town of Cutch, is said to take its name from the 52-yard snake which the people used to worship and feed every day with rice and milk.¹⁰

(j) *The forest tribes.*—As will have been seen from instances already given, the worship is common among the forest tribes.

The Gonds in Chhātisgarh worship images of snakes every three years by setting out a vessel of milk for the cobra.¹¹ Members of this tribe are said to have always appeared naked before the shrine of their god Sek Nāg or Sesa Nāg.¹² The cult is common among the tribes of the Vindhyan ranges.¹³ Some Bhils, however, in W. India are reported to kill snakes when they have the chance, and the Khālpās of Gujārāt are reported not to reverence them.¹⁴

4. *The Nāgas.*—The chief serpent-worshipping race in ancient India is known as the Nāgas, who appear both in history and in folk-lore, and to whom much vague speculation has been devoted.

(a) *The Nāgas in history.*—One of the latest authorities, C. F. Oldham, distinguishes between the Nāga demi-gods in heaven and the Nāga people on earth, the former being assumed to be the deified ancestors of the latter. He concludes that the Asuras and the Sarpas, 'serpents,' of the *Rigveda*, the Asuras and Nāgas of the *Mahābhārata* and Manu, and the Asuras, or demons, of Brāhmanical tradition all represent hostile tribes, who opposed the Aryan invaders, and that the Asuras Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 190; B. L. Rice, *Mysore, a Gazetteer compiled for Government*, Westminster, 1897, i. 454 ff., *Mysore and Coorg from the Inscriptions*, London, 1909, p. 203 f.; for the Komati cult of nāgas see H. V. Nanjundayya, *Ethnographical Survey, Mysore*, monograph no. vi. p. 28.

¹ i. 9.

² J. W. McCrindle, *Anc. India as described by Ptolemy*, Calcutta, 1885, p. 54.

³ BG xv. ii. [1882] 261; for early snake images and inscriptions in Mysore see E. L. Rice, *Mysore and Coorg from the Inscriptions*, pp. 15, 115, 202 (with illustrations).

⁴ *Tanjore Gazetteer*, Madras, 1906, i. 70.

⁵ *Bellary Gazetteer*, Madras, 1906, i. 64.

⁶ BG xiv. [1882] 897, xviii. iii. [1885] 886.

⁷ *Id.* xi. i. [1901] 379 f.; cf. below, § 7 (b).

⁸ J. Burgess, *Report on Ant. of Kāthiāwād and Kachh*, Bombay, 1876, p. 87 ff.

⁹ BG viii. [1884] 510; for other snake-shrines see *ib.* pp. 558, 603.

¹⁰ *Id.* v. [1880] 216 n., 218; Marianne Postans, *Cutch*, London, 1889, p. 100 ff., describes the rite.

¹¹ *JASB* lviii. [1890] iii. 281.

¹² J. F. Hewitt, *Rubbing Races of Prehistoric Times*, London, 1894-95, i. 87 f.; for Gōnd serpent-worship in the Central Provinces see *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, Nagpur, 1870, *Introd.* lxvi; *NINQ* i. 98.

¹³ *NINQ* i. 146.

¹⁴ BG ix. i. 305, 346.

were Dravidians.¹ Others regard the race of Nāgas as of trans-Himālayan origin, who adopted the snake as their national emblem, and hence gave their name to the cobra.²

¹ The great historical fact in connection with the Nāgas . . . is the fierce persecution which they suffered at the hands of the Brāhmins; the destruction of serpents at the burning of the forest of Khandava, the terrible sacrifice of serpents which forms the opening scenes in the *Mahābhārata*, and the supernatural exploits of the youthful Krishna against the serpents sent to destroy him, are all expressions of Brāhmanical hatred towards the Nāgas. Ultimately this antagonism merged into that deadly conflict between the Brahman and the Buddhist, which after a lengthened period of religious warfare terminated in the triumph of the Brahman. From these data it would appear that the Nāgas were originally a race distinct from the Aryans and wholly without the pale of Brahmanism; that those who became Buddhist were either crushed or driven out of India during the age of Brāhmanical revival, and that the remainder have become converts to Brahmanism and appear to be regarded as an inferior order of Kshatriyas.³

Much of this is little more than speculation, and all that can be stated with confidence is that the Nāgas appear to have been a foreign, perhaps non-Aryan, people, found chiefly in N. India, but occupying other parts of the country.⁴ They were powerful in Central and S. India.⁵ Castes like the Maravans, Agamundaiyans, and Kallans in Madras are possibly descended from them.⁶

(b) *The Nāgas of folk-lore.*—In Buddhist tradition, folk-lore, and art we have frequent references to the Nāgas, personages half-human, half-divine. In the legends chiefs and kings are mentioned who displayed special reverence for Buddha; his alms-bowl was their gift; their kings approach and consult the Master.⁷ The folk-tale collections of Somadeva, *Kathā-sarīt-sāgara*, and the *Jātaka*⁸ abound in tales of the Mélusine and other types in which Nāgas figure.

The king of the Nāgas dwells amidst dance and song in a happy land; filled with troops of Nāga maidens, gladdened constantly with their sports day and night, abounding with garlands and covered with flowers, it shines like the lightning in the sky. Filled with food and drink, with dance and song and instruments of music, with maidens richly attired, it shines with dresses and ornaments.⁹ Their palaces are under water, or beneath the roots of a great tree, or under the Vindhyan hills.¹⁰ Their king wears a magic ring and he spits fire;¹¹ he is offered honey, fried grain, and frogs, but dares not eat them;¹² the erection of ancient buildings is attributed to them, apparently because they were regarded as foreign artificers.¹³

5. *The historical development of serpent-worship.*—Serpent-worship in a fully developed form does not appear in the *Rigveda*, but it is found as an element of religion in the *Yajurveda*.¹⁴

But there can be no doubt that a belief in serpents had its origin in the Veda, though the serpents meant there were at first the serpents of the dark night or the black clouds, the enemies of the solar deities, such as the *Asvins*, and not yet the poisonous snakes of the earth. The later development of these serpents and the idea of pacifying them by sacrificial offerings is likewise, as has been well shown by Dr. Winternitz, thoroughly Aryan, nor is there any necessity for adopting that latest of all

¹ Pp. 31, 45, 55.

² E. T. Atkinson, *Himalayan Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1884, p. 873 f.

³ J. T. Wheeler, *Hist. of India*, London, 1867-81, i. 147, 411, ii. 630.

⁴ BG ix. i. 450 n., 458 n., where they are identified with immigrants from Central Asia.

⁵ *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, *Introd.* lxviii; V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p. 39 ff.; Rice, *Mysore Gazetteer*, i. 274, 454.

⁶ *Trichinopoly Gazetteer*, Madras, 1907, i. 120. For further accounts and speculations regarding the Nāgas see A. Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, London, 1879, p. 23 ff.; F. C. Maisey, *Sanchi and its Remains*, do. 1892, p. 60 ff.; B. H. Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community*, do. 1896, pp. 95 ff., 169 n.; Oldham, p. 53 ff.

⁷ A. Grünwedel, *Buddhist Art in India*, London, 1901, p. 43 ff.; T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, do. 1908, p. 220 ff.

⁸ Cambridge, 1895-1913. ⁹ *Jātaka*, vi. 150.

¹⁰ *Id.* iv. 281; Somadeva, ii. 149.

¹¹ C. H. Brown, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*, London, 1909, pp. 90, 130; *Jātaka*, i. 206.

¹² *Jātaka*, vi. 95.

¹³ *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, Rangoon, 1900, i. i. 279; Grünwedel, p. 208.

¹⁴ A. A. Macdonell, *A Hist. of Sanskrit Lit.*, London, 1900, p. 182.

expedients, that of ascribing all that seems barbarous in Indian religion to the influences of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country of whom we know next to nothing.¹

E. W. Hopkins remarks that in Vedic times 'serpent worship is not only known, but prevalent.'² We meet with references to Ahibudhnya, the serpent of the deep, and to Ahi, another designation of the demon Vṛtra; in the later *Sambhās* the serpents (*sarpah*) are a class of divine beings.³ The post-Vedic Rāhu, the eclipse demon, is, in modern belief, a serpent.⁴ The *Atharvaveda* contains numerous charms against serpents and a rite of propitiation on the full-moon day of Mārgaśīrṣa; they are recognized as gods, and called euphemistically 'biting ropes.'⁵ In later tradition many legends are connected with them, like that of Nahusha, turned into a serpent because he insulted the Rṣi Agastya.⁶ A series of tales describes the enmity between Garuḍa, the chief of the feathered race, and the Nāgas.⁷ Garuḍa has been compared with the Simurgh of Persian and the Rukh, or Roc, of Arab tradition, the latter of which attacks snakes,⁸ and with the Hebrew Cherub.⁹ It has also been suggested that the bird was the totem of tribes hostile to the Nāgas.¹⁰ In the *Brāhmaṇas* serpents, as developed objects of cult, occupy a prominent place, and in the *Mahābhārata*, amidst a mass of folk-tradition, the divine snakes are grouped with other celestial powers.¹¹

6. Serpents in the later orthodox cults.—The serpent is closely associated with Brāhmanical Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

(a) *Brāhmanical Hinduism.*—

The association of the snake with Śiva's symbol, the *linga*, is very intimate.¹² A brazen serpent surrounds the great *linga* at the Rājput shrine of Eklinga.¹³ As symbols of Śiva's energy, they appear in the remarkable Natarāja image.¹⁴ In the Himalāya Bhairava, one of the Śaiva group of deities, is represented by a coloured stick in the form of a hooded snake, and Śiva himself, as Rikhesvar, lord of the Nāgas, is surrounded by serpents and crowned with a chaplet of hooded snakes. If, in ploughing, the share injures or kills a snake, a short ritual is prescribed to appease the lord of the snakes. Ganesa, the Mātṛis or Mother-goddesses, and Ksetrapāl, the field guardian deity, are first worshipped on the spot; then the figure of Śiva in his form as Mṛityudāya, 'he that overcomes death,' is drawn on cloth, and with it that of the snake-god; both are worshipped, the snake spell (*sarpamantra*) is recited, and a fire-sacrifice (*homa*) is made.¹⁵ The Lingayats (*q.v.*), as Śaivas, naturally worship snakes.¹⁶ Other deities are also associated with the serpent. At Ter, probably the ancient Tagara, the hooded snake accompanies an association of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Sūrya, the sun-god, and Śakti Devi, impersonation of the female energy at Chitrāri in the Chamba State, bears a bell and snake in her right hand.¹⁷ At Jaipur, in Orissa, Kālī is represented with her hair brushed back under a snake fillet and surmounted by a distended head of a cobra,¹⁸ while in S. India Bhadrakālī's image, with two wings, is covered with serpents.¹⁹ Probably in commemoration of his feats as a dragon-slayer, a living snake guards Kṛṣṇa's shrine, and at Pandharpur

his consort, Rādhā, holds snakes in her hands.¹ Viṣṇu resting on Ananta or Sesa, the world-serpent, is a common subject in religious art. He sleeps upon the serpent whose heads support the world, during the intervals of creation.² In his form Nārāyaṇa, at Balājī in Nepāl, his image has a snake-hood projecting over the water.³

(b) *Buddhism.*—The records of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims supply numerous examples of the serpent-cult in Buddhism, particularly as guardians of trees and springs.

Two dragon-kings washed the infant Buddha; the dragon grants a site for monasteries in his lake; the Nāga Rāja, Muchilinda, protects Buddha with his folds.⁴ On the Bodhi Gaya falls the *nāga* spreads his hood, and at Bharhut a king with a five-headed snake-hood kneels before an altar behind which is a tree.⁵ At the Sarpa (*or serpent*) cave, excavated about the time of Aśoka, a three-headed serpent of a very archaic type appears.⁶ In W. India the Śaiva Buddhist converts preserved their original snake-worship.⁷ In the records of the Chinese pilgrims we find Buddhist *sramanas* worshipping the *nāga* and conducting rites at *nāga* shrines.⁸ A favourite gift at modern Buddhist pagodas in Burma is a representation in gold of the Lord Buddha, with a hooded snake raising itself over him.⁹

(c) *Jainism.*—

In Jainism the symbol of the Tīrthakara Pārśvanātha is a serpent (*sarpa*).¹⁰ The colossal statue of Gomatesvara at Srāvana Belgola (*q.v.*) is surrounded with white ant-hills from which snakes emerge.¹¹ The Nāgamalai, or snake-hill, is said to be the remains of a great serpent formed by the magic art of the Jains, and prevented by the power of Śiva from devouring the Śaiva city of Madura, and at the Rāmātūrtha stands a Jain image covered by a cobra with expanded hood.¹²

(d) *Sikhism.*—Sikhism also has associations with the snake.

Guru Har Gobind, as a child, destroyed a cobra sent by an enemy to attack him, and he killed a monstrous python which in its previous birth had been a proud *mahant*, or prior, who embezzled the property of his disciples; Guru Har Rai acted in the same way to a python which in a previous existence had been a *paṇḍit* who used falsely to vaunt the power of the Vedas.¹³

7. The serpent in its various manifestations.—The snake-cult assumes many forms.

(a) *Controlling water.*—The belief that serpents live in, guard, and control water—lakes, springs, and rivers—is a belief common to many races.¹⁴

In the records of the Chinese pilgrims a *nāga* rides on the winds, passes through space, and glides over the waters; another brings fertilizing rain; on a mountain pass 'there are poison dragons, who when evil-purposed spit poison, winds, rain, snow, drifting sand, and gravel-stones'; other wicked dragons are restrained from sending rain-storms; people resort with their shamans to the tank of the Nāga Rāja Elāpātra, and by cracking their fingers and praying they obtain rain or fine weather.¹⁵ Many lakes and tanks in N. India are sacred to serpents.¹⁶ All the wells in Kāśmīr, especially hot springs, are associated with snake-worship.¹⁷ The Nāga Mahāpadma is the tutelary guardian of the largest Kāśmīr lake, the Vūlur.¹⁸ The sinuous motion of the snake suggests its connexion with rivers, as in Burma, where three snakes, one of which is cut into three pieces, produce three rivers and four canals, and in Sikkim, where the course of the river Tista is straight because the king of serpents led it into the plains.¹⁹

¹ F. Max Müller, *Contrib. to the Science of Mythology*, London, 1897, ii. 598 f.

² *The Religions of India*, ed. Boston and London, 1902, p. 154, quoting *Rigveda*, xi. 9, viii. 6, 7, where it is combined with tree-worship (see below, § 1a).

³ A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Strassburg, 1897, pp. 72, 148, 152; J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, London, 1868-70, i. 95 f.

⁴ Macdonell, *Ved. Myth.*, p. 160; E. Thurston, *Ethnog. Notes in S. India*, Madras, 1906, p. 239; cf. W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, London, 1906, ii. 235.

⁵ *SEE* xlii. [1897] 151 ff., 425, 437, 552 ff., 605, 640, 43, 119, 126, 162, 147.

⁶ Muir, i. 67 ff.

⁷ Somadeva, i. 182 f., ii. 312; *Jātaka*, vi. 93, 102.

⁸ R. F. Burton, *Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, ed. London, 1898, iv. 357 f.

⁹ *HDB v.* 644; art. HINDUISM, § 5 (b).

¹⁰ Oldham, p. 81 f.

¹¹ Hopkins, pp. 251, 376.

¹² J. R. Rivett-Carnac, 'The Snake Symbol in India, especially in Connection with the Worship of Śiva,' *J.A.S.B.*, 1879, i. 17 ff.

¹³ Tod, popular ed., i. 427.

¹⁴ V. A. Smith, *Hist. of Fine Art*, p. 251.

¹⁵ Atkinson, ii. 777, 851, 913.

¹⁶ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, iv. 257.

¹⁷ *Arch. Surv. Rep.* 1902-03, pp. 201, 241.

¹⁸ W. W. Hunter, *Orissa*, London, 1872, i. 269.

¹⁹ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, ii. 406.

¹ G. Oppert, *On the Orig. Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa or India*, London, 1898, p. 138; *BG* xx. [1884] 463.

² H. A. Wilson, *Viṣṇu Purāna*, London, 1840, p. 205; V. A. Smith, *Hist. of Fine Art*, p. 162 f.

³ P. Brown, *Picturesque Nepal*, London, 1912, p. 131.

⁴ Beal, i. *Introd.* i. 149, ii. 123; Watters, ii. 123 f.

⁵ J. Fergusson, *Hist. of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, London, 1910, i. 105 n., 107 n., i. 33.

⁶ J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, London, 1880, p. 69.

⁷ *BG* xi. [1883] 336 n.

⁸ Beal, *Introd.* xli.

⁹ Shway Yoe [J. G. Scott], *The Burman: his Life and Notions*, London, 1882, i. 189.

¹⁰ J. G. Bühler, *On the Indian Sect of the Jainas*, Eng. tr., London, 1908, p. 71; Oldham, p. 177.

¹¹ V. A. Smith, p. 268 f.; E. Thurston, *Omens and Superstitions of S. India*, London, 1912, p. 135.

¹² *Madura Gazetteer*, Madras, 1906, i. 7; *Vizagapatnam Gazetteer*, 1907, i. 335.

¹³ M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1909, iii. 39, iv. 183, 232.

¹⁴ J. A. MacCulloch, *CF*, p. 268 n.; J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias*, London, 1898, v. 44 f.

¹⁵ Beal, i. 25, 64, *Introd.* xxix, xli, i. 122, 137.

¹⁶ *PR* i. 43 f.; Somadeva, ii. 225, 415.

¹⁷ Lawrence, p. 22; F. Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, London, 1875, p. 130.

¹⁸ Kalhana, i. 174, ii. 424.

¹⁹ *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, i. ii. 504; L. A. Waddell, *Among the Himalayas*, London, 1899, p. 111.

(b) *The chthonic snake.*—The snake living in crevices of the earth is often identified with deceased ancestors and is regarded as chthonic.¹

Marmots in the Himalaya are credited with the power of producing storms because they live in the bowels of the earth with the *nāgas* that cause thunderstorms.²

In the *Brāhmanas* they chant the verses (seen) by the Queen of the Serpents (*sarpa-rājīnī*), because the earth is the Queen of the Serpents, for she is the Queen of all that moves (*sarpatī*).³ Thus the snake becomes associated with fertility and eroticism.⁴ Therefore the cult is largely in the hands of women.

Among the Komatis of Mysore women worship snake images set up in performance of vows, and believed to be specially efficacious in curing sores and giving children.⁵

Hence snake-worship is often performed at marriages, as among the Bedars of the Deccan by married women, by Brāhmins in Kanara, by Lambādīs in Madras.⁶ The cult of earth fertility-goddesses, like Ellammā or her impersonation, the Mātangi, is accompanied by snake symbols.⁷ This is specially the case with the house-snake, which is regarded as the family-genius.⁸

(c) *Snakes representing ancestors.*—The conception of the snake as a fertilizer is, again, connected with the belief that the spirit of an ancestor, which takes shape as a snake, is re-embodied in one of the successors.⁹

In the Central Provinces Sonjharā women will not mention the name of the snake aloud, just as they refrain from naming their male relatives.¹⁰ When Mandalay was founded, the king of Burma ordered that a pregnant woman should be slain in order that her spirit might become the guardian *nat* of the city; offerings of fruit and food were made to her spirit, which was supposed to have taken the shape of a snake.¹¹ In the Central Provinces it is said that a man had three wives, who were cremated with his body. While they were burning, a large serpent came up, and, ascending the pile, was burnt with them. Soon after another came up and did the same. They were seen by the whole multitude, who were satisfied that they had been the wives [of the deceased] in a former birth, and would become so again after this sacrifice.¹²

When Ohitor was stormed by the Muhammadans (A.D. 1313), the Rājputs, with their wives and children, perished by fire in an underground chamber. 'Superstition has placed as its guardian a huge serpent, whose venomous breath extinguishes the light which might guide intruders to the place of sacrifice.'¹³

(d) *Snakes guardians of treasure.*—The chthonic snake is naturally guardian of treasure buried in the earth. This incident often appears in folklore.¹⁴ J. Forbes tells a ghastly tale of a snake which actually occupied a cavern in which treasure was supposed to lie.¹⁵

(e) *Snakes identifying and protecting kings or heroes.*—The basis of this belief, according to one suggestion, is that, as representing the ancient rulers, they naturally protect their successors.

The Nāgas of the Central Provinces derive their name from the *nāg*, or cobra, and assert that a cobra spread its hood to protect the tribal hero from the sun.¹⁶ The claim to the throne of Sanga, the hero of Mewār and Kehar of Jaisalmer, was recognized in the same way.¹⁷ The same tale is told of the great chief Holkar,¹⁸ and of the infant Buddha, whose image at

Sārṇāth represents him sheltered by the coils and hood of a three-headed snake.¹ The world-snake, Śeṣa, protected the infant Kṛṣṇa from a rain-storm.²

(f) *The snake as a healer.*—Throughout India the *nāga* is invoked to heal disease of all kinds, particularly loathsome sores. Hence parts of its body are valued as remedies.

Among the Taungthas there is but one medicine current, the dried gall bladder and the dung of the boa-constrictor, which is supposed to be, and is used as, a remedy for every thing.³

In the Garo hills the skin of a certain snake, when applied to the part affected, cures pain.⁴

(g) *The snake-jewel.*—The snake has in its head a jewel possessing magical powers.⁵

It is sometimes metamorphosed into a beautiful youth; it equals the treasure of seven kings; it can be secured only by cowdung or horsedung being thrown over it; and if it is acquired the serpent dies. . . . Its presence acts as an amulet. . . . It protects the owner from drowning . . . allowing him to pass over rivers dry-shod.⁶

Snakes make precious stones, like those in Malabar, which are formed by divine serpents blowing on gold in the depths of the earth.⁷

8. *Places immune from snakes.*—Like Sardinia, Ireland, and other places, certain localities in India are immune from snakes.⁸

It is believed that no poisonous snakes exist in those parts of the Kāśmīr valley from which the peak of Harāzṅak is visible.⁹ On the Rājnāgiri and Taleimalai hills venomous snakes are said to be innocuous.¹⁰ The family saint of the Kālār Rājputs in the Panjāb is Kālā Sayyid; any one sleeping near his shrine must lie on the ground lest he be bitten by a snake; but, if a snake bites a man on a Kālār's land, he will suffer no harm.¹¹

9. *Snakes and totemism.*—The worship of the serpent seems to have originated independently of totemism.¹² Descent from the snake, the use of its name as a sept title, the tabu which prevents its slaughter, and the respect paid to it when dead all appear in India.

(a) *Descent from the snake.*—

The Muāsīs and Nāgvansīs of the Central Provinces claim descent from a male and female snake, and the Hajjām barbers of Bombay from the world-serpent, Śeṣa.¹³ Some Nāgar Brāhmins in Nimar are said to be the offspring of Brāhmins and Nāga women; some Brāhmins for this reason refuse to eat with them, and in Baroda they call their women Nāg-kanyā, 'snake-maidens.'¹⁴ In Burma there are people who say that they are descended from the egg of a *nāga*.¹⁵ The Gandhmāīs believe their ultimate ancestor to have been a cobra; hence they specially observe the Nāgpañchami festival¹⁶ and eat no cooked food on that day.¹⁷ A group of Vellālas in Madras say that they spring from a Nāga-kanyā;¹⁸ and the ruling family of Chota Nāgpur claim their origin from the serpent Fundarā Nāg.

(b) *Septs and sub-castes named after the snake.*—Nāg is a common title of caste-sections in Bengal, Madras, and other parts of India.¹⁹

(c) *Tabu against killing snakes.*—This is partly general and partly confined to groups which claim descent from the serpent.

According to Manu, killing a snake degrades the offender into a mixed caste, and a Brāhmin must give a spade of black iron.²⁰ In Madras a cobra is popularly believed to be a Brāhmin;

¹ CGS, Oxford, 1896, i. 290, v. 37; JHS xix. [1899] 205.

² Waddell, p. 219.

³ *Āitareya Brāhmana*, ed. M. Haug, Bombay, 1863, ii. 358 f.

⁴ A. E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, London, 1902, p. 192 ff.

⁵ *Eth. Surv. Mysore*, vi. [Bangalore, 1906] 29; Thurston, Omens, pp. 124, 133, 128.

⁶ BG xxiii. [1884] 96, xv. i. [1883] 171; Thurston, Omens, p. 136.

⁷ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, iv. 306, 300.

⁸ E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, London, 1909-10, i. 169, 172; J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore*, Cambridge, 1910, p. 259 f.

⁹ PR i. 179; Hartland, i. 169, 176; Frazer, GE³, pt. v., *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, London, 1912, ii. 288, 294 f., *Totemism and Exogamy*, do. 1910, ii. 634.

¹⁰ Russell, iv. 510.

¹¹ *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, i. ii. 35.

¹² W. H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, p. 29.

¹³ Tod, popular ed., i. 215.

¹⁴ *Jātaka*, i. 179, ii. 214; F. A. Steel and R. C. Temple, *Wide-snake Stories*, Bombay and London, 1884, p. 295; Bompas, p. 158; T. K. Gopal Panikkar, p. 59; BG i. i. [1896] 461.

¹⁵ *Oriental Memoirs*², London, 1834, ii. 18 ff.

¹⁶ Russell, iv. 258.

¹⁷ Tod, popular ed., i. 236, ii. 203.

¹⁸ J. Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, London, 1823, i. 144.

¹ *Arch. Surv.* 1904-05, p. 85.

² *Vishnu Purana*, ed. Wilson, p. 503.

³ T. H. Lewin, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong*, Calcutta, 1869, pp. 78, 98.

⁴ *Asiatic Researches*, iii. [London, 1799] 41.

⁵ MacCulloch, *CF*, p. 41; J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr., London, 1882-83, iii. 1220, iv. 1636.

⁶ PR² ii. 143 f. ⁷ Gopal Panikkar, p. 59.

⁸ Frazer, *Pausanias*, v. 325 f. ⁹ Lawrence, p. 165.

¹⁰ *Trichinopoly Gazetteer*, 1907, i. 5, 285.

¹¹ Rose, *Glossary*, ii. 441.

¹² Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, ii. 500 ff., iv. 35 f.

¹³ *Chhātāgarh Gazetteer*, 1909, pp. 117, 309; *Census of India*, 1911, vii. Bombay, pt. i. 261.

¹⁴ *Nimar Gazetteer*, 1908, i. 66; *Census of India*, 1911, xvi. Baroda, pt. i. 308.

¹⁵ *Upper Burma Gazetteer*, ii. ii. 135; H. H. Risley, *The People of India*, Calcutta, 1908, p. 101.

¹⁶ See below, § 13 (f). ¹⁷ Russell, iii. 19.

¹⁸ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, vii. 882; Sarat Chandra Roy, *The Mundas and their Country*, Calcutta, 1912, p. 136 ff.; for similar legends of descent from a snake-god see GE³, pt. iv. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, London, 1914, i. 80 ff., pt. iii. *The Dying God*, do. 1911, p. 132 f.

¹⁹ Risley, *TC* ii. 120; Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, v. 134 f.

²⁰ *Laws*, xi. 69, 134.

it is a deadly sin to kill it, and the offence necessitates an extreme form of penance.¹ The Badagas of the Nilgiri hills will not kill a snake nor pass near a dead one.² In W. India, in spite of its destructive nature, a cobra is never killed; when one appears in a house, the people bow to it and pray it not to harm the inmates; at the most, if it is caught, it is put in an earthen jar, and this is laid in a lonely spot; the Vāpis of Ahmadnagar, if they wish to get rid of a cobra, have it caught with round wooden scissors and set at large in a neighbouring field.³ One penalty for killing a snake is leprosy, and this disease attacks any one who destroys its eggs by disturbing the ground in which it dwells, or by setting on fire jungle or grass in which it lives and breeds.⁴

Among the Khātrīs of the Panjāb a snake was once born to one of the Abrolā sept, and another fed the ancestor of the Chhotrās; both septs worship and will not kill the reptile.⁵ In the Central Provinces the Hatwās are descended from a snake, belong to the Nāg gotra, will not kill a cobra, will save it from death at the hands of others, and sometimes pay snake-charmers to release those which they have captured; an oath by the snake is their most solemn form of affirmation.⁶ The same tabu prevails among the Nāgash sept of the Kātuyās in Bengal and the Nāgel sept of the Nāhals in the Central Provinces.⁷

(d) Respect paid to dead snakes.—

In the Central Provinces, if a Parjā of the snake sept kills one accidentally, he places a piece of new yarn on his head, praying for forgiveness, and deposits the body on an ant-hill where snakes are supposed to dwell.⁸ In Travancore, if a dead cobra was found, it was burned with the same ceremonies as a man of high caste.⁹ In W. India a special rite (*nāgabali*) is performed by those who desire children, by those who suffer from bodily disease, who have killed a snake, or whose nearest relative has died from snake-bite.¹⁰

10. Persons dying from snake-bite.—The person dying of snake-bite is considered tabu, because his body has been occupied by the snake-god. Hence the corpses of such persons are usually disposed of in a way different from that observed by the group.

Among the Sāgars of Bombay those who die of snake-bite are cremated on the village common, probably in the hope that the spirit may depart at once, and if this is not done, it is said that they will fail to receive absolution.¹¹ The Jātapu Kandhs generally burn their dead, but those dying of snake-bite are buried.¹² In parts of the Central Provinces, if a person has died by hanging, drowning, or snake-bite, his body is burnt without any rites, but, in order that his soul may be saved, a fire-sacrifice (*homa*) is performed after the cremation.¹³ In N. India a person dying in this way is believed to be re-born as a snake in the next life. In order to avoid this, an image of a snake is made of silver, gold, wood, or clay, offerings are made to it, a Brāhman is fed, and a prayer is made to Vāsuki Rājā to release the soul.¹⁴

11. Magical cures for snake-bite.—

In Baroda an expert is summoned who applies charmed cowdung ashes to the bite, and, with a charm, ties knot after knot on a thread; if the patient is restless, he dashes some handfuls of water on his eyes, and tries to force the snake to leave his body; after this treatment the snake explains why it bit the man; if the injury which prompted the snake to bite was trivial, it agrees to leave the patient; if severe, it refuses to leave, and death follows; members of a Nāgar Brāhman family are expert in this treatment.¹⁵ In the *Atharvaveda* there are numerous charms for the exorcism of snakes from houses or against snake-bite; a central feature of such charms is the invocation of the white horse of Pedu (Paidwa), a slayer of serpents.¹⁶ A favourite means of cure is by the 'snake-stone,' which is supposed to suck the poison from the bite.¹⁷

Certain clans, families, and individuals claim the power of curing snake-bite or are closely identified with the snake.¹

Such are the Kir of the Central Provinces,² the Snake-tribe in the Panjāb,³ and the Bodlās in the same province.⁴ Ghāsīdās, the founder of the Satnāmī (q.v.) sect, is said to have been gifted in the same way.⁵ Among the Todas certain men have a reputation for curing snake-bite; the limb bitten is bound in three places with a cord of woman's hair; with a piece of a certain tree the healer strikes the limb, repeating an incantation.⁶

Various charms are used to repel the attacks of snakes. These are often made in the shape of the reptile.

Such is the *nāgapatam*, the most primitive form of ornament worn by Nāyar women in S. India, which represents a hooded snake.⁷ Men and women in Vizagapatam are very fond of wearing earrings of brass or gold wire twisted to symbolize a snake, with one end flattened out and pointed to represent the head.⁸ The head ornament of a Marāthā Brāhman woman bears in the centre an image of a cobra erect, representing Segā Nāga, the serpent-king.⁹ Ladākhi women wear, as their national head-dress, a snake-shaped plaited strip of red cloth.¹⁰ In Bengal a *karabi* root (*Nerium odorum*), pulled whilst the breath is held, on the night when the snake-goddess, Manasā, is worshipped, protects the wearer from snake-bite, but its efficacy lasts only one year.¹¹ A rosary made of the vertebrae of snakes is used in Tibet for necromancy and divination.¹²

Many sacred places are in repute for the cure of snake-bite.

In the Central Provinces a visit to the shrine of Bhīlat Bābā, a local saint, cures possession by devils and snake-bite.¹³ That of Mahā Siddhā, 'the great saint,' has the same reputation in Berār.¹⁴

With the same object *ex votos* in the form of snakes are often dedicated.

Brāhmins in Madras offer images of snakes to appease the wrath of Rāhu during an eclipse, and in Tamil temples models of snakes, especially those coiled in *cōitu*, are offered to propitiate serpents.¹⁵ Coiled snakes are constantly represented on Indian temples.¹⁶

12. Tree- and serpent-worship.—The connexion between tree-worship and serpent-worship has probably been overstated by J. Fergusson;¹⁷ but some instances are forthcoming.

In Buddhist times 'the tree-deities were called Nāgas, and were able at will, like the Nāgas, to assume the human form; and in one story the spirit of a banyan tree who reduced the merchants to ashes is called a Nāga-rājā, the soldiers he sends forth from his tree are Nāgas, and the tree itself is "the dwelling-place of the Nāga."¹⁸ This may explain why it is that the tree-gods are not specially mentioned in the Mahā Samaya list of deities who are there said by the poet to have come to pay reverence to the Buddha.¹⁹ On the Bharhut *stūpa* are various reliefs of *nāgas* engaged in worshipping sacred trees or possibly the Buddha immanent in them.²⁰ A similar subject from S. India is described by Tod.²¹

In Mysore 'the stones bearing the sculptured figures of serpents near every village are always erected under certain trees, which are most frequently built round with a raised platform, on which the stones are set up, facing the rising sun. One is invariably a sacred fig, which represents a female, and another a margosa, which represents a male; and these two are

¹ Cf. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, i. 133.

² Russell, iii. 483 f.

³ P.N.Q. ii. 91; cf. G.B., pt. v., *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, ii. 316 f.

⁴ Rose, *Glossary*, ii. 115.

⁵ *Raipur Gazetteer*, 1909, i. 80.

⁶ W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, London, 1906, p. 267.

⁷ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, v. 366; *Census of India, 1901*, xxvi. *Travancore*, pt. i. p. 325; L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, ii. 101.

⁸ *Vizagapatam Gazetteer*, i. 69.

⁹ *Eth. Surv. Central Provinces*, viii. [1911] 95; *B.G.* xviii. i. [1885] 54.

¹⁰ *Census of India, 1911*, xx. *Kashmir*, pt. i. p. 61 n.

¹¹ *Mem. A.S.B.* i. [1905] 283.

¹² L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet*, London, 1895, p. 209.

¹³ *Hoshangabad Gazetteer*, 1908, i. 291.

¹⁴ *Berār Gazetteer*, Bombay, 1870, p. 192; *P.R.* i. 220 ff.

¹⁵ Thurston, *Omens*, pp. 43, 160, *Ethnog. Notes*, p. 353 f.

¹⁶ *Asiatic Researches*, vi. [1801] 389 (with illustrations); *P.N.Q.* ii. 73.

¹⁷ For similar offerings of images of snakes and phalli see J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge, 1912, p. 266; Somadeva, i. 8; for *ex voto* offerings, in Himalayan snake-shrines, Oldham, p. 101 f.

¹⁸ *Jātaka*, iv. 221 ff.

¹⁹ Rhys Davids, p. 232, with illustration of Buddha preaching to *nāgas* in a sacred tree.

²⁰ Cunningham, p. 26 f., plates xxviii., xxix.

²¹ Popular ed., i. 462.

¹ Thurston, *Omens*, p. 124; Dubois, p. 114 ff.; cf. G.B., pt. ii. *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, London, 1911, p. 221 ff.

² J. W. Breeks, *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilagiris*, London, 1873, p. 104.

³ *Census of India, 1911*, xvi. *Baroda*, pt. i. 67; *B.G.* xvii. 1884] 40.

⁴ Thurston, *Omens*, p. 124.

⁵ Rose, *Glossary*, ii. 516, 519.

⁶ Russell, i. 367.

⁷ *Census of India, 1901*, vi. *Bengal*, pt. i. 415; Russell, iv. 60.

⁸ Russell, iv. 373.

⁹ Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, i. 21, quoting J. Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, p. 162; Thurston, *Ethnog. Notes*, p. 288.

¹⁰ J. M. Campbell, *Notes on the Spirit Basis of Belief and Custom*, Bombay, 1885, p. 366 ff.

¹¹ *Eth. Surv.* no. 113 [Bombay, 1908], p. 4.

¹² *Census of India, 1901*, xv. *Madras*, pt. i. p. 157.

¹³ *Jubbulpore Gazetteer*, Nagpur, 1909, i. 137.

¹⁴ *NINQ* iv. [1894-95] 130.

¹⁵ *Census of India, 1911*, xvi. *Baroda*, pt. i. 67 f.

¹⁶ *SBE* xiii. 425 f., 271, 461, 487, 552 ff., 605 f.; for other remedies of the same kind see Thurston, *Omens*, p. 95; *P.R.* i. 239; *P.L.* xxi. [1910] 85.

¹⁷ H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, London, 1903, p. 247 ff.

married with the same ceremonies as human beings. The bilpatra [*bilva-bilva-patra*] (*Bgle marmelos*), sacred to Siva, is often planted with them.¹

In Bellary it is said that the five Pāṇḍava brethren concealed their arms on a *sami*-tree (*Prosopis spicigera*), and that their weapons turned into snakes and remained untouched till they returned.²

13. **Worship and propitiation of snakes.**—The worship and propitiation of snakes are so closely connected with orthodox and unorthodox cults that it is often difficult to disentangle them.

(a) *Worship of the living snake.*—

A snake temple at Calicut contains several live cobras, which are fed by priests and worshippers; they are carefully protected, and allow themselves to be handled and made into necklaces by those who feed them; they are venerated as representing the spirits of ancestors.³ The worship of living snakes is also found in Mysore and at Vaisarpadi near Madras, where crowds of votaries assemble, generally on Sundays, in the hope of seeing the snakes preserved in the temple-grounds.⁴ In the island of Nainitove, Ceylon, consecrated snakes used to be tenderly reared by the Pāṇḍava priests, and fed daily at the expense of their votaries.⁵ At Bhāṇḍak, in the Central Provinces, a cobra appears in the snake-temple on all public occasions, and similar cases are reported from Rājamūndri, Sambalpur, and Manipur.⁶

(b) *Snake temples.*—Temples in which snake-worship is performed are numerous.

At the most ancient temple in Bilāspur and in Chhattisgarh the only image is that of the cobra.⁷ At Nāgarcoil, in Travancore, is a temple of the snake-god containing many stone images of snakes; snake-bite is not fatal within a mile of the temple; at Mannarsala the sacred enclosure contains several living cobras.⁸ At Nimbargi, in Bijapur, a woman saw her cow dropping its milk on a serpent's hole; she was ordered in a dream to build a temple over it, and to close its doors for nine months; but in her impatience she opened it prematurely, and found that a half-finished image of Sītārām and a *līngā* had sprung from the ground—a legend obviously invented to explain the form of the image.⁹ Among the Jādejā Rājputs of Kachh the chief procession is that of the Rāv to the snake temple in Bhuj fort.¹⁰ A curious illustration of the fusion of Islam with animism is found in the snake mosque near Manarghāt, at the foot of the Nūlgiri hills, where an annual festival is held and alms are collected for the mosque.¹¹

(c) *Snake-worship at ant-hills.*—Snake-worship is often conducted at ant-hills supposed to be the home of snakes.¹²

The Dhangers of the Central Provinces say that the first sheep and goats came out of an ant-hill, and, to stop the damage which they caused to crops, Siva created the first Dhanger; hence they revere ant-hills, never remove them from their fields, and at the Divālī, or feast of lights, worship them with offerings of rice, flowers, and part of the ear of a goat.¹³ Some tribes in Madras worship snakes by pouring milk on ant-hills.¹⁴ The worship of the ant-hill at marriages and the custom of bringing the lucky earth from them are possibly connected with the fertility cult of snakes or of ants, because they multiply in great numbers.¹⁵

(d) *Propitiation of snakes.*—

In N. India the Agarwāl branch of traders, who have a legend of snake-descent, have an annual rite for propitiation of snakes at which various ceremonies are performed, and sesamum charmed with a spell is sprinkled in the house to preserve the inmates from snake-bite.¹⁶ In Central India, to propitiate the snake-god Nāgdeo, milk is placed by Bhīls near the hole of a cobra.¹⁷ A solemn annual service to propitiate the Nāga rain-deities is held in Tibet.¹⁸ In an important cycle of folk-tales a monster or dragon is appeased by the periodical sacrifice of a

victim, often a girl, who is finally rescued by a hero.¹ Frazer regards the tales as reflecting a real custom of sacrificing girls or women to be the wives of water-spirits, who are often conceived as great serpents or dragons.²

In the worship of serpents it is important to note that the offerings made to *nāgas* are not such substances as are usually eaten by snakes, but things suitable for the food of men.³ In S. India among the rites performed by the twice-born classes are *nāga-pratishṭha*, the worship of the cobra in the form of a carved stone image, and *nāgabali*, or the performance of the obsequies of a dead cobra with all the formalities observed in ordinary funeral-rites.⁴

(e) *Worship of snake-heroes.*—Many deified snake-heroes are found in India.

Such are Gūgā or Guggā Pīr in the Panjāb and Rājawa and Soral in Hoshangābād.⁵ In the Central Provinces the Bhasias worship Karuā, 'the black one,' the cobra who, they say, was born in the tribe; he hid in the house-oven because he happened by accident to see one of his brothers' wives without her veil, was burnt to death, and is now deified by the tribe.⁶ Another worthy of the same class is Bhīlat, a deified cowherd, whose disciples are believed to be able to cure snake-bite with the long sticks which they carry.⁷

(f) *Snake-festivals.*—The chief snake-festival is that known as the Nāgpanchami, 'dragon's fifth,' in N. India and Nāgara-panchami in S. India, because it is held on the 5th day of the light half of the month Srāvana, or Sāvan. Its occurrence in the rainy season is possibly connected with the power of the snake to give rain.

In S. India, on the eve of the festival, worship is rendered with offerings of flowers and incense at snake-holes, and milk is poured into them; the stone images of snakes under sacred trees are visited with reverence; on the day of the feast these images are washed, milk, curds, etc., are poured on them, flowers are presented, and other offerings made.⁸ In the Central Provinces, during the month of Srāvana, a man must be sent on a certain day to eat cakes at the shrine of the snake-god and return; if this is neglected, the family will be attacked by cobras.⁹ In other parts of the Province Brāhmins on the day of the feast must not cut vegetables with a knife, but only with a scythe, and may not eat bread baked on a griddle; the priest comes to the house in the morning, and, if he tells the owner to do something ridiculous, he is bound to do it; on that day every guest who eats in the house must be branded on the hind-quarters with a burning stick, the host doing this stealthily; schoolmasters take their boys to a stream, where they wash their slates, worship them, come home, and eat sweetmeats.¹⁰ Wrestling contests are held on this day, and it is suggested that this is done because the movements of the wrestlers resemble the writhing of a snake.¹¹ In the Deccan, on the first day of the feast, images of snakes are painted on the walls of the house, worship is offered to them, and an old woman recites a legend explaining the origin of the rite.¹² In the Himalayan districts of the United Provinces Siva is worshipped under the title of Rikheswar, as lord of the *nāgas*, in which form he is represented as surrounded by serpents and crowned with a chaplet of hooded snakes; the people paint figures of serpents and birds on the walls of their houses, and seven days before the festival steep a mixture of wheat, grain, and pulse in water; on the morning of the Nāgpanchami they take a wisp of grass and, tying it up in the form of a snake, dip it in the water in which the grain has been steeped, and place it with money and sweetmeats before the pictures of the serpents.¹³

At the temple of Jagannāth (*g.v.*) at Puri 'the supremacy of Vishnu is declared in the festival of the slaughter of the deadly cobra-da-capello, Kālī-damana, the familiar of Siva and his queen.'¹⁴ Viṣṇu, in the form of Ananta, 'the infinite,' the snake-god Śeṣa, is worshipped at the feast of the Anant Chaudas, on the full moon of Bhādon, which, like other snake-festivals, falls in the rainy season.¹⁵ A remarkable rite in N. India is that of the *gurus*, when girls go to a tank or stream and float dolls, which are beaten by the boys with long switches, possibly a purgation, fertility, or rain cult.¹⁶ A similar rite is known as

¹ Rice, *Mysore Gazetteer*, i. 455.

² *Bellary Gazetteer*, i. 64.

³ M. A. Handley, *Roughing it in S. India*, London, 1911, p. 701.

⁴ Rice, i. 455; Thurston, *Ethnog. Notes*, p. 283.

⁵ J. E. Tennent, *Ceylon*, London, 1859, i. 378.

⁶ *IGI* viii. 59; *Census Rep. Berar*, 1881, p. 48.

⁷ *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, 1870, *Introd.* lxx. 86.

⁸ Thurston, *Omens*, p. 92; Aiyā, *Travancore State Manual*, iii. 589.

⁹ *EG* xxiii. 687 f. ¹⁰ *Ib.* ix. i. 138.

¹¹ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, vii. 105 f.

¹² For rites at conical mounds compare the Greek *omphalos* and other sacred mounds (Harrison, *Themis*, pp. 334, 396 ff.; Frazer, *Pausanias*, v. 314 ff.), and the bell-shaped mound in marriage and other rites among the pagan Malays (Skeat-Bagden, i. 129, ii. 67, 72 ff., 85).

¹³ Russell, ii. 430.

¹⁴ Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, i. 196, ii. 256 f., vi. 236, 356.

¹⁵ *Eth. Surv. Mysore*, ix. 6, xxii. 8, xiii. 8; L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, ii. 876.

¹⁶ *NINQ* ii. 202.

¹⁷ *Eth. Surv.*, 1909, p. 30.

¹⁸ Waddell, *Buddhism of Tibet*, p. 503; for a similar rite among the Pullavans of S. India see Anantha Krishna Iyer, i. 153 f.

¹ E. S. Hartland, *LP* i. chs. i.-iii.; Frazer, *Pausanias*, v. 143 ff., who gives Indian parallels.

² Frazer, *Lectures on the Early Hist. of the Kingship*, London, 1905, p. 184; *GEB*, pt. 1, *The Magic Art*, do. 1911, ii. 155 ff. For human sacrifice in snake-cults see above, § 3 (*g*).

³ Oldham, p. 29 f.

⁴ Above, § 9 (*d*); *Census of India*, 1911, xxi. *Mysore*, pt. i. p. 89.

⁵ *PR* 2. i. 211 ff., ii. 140; for a full account of the cult of Gūgā see Rose, i. 143 ff.

⁶ *Eth. Surv.* iii. [1907] 33; Russell, ii. 247.

⁷ *Nimar Gazetteer*, 1908, i. 59.

⁸ *Eth. Surv. Mysore*, s.v. 'Besthas', p. 11; Thurston, *Omens*, p. 124.

⁹ *Damoh Gazetteer*, 1906, i. 23.

¹⁰ *Chhindwāra Gazetteer*, 1907, i. 55 f.

¹¹ *Nāgpur Gazetteer*, 1908, i. 94.

¹² Balāji Sitaram Kothare, *Hindu Holidays*, Bombay, 1904, p. 24 f.

¹³ Atkinson, i. 851.

¹⁴ Hunter, i. 131.

¹⁵ *Mem. ASB* i. 174 f.

¹⁶ *NINQ* i. [1891-92] 73.

godham in Bihār.¹ In other parts of N. India people go about begging during the rainy season for two and a half days, during which time they do not sleep under a roof or eat salt; the object is said to be to avert the danger of snake-bite.

14. The snake in Hindu religious art.—Representations of the snake and its worship appear throughout Hindu religious art.

Figures of the Nāga Rājā, often in connexion with those of Buddha, appear in many cave-temples.² The figures of the nāgas at Ajanta (q.v.) are specially interesting.³ A favourite subject is Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa resting on the world-snake, Śeṣa.⁴

15. The snake in folk-lore.—The snake naturally plays a leading part in the folk-lore of India. Here only a few instances can be given.⁵

The snake knows the powers of life-giving plants, and the language of birds and animals can be acquired by eating some part of the flesh of a serpent.⁶ According to Philostratos of Lemnos, their hearts and livers were eaten in India, and knowledge of the language and thoughts of animals was thus attained.⁷ According to the Santāls, the power of understanding the speech of animals is given by Manasā, king of serpents.⁸ In another Santāl tale a snake teaches a woman an incantation which, if used when dust is thrown into the air, will cause the person against whom it is aimed to be burned to ashes.⁹ Omens are naturally taken from snakes. In Madras a person should postpone his journey if he sees a cobra, or a rat-snake; and in Kumaun, when a snake crosses a man's path, he must tear a rag from his clothing and place it on the trail of the reptile; if he fails to do so, he falls sick or suffers some other evil.¹⁰ In Madras any one who dreams of a snake is considered to be proof against its bite; if a man dreams of a cobra, his wife or some other near female relative has conceived.¹¹ If a man has marks of a snake on his right foot, or a woman on her left, they are incarnations of some deity.¹² In the Panjāb some snakes which drink buffaloes' milk are so swift as to be able to bite a galloping horse; two-headed snakes are common; there is a snake which poisons the breath of a sleeper, strikes him with its tail, and is able to remove from the bedside sticks which might be used against it.¹³ The Sanskrit names for the snake, *ṛṣi-viśha*, *ṛṣiṣi-viśha*, 'having poison in the eyes,' imply that it can poison by a mere glance.¹⁴ The hamadryad is supposed to pursue its victim over hill, dale, and water.¹⁵ Among the Todas a person whom a snake has bitten must not cross a stream; if it is absolutely necessary that he should cross, he must be carried over it.¹⁶ The same people explain eclipses by the fact that a snake once hunted a hare, which took refuge in the moon; the moon promised to protect it. 'The snake still goes sometimes to catch the hare in the moon, and when he goes the moon becomes dark and some people fire guns and send up rockets and the Todas shout.'¹⁷

The Kadu Gollas of Mysore believe that, if a woman in her courses enters the house, they will be bitten by snakes or stung by scorpions.¹⁸ In N. India a snake is said to become blind on seeing a pregnant woman.¹⁹ In the Konkan the bite of the rat-snake is poisonous on Sunday, but harmless on other days; if it is in a field with a buffalo, whichever sees the other first will survive, while the one first seen will die; when buffaloes bathe, this snake sucks their milk under water.²⁰ One snake in Ratnagiri can kill people by merely casting its shadow on them from a tree or the roof of a house.²¹

LITERATURE.—To the knowledges of the writer no comprehensive monograph on serpent-worship in India has been published. Some aspects of the subject have been investigated by J. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship, or Illustrations of Mythology and Art in India*,² London, 1873; C. F. Oldham, *The Sun and the Serpent*, do. 1905; W. Crooke, *PR*,² do. 1896,

¹ G. A. Grierson, *Bihār Peasant Life*, Calcutta, 1885, p. 400.

² Fergusson-Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, pp. 156 l., 306, 317, 325, 331, 343, 421; Grünwedel, pp. 29, 94, 106 ff., 133.

³ Grünwedel, p. 43 ff.

⁴ *Arch. Surv. Rep.* 1905-06, p. 114; J. Fergusson, *Hist. of Ind. and Eastern Arch.*, i. 341; Smith, *Hist. of Fine Art*, p. 102 l. For other sculptures see A. Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, and *The Dhāra Topes*, London, 1854; F. C. Maisey, *Sanchi and its Remains*.

⁵ See *PR* ii. 141 l.

⁶ *GB*, pt. iv. *Adonis*, *Atis*, *Osiris*, i. 136, pt. v. *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, ii. 146; J. A. MacCulloch, *Rel. of the Anc. Celts*, Edinburgh, 1911, p. 149 n.

⁷ McCrindle, *Anc. India in Class. Literature*, p. 194.

⁸ A. Campbell, *Santāl Folk-tales*, Pokhuria, 1891, p. 22.

⁹ Bompas, p. 153.

¹⁰ Thurston, *Omens*, p. 25; *NLNQ* ii. 136; for other omens from snakes see J. K. Paddfield, *The Hindus at Home*, Madras, 1896, p. 258 ff.

¹¹ Above, § 7 (b); Thurston, *Omens*, p. 20.

¹² *NLNQ* v. [1892-93] 17.

¹³ Malik Muhammad Din, *Rep. Bahawalpur State*, Lahore, 1908, p. 81.

¹⁴ *Ch. PL* xvi. [1905] 150.

¹⁵ H. Yule, *Narr. of the Mission to the Court of Ava*, London, 1858, p. 100 n.; Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, vii. 136.

¹⁶ Rivers, p. 267.

¹⁷ *Ch. PL* p. 593.

¹⁸ *Arch. Surv.* xiv. [Bangalore, 1908] 14.

¹⁹ *NLNQ* v. [1895-96] 70.

²⁰ *BC* xviii. i. 75.

²¹ *Id.* x. [1880] 50.

ii. 121 ff.; A. de Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, do. 1872, ii. 388 ff. For other references see *EB*¹¹ xxiv. 676 ff. Some of the abundant and scattered literature on the subject has been quoted in the article.

W. CROOKE.

SERPENT-WORSHIP (Teutonic and Balto-Slavic).—I. *TEUTONIC*.—1. Lombard snake-worship.—In the 7th cent. St. Barbatas melted down the golden image of a viper, which the Lombards worshipped in secret. Unfortunately we know nothing further of this cult.¹

2. Wisdom and healing powers.—The Teutons, like most other peoples, believed in the wisdom of the serpent and in his powers of giving health and strength.

Hother, the adversary of Balder, came to his enemy's camp, and heard that 'three maidens had gone out carrying the secret feast of Balder. . . Now they had three snakes, of whose venom they were wont to mix a strengthening compound for the food of Balder, and even now a flood of slaver was dripping on the food from the open mouths of the serpents.' The eldest maiden refused to give the food to Hother, 'declaring that Balder would be cheated, if they increased the bodily powers of his enemy.'²

Saxo also tells us how Roller saw his mother preparing a meal for himself and his step-brother Eric. 'He looked up at three snakes hanging from above. . . from whose mouths flowed a slaver which dribbled drops of moisture on the meal. Now two of these were pitchy of hue, while the third seemed to have whitish scales. . . Roller thought that the affair looked like magic. . . For he did not know that the snakes were naturally harmless, or how much strength was being brewed for that meal.' Eric chooses the broth made from the dark snake, 'judging the feast not by the colours but by the inward strengthening effected', and so he attains 'to the highest pitch of human wisdom,' knowledge of animal language, and success in war.³

Somewhat similar results come from the eating of the heart of the snake or dragon, Fáfnir, by Sigurd the Volsung.⁴ We find a parallel for this superstition of the potency of the snake's slaver in the Lithuanian custom of putting their sacred house-snake on the table and letting him touch their food.⁵

3. The snake and the soul.—The cult of the house-snake probably prevailed at one time among the Teutons.

'Plenty of old tales are still told of *home snakes* and *unkes*. On meadows and pastures, and even in houses, snakes come to children when alone, sip milk with them out of their bowl. . . they watch infants in the cradle, and to bigger children they shew treasures: to kill them is *unlucky*. . . If the parents surprise the snake with the child, and kill it, the child begins to fall away, and dies before long.'⁶

'In some districts they say every house has two snakes, a male and a female, but they never shew themselves till the master or mistress of the house dies, and then they undergo the same fate.'⁷

The cult of the house-snake is a wide-spread religious practice, and seems to be a form of ancestor-worship, arising from the notion that snakes embody the souls of the dead. In some Teutonic legends and superstitions the snakes appear to embody the souls of those who are still alive—a survival perhaps of the primitive belief in the 'external soul.'

Paul the Deacon tells the story of King Gunther, whose 'soul crept out of his mouth in the shape of a snake. . . passed a little brook and entered a mountain, afterwards returning again to the mouth of the king. . . The king in the meantime had dreamt that he crossed a bridge over a river, and arrived in a mountain full of gold. The treasure. . . was afterwards actually lifted.'⁸

Several Northern stories appear to contain reminiscences of the custom of rearing house-snakes.

Thora, daughter of Herod, king of Sweden, at the command of her father, 'endured to rear a race of adders with her maiden hands,' which grew until they became a public nuisance and were killed by her wooer, Ragnar Lodbrok.⁹ According to the version of the story in the *Saga of King Ragnar Lodbrok*,¹⁰ the

¹ Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, tr. Stallybrass, ii. 684.

² Saxo, tr. Elton, p. 93.

³ *Id.* p. 153 l.

⁴ *Volsunga Saga*, in *Die prosaische Edda*, ed. Wilken, p. 132.

⁵ See below, § 11.

⁶ Grimm, ii. 686.

⁷ *Id.* p. 687.

⁸ See Saussaye, *Religion of the Teutons*, p. 297.

⁹ Saxo, p. 364 l.

¹⁰ *Fornaldar Sögur Nordrianda*, Kaupmannahöfn, 1829, i. 237 l.

princess kept a snake in a box, with gold under him. The snake grew until he encircled the whole room, and the gold grew with his growth.

Both snakes and dragons (which often play a very similar part in popular belief) are frequently supposed to bring wealth or guard gold.

Fáfnir was originally human, but guarded his treasure by lying on top of it, in the form of a great snake or dragon.¹ The dragon in *Beowulf* kept watch over treasure in a burial-mound. It is probable that originally the dead man was thought to appear in the form of a snake or dragon guarding the treasures that were buried with him in his grave.

Saxo tells of another snake-rearing princess:

'Siward, the king of the Goths, is said to have had . . . a daughter Alfhild, who showed almost from her cradle such faithfulness to modesty, that she continually kept her face muffled in her robe. . . . Her father banished her into very close keeping, and gave her a viper and a snake to rear, wishing to defend her chastity by the protection of these reptiles.'²

Saxo has probably misunderstood the king's motive. Sacred snakes are often tended by virgin priestesses, who are supposed to be their wives, the fundamental belief being that women 'can conceive by the dead in the form of serpents.'³ A legend recorded by Grimm⁴ is noteworthy in this connexion:

'Once, when a woman lay asleep, a snake crept into her open mouth, and when she gave birth to a child, the snake lay coiled tightly round its neck, and could only be got away by a milk-bath; but it never left the baby's side, it lay in bed with it, and ate out of its bowl, without doing it any harm.'

4. The snake in the other world.—Saxo gives a detailed account of Thorkill's visits to the other world:

After crossing the bridge which divided the world of men from the world of monsters, he came to the dwelling of Geirrod where 'the flooring was covered with snakes.' Afterwards Thorkill and his companions went to visit Utgarda-Loki. They came at last to a cave of giants, situated in a land of eternal night. 'The entrance was hideous, the door-posts were decayed . . . the floor swarming with snakes.' Then in another cavern 'he beheld a number of iron seats among a swarm of gliding serpents. Next there met his eye a sluggish mass of water gently flowing over a sandy bottom. . . . Again . . . a foul and gloomy room was disclosed to the visitors, wherein they saw Utgarda-Loki, laden hand and foot with enormous chains. . . . They could scarcely make their way out, and were bespattered by the snakes which darted at them on every side.'⁵

We may compare this with the description of the place of punishment in the Prose Edda:

'In Corpse Strand there is a great and evil hall, and the doors face the north; it is all wrought of snake-backs, but the snake-heads look into the house, and breathe out poison, so that the poison-streams run along the halls, and oath-breakers and murderers waste those rivers as it is here said:

"I know a hall standing
Far from the sun
In Corpse Strand,
The doors face north
Poison drops fall
In from the windows."⁶
'There Niðhöggr devours
The corpses of the departed.'⁷

Niðhöggr lives with a great number of snakes in the spring Hvergelmir under the great World-Tree, the Ash Yggdrasil.

'The Ash Yggdrasil,
Suffers hardships
More than men know . . .
Niðhöggr crawls underneath.'⁸
'More snakes lie
Beneath the Ash Yggdrasil
Than unwise fools can think of . . .
I think they will always
Be spoiling the boughs of that tree.'⁹

The conception of the universal tree was perhaps suggested by tree-sanctuaries such as the Upsala sanctuary and the great Romove sanctuary of the

¹ *Volsunga Saga*, ed. Wilken, p. 175.

² P. 274.

³ J. G. Frazer, *GES*, pt. iv., *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, London, 1912, i. 90; cf. *ib.* pt. v., *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, do. 1912, ii. 171, pt. i., *The Magic Art*, do. 1911, ii. 149 f.; C. F. Oldham, *The Sun and the Serpent*, do. 1905, p. 154.

⁴ H. 686.

⁵ *Völuspá*, 88.

⁶ *Grimmismål*, 85, quoted in *Gylf.* ed. Wilken, p. 23.

⁷ *ib.* 84, quoted in *Gylf.* p. 23.

⁸ *ib.* 84, quoted in *Gylf.* p. 23.

Baltic peoples.¹ The above-quoted lines point to the conclusion that at one time it was customary to keep snakes in these sanctuaries; we know that a sacred serpent was kept at Romove.² Snakes evidently appear in the other world because they embody the souls of the dead. Two of the snakes who gnaw Yggdrasil's Ash are called Ófnir and Sváfñir—names which are also given to Odin, the god of death.³

5. The world-snake.—Just as the sacred tree seems to have given rise to the idea of a universal world-tree, so probably the sacred snake gave rise to the idea of Miðgarðsormr, the great world-snake, which lies in the sea, coiled round the whole earth.

Miðgarðsormr, Hell, and the wolf Fenrir are children of Loki and adversaries of the gods. At the end of the world Miðgarðsormr will come up on to the land, breathing out poison. Thor, the thunder-god, will do battle with him and be killed by his poisonous breath.⁴

6. Conclusion.—We know something of the beliefs about snakes prevalent among the Teutonic peoples, but practically nothing about the ritual of the snake-cult. The Teutons seem to have regarded the snake as possessed of special gifts of knowledge and healing power; but on the whole its malignant aspect seems to be predominant. The snake is clearly regarded as an embodiment of the soul, and so comes to be connected with death, the land of the dead, and the powers of destruction.

II. LETTISH, LITHUANIAN, AND OLD PRUSSIAN.

—1. The house-snake.—The cult of the house-snake was one of the 'almost incredible things' which Jerome of Prague related to the Council of Basel (1431–37) when describing his experiences as a missionary among the Lithuanians. Each *paterfamilias* had his own serpent in a corner of the house, to which he gave food and did sacrifice.⁵

In the middle of the next century Joannes Meletius (Menecius) gives similar evidence:

'Moreover the Lithuanians and Samogites keep snakes warm under the stove, or in a corner of the steam-room where the table stands. These snakes they worship as they would a divine being; and at a regular season of the year the sacrificers summon them forth to share the meal. They come out and climb up over a clean cloth and sit on the table. When they have there tasted the several dishes, they go down again and hide themselves in their holes. When the snakes have gone away the men gladly eat up the dishes of which they have had a first taste, and expect that for that year all things will turn out happily for them. If, however, the snakes have not come in answer to the prayers of the sacrificer, or have refused to taste the dishes placed on the table, then they believe that in that year they will suffer some great calamity.'⁶

About thirty years later Alexander Guagnini describes the worship of house-snakes, which was still kept up by many of the country people in Samogitia.

They revered a particular kind of snake 'with four tiny feet, like lizards, and black and fat in body, called in their native tongue *gvojitos*.' Guagnini tells the story of a pagan, living in a village near Vilna, who, having been persuaded by a Christian to kill his sacred snake, was horribly deformed, because, as he said, he 'laid wicked hands on the serpent, his domestic god.'⁷

The Letts also were in the habit of rearing and worshipping house-snakes, which were so tame that they could not harm man or beast belonging to the house; even the children would play with them and have them in their beds.⁸ It was the duty of the Lettish goddess Brehkina to cry out to all who entered: 'You must leave the milk-

¹ Cf. art. NATURE (Teutonic); H. M. Chadwick, in *JAI* xxx. [1900] 80.

² See below, § n.

³ *Grimmismål*, 54, in *Die Lieder der älteren Edda*, ed. Hildebrand and Gering, p. 95.

⁴ *Gylf.* xxiv. 37 f., II. 82.

⁵ *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, 5 vols., Leipzig, 1861–74, iv. 239.

⁶ *FL* xii. [1910] 298.

⁷ *Respublica sine status regni Poloniae Lituaniae Prussiae Livoniae*, Leyden, 1627, p. 276.

⁸ *Scriptores Rerum Livonicarum*, Riga and Leipzig, 1848, ii. 441.

mothers [i.e. house-snakes, toads] unharmed in the house.¹

Matthæus Prætorius quotes from Bretkius a detailed description of the consecration of the house-snake.

'A *weidulut* or *maldivinks* is called, who brings with him one or more snakes. Thereupon the table is laid, and a *kauszele* [i.e. bowl] full of drink, and a can of beer set out.' The *weidulut* prays and the snake creeps up on to the table. 'Soon he makes a circle round the snake, which thereupon lies as if dead, until the *weidulut* has finished his prayers, which are many. Then the snake is sprinkled with beer out of the consecrated *kauszele* and after that it moves again, and, on the command of the *weidulut*, touches some of the food and gets down from the table by means of a towel. The *weidulut* notices the place that the snake will occupy and hallows it by prayer. Thereupon the snake establishes itself in its place. The host, however, with the *weidulut* and the inmates of his house, is joyful and concludes this consecration with much drinking and all manner of amusements.²

Erasmus Stella and Gnagnini call the sacred serpents of the Baltic peoples *penates*. It is almost certain that here, as elsewhere, the cult of the house-snake was a form of ancestor-worship. The Lithuanians named their house-snakes *gyvojitės*, *gyvoitos* (cf. above), 'the living ones' (cf. Lith. *gyvaitė*, 'snake,' derived from Lith. *gyvas*, 'living'). It is therefore highly probable that they shared the almost universal idea that the snake, owing to his power of sloughing his skin, is immortal and a fit embodiment for the spirit of the dead, the ever-living ancestor.³ The association of the *paterfamilias* with a special snake, and the Lettish term *peena maates* (cf. below), point to the same conclusion.

The snake as household god or ancestral spirit would naturally further the interests of his own family at the expense of others. The Letts, we are told by Fabricius, reared huge serpents which would steal milk-pails from neighbouring herds and bring them back to their own people.⁴ From the same authority we learn that these people knew how to injure their enemies' crops by magic arts, but he does not state that they used snakes for the purpose. Prætorius, however, gives an interesting piece of evidence for such practices among the Lithuanians in the 17th century:

A certain man who had been a servant in Insterburg, near Lithuanian Georgenburg, told how various villages in the neighbourhood still kept (though in great secrecy) a *monivinks*. At certain times in the year, usually spring or autumn, this *monivinks* called the people together and collected various snakes through magic prayers, and charmed them by certain magic characters. The table was then laid, food and drink set out, a special place prepared for the snakes, and milk set out for them. The snakes were brought up on to the table, and at the command of the *monivinks* touched all the food, after which the feast took place and was concluded with much drinking. After the meal each person present told the *monivinks* the name of his enemy, and how he wished him to be injured. 'If some one wished his enemy's grain to be injured in the field, the *weideler* took a snake in his two hands, charmed it anew, prayed again some magic prayers, and let it dart away to the door or window, with these words: *Szmikst per Esze*, i.e., Go through the fields. . . thereupon the specified corn, and other grain in the field was injured through hail.

If the *weideler* said: *Szmikst per armida*, then the supply of bread was injured.⁵ This seems to be a survival of beliefs and practices connected with the house-snake.

2. The sanctuary-snake.—The serpent cult was not confined to the house. In Samland, it seems, large numbers of snakes were reared in an oak-wood in honour of the gods.⁶ Prætorius⁷ explains that *zaltiones* were snake-charmers, who had charge of the snakes consecrated to Padrympus. This information, however, can scarcely be drawn from personal observation, as Prætorius tells us else-

where that in his day Padrympus was no longer invoked by name.¹ Padrympus, or Potrimpus, was one of the deities to whom the famous Romove sanctuary was consecrated. In his honour a snake was kept in a large jar, crowned with sheaves of corn, and fed with milk by virgin priestesses.² Grunau's account of Old Prussian beliefs has perhaps been regarded with undue scepticism. In this case his statement is supported by the evidence of comparative religion. In diverse parts of the world snakes are tended by virgins, who apparently are considered as their wives.³ The custom of giving milk to serpents is even more universal, most likely because milk is the food of children. The fundamental idea seems to have been that the dead could be born again into their own families. We find traces of this belief among the Scandinavians and elsewhere.

'Behind the Greek notion that women may conceive by a serpent-god seems to lie the belief that they can conceive by the dead in the form of serpents.'⁴ Hence the snake's influence over human fertility. The term *peena maates*, 'mothers of milk,' suggests that some such conception prevailed among the Letts. The word *maates*, 'mothers,' is due to the Lettish preference for female deities.

It is easy to understand why the snake was the peculiar treasure of Potrimpus.

Among the Ewe-speaking peoples of the Slave Coast 'a close connexion is apparently supposed to exist between the fertility of the soil and the marriage of these women to the serpent. For the time when new brides are sought for the reptile god is the season when the millet is beginning to sprout.'⁵

Snakes are commonly credited with power over the weather and the crops; Potrimpus is an agricultural deity—one of the many agricultural deities whose cult was ultimately merged into that of Zemynle (Lettish, *semmes maat*, 'mother of earth'), the great earth-goddess. It is worth noting that the name Potrimpus may be connected with Old Prussian *trumpa*=*fluvius*, and that David tells us that 'flowing waters were appropriated to him.'⁶ Water-spirits are often thought to have the appearance of snakes, and, like Potrimpus, they 'have an especial taste for human blood.'⁷ Possibly Potrimpus was originally a water-snake deity. This, however, is mere conjecture.

It is not improbable that at one time the serpent was a common feature of Northern sanctuaries, but here again we have no conclusive evidence.⁸

3. The god of healing.—Michalo, a Lithuanian writer of the 16th cent., believed that his nation was of Italian origin on account of the striking similarity of Lithuanian and ancient Roman rites, 'especially on account of the cult of Æsculapius, who is worshipped in the form of a serpent—the same form in which formerly he migrated from Epidaurus to Rome.'⁹ This serpent-god can be none other than the Ausschauts who in the 16th cent. was still worshipped by the Sudavians in Samland, and who is equated with Æsculapius in the *Constit. Synod. Evangel.* of 1530. His name occurs in various forms:

'Auscentum deum incoluntatis et aegritudinis.'¹⁰ Auschleuts (also Auschkauts) 'der Gott aller Gebrochen, Krankheiten und Gesundheit.'¹¹ 'Auszwelitis, nach Bretkius Auszweikus, ein Gott der Kranken und Gesunden, von sweikas gesund, sweikata Gesundheit.'¹² This derivation is probably correct.

¹ P. 18.

² Simon Grunau, *Preussische Chronik*, ed. M. Perlbach, Leipzig, 1876-77, i. 28.

³ Cf. *GB*³, pt. v., *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, London, 1912, ii. 17 f., pt. i., *The Magic Art*, do. 1911, ii. 149 f.; Oldham, *The Sun and the Serpent*, p. 154.

⁴ *GB*³, pt. iv., *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*², London, 1907, i. 76 f.

⁵ *Id.* i. 59. ⁶ i. 87.

⁷ See *GB*³, pt. i. *The Magic Art*, ii. 150, 155 f.

⁸ Cf. above, § x.

⁹ *Respublica Poloniae Lituanicae Prussie Livoniae*, p. 265.

¹⁰ Meletius, *Epist. ad Sabinum* (PL xii. 296).

¹¹ David, i. 91. ¹² Prætorius, p. 27.

¹ *Mag. der lettisch-literarischen Gesellschaft*, vi. xiv. 144.

² *Deliciae Prussicae*, ed. W. Pierson, Berlin, 1871, p. 35.

³ See J. G. Frazer, *GB*³, pt. vi., *The Scapgoat*, London, 1913, p. 302 ff., pt. iii., *The Dying God*, do. 1911, p. 26, *The Belief in Immortality*, do. 1913, i. 60, 69 ff., 74 f., 88.

⁴ *Script. Rer. Livon.*, ii. 441. ⁵ Cf. *Delic. Pruss.*, p. 36.

⁶ Lucas David, *Preussische Chronik*, ed. E. Hennig, Königsberg, 1822, i. 62.

⁷ P. 46.

David gives us a further piece of information about Aunschauts. He describes in detail the usual harvest festival at which four special gods were invoked.

If, however, the harvest was unsuccessful, the priest prayed 'to their excellent and most mighty god Aushkaut, that he would intercede for them with the above-named four gods: Pergubrius, Perkunus, Schaystix and Palwittis.' Every one must then contribute some barley, for the brewing of the beer, and atonement must be made for every breach of village law. The women then brought bread (made from the first crop of wheat) for them to eat at their consecrated feast. The festival lasted until all the beer had been consumed.¹

There is a parallel to this in the customs of the Ewe-speaking people.

'They invoke the snake in excessively wet, dry, or barren seasons; on all occasions relating to their government and the preservation of their cattle; or rather, in one word, in all necessities and difficulties in which they do not apply to their new batch of gods.'²

4. The mythical serpent.—The worship of actual, living snakes may develop into the belief in an imaginary, idealized serpent, and so give rise to snake- or dragon-myths. Some such process may be traced in the customs and superstitions of the Letts, recorded by Fabricius and Paul Einhorn.

'Some of them rear dragons, in their houses, which steal crops, which they bring back to their own people; others nourish huge serpents, etc.'³

Paul Einhorn seems to have been much puzzled as to the true nature of the Lettish house-dragon, of whose appearance and habits he gives a detailed description:

'This nation has also had just such an evil and horrible god of wealth [i.e. as Pluto] whom they call Puke, but the Germans call him the dragon.' This dragon was still kept by many people even in Einhorn's day. He would steal riches and crops and bring them to the people who entertained him. 'He is fiery-red in appearance and flies quietly through the air like a burning fire.' 'He is red when he is hungry; when he is well-fed with the corn he has stolen, he is quite blue and horrible to see. If any householder wishes to keep him and gain wealth through his services, he must prepare a special chamber for him . . . which must be kept perfectly clean . . . nobody must enter there, except the master of the house, and those whom he will have within. . . not every one must know what sort of a chamber it is.' He must always have the first share of all beer and bread and other food, otherwise he will consider himself insulted and burn down the house. He is often to be seen in the evening, but those who keep him do so in great secrecy, and either cannot or will not say much about him.⁴

The Lettish *puke* may be compared with the Lithuanian *aitwars*. Opinions seem to have differed as to the appearance of this being.

'The *Aitwars*, or Incubus, is described by the Nadraivian peasant as having human shape, but with incredibly large hands and feet.'⁵

The Nadraivians draw a distinction between the *aitwars*, the *barsdukkas*, and the *karkuczus*, who bring wealth and crops to people.

'The *Barsdukkai* live beneath, the *Aitwars* above, the earth. These *Barsdukkai* look like men, but the *Aitwars* has the appearance of a dragon or great snake, with fiery head.'⁶

The *aitwars*, like the *puke*, sometimes does good and sometimes ill to those with whom he lives. He is in the habit of stealing. He flies through the air. He must have the first taste of all food. Occasionally he burns down the house in which he lives.⁷ It is dangerous to have an *aitwars* in the house during a thunder-storm, because Perkunus, the thunder-god, is likely to strike him for being too familiar with men, and, since it is owing to men that he is punished, he will revenge himself by burning down their home.⁸

5. Conclusion.—We have some detailed descriptions of the ritual, but little direct information as to the ideas which lay behind the serpent-cult of

¹ David, i. 92.

² W. Bosman, 'Description of the Coast of Guinea,' tr. from Dutch in J. Pinkerton, *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, London, 1808-14, xvi. 494.

³ Cf. above; Fabricius, in *Script. Rer. Livon.* ii. 441.

⁴ 'Ein christlicher Unterricht,' *Script. Rer. Livon.* ii. 624.

⁵ Prætorius, p. 13.

⁶ *Ib.* p. 30.

⁷ *Ib.* p. 29.

⁸ *Ib.* p. 21.

the Letts, Lithuanians, and Old Prussians. To a certain extent we can supply this gap in our knowledge by comparison with the beliefs and rites of other peoples, there being no important feature of Baltic serpent-worship for which we cannot find parallels elsewhere. The Lithuanians, Letts, and Old Prussians seem to have credited the snake with healing powers and with influence over the weather, crops, and human fertility. The souls of the dead were probably thought to be incarnate in snakes. The serpent, in its malignant aspect, seems to have played little part in Baltic religion, unless, perhaps, we may trace it in the superstitions connected with the *aitwars* and the *puke*.

III. SLAVIC.—The Slavic snake-cult was probably very similar to that which prevailed among the Baltic peoples.¹

According to Afanasief, Russian peasants 'consider it a happy omen if a snake takes up its quarters in a cottage, and they gladly set out milk for it. To kill such a snake would be a very great sin.'²

Popular superstition preserved the belief that the snake brings wealth and has the gift of healing. In Slavic fairy-tales the power of the snake depends on its possession of 'living waters.'³

Certain features of the old cult of the house-snake survive in the superstitions connected with the *domovoy*, a house-spirit not unlike the Lithuanian *aitwars* and the Lettish *puke*.⁴ The *domovoy* lives behind the stove, but may be found wherever fires are lighted. He hides behind the stove in the daytime, but comes out at night and eats the food that has been left out for him. He is in the habit of robbing neighbouring peasants for the sake of his own people; occasionally he even harms those of his own household, sometimes going so far as to burn down the house. His close connexion with the domestic hearth, and the fact that he appears at times in the likeness of the master of the house, show that he is really an ancestral spirit. He is usually thought of as in human shape, but

'in White Russia the *Domovoy* is called *Tsmok*, a snake, . . . This House Snake brings all sorts of good to the master who treats it well and gives it omelettes, . . . if this be not done the snake will burn down the house.'⁵

Długosz, in his *History of Poland* (15th cent.), mentions a certain 'deus vitæ quem vocabant Zywie.'⁶ Brückner⁷ suggests that this Zywie, and also perhaps 'Siwa dea Polaborum' mentioned by Helmold, may be really the house-snake. Both names may be derived from *ziwb* (cf. Lith. *gyvas*, 'living'; cf. Lith. *gyvūte*, 'snake').

The snake, as the 'living one,' was often supposed to embody a dead man's soul, and so came to be connected with death, and to assume a malignant character. It is this aspect of the snake that appears in Slavic fairy-stories.

'In that kingdom in which Ivan lived there was no day, but always night: that was a snake's doing.'⁸ 'The Serpent [Zmyei] is described in the stories as "winged," "fiery," "many-headed" . . . he is spoken of as guarding treasures of bright metals and gleaming gems, and as carrying off and imprisoning fair maidens.' He is the great antagonist of the hero. 'In some of the stories he bears a surname which points to his connexion with the Deity of the Hearth, being called Zapechny, or Zatrubnik, or Popysalot—from *pech* [the stove], or *truba* [the stove-pipe or chimney], or *pepel* [ashes].'⁹

The snake seems to be similar to, or even identical with, other evil beings who figure in the stories, especially 'Koschei the Immortal' and the flying witch, or Baba Yaga.

¹ See above, § II.

² W. R. S. Ralston, *The Songs of the Russian People*², p. 175.

³ *Ib.* p. 174 f.

⁴ See above, § II., and art. DEMONS AND SPIRITS (Slavic).

⁵ Ralston, p. 125.

⁶ *Historiæ Poloniæ*, Leipzig, 1711-12, i., *Opera*, ed. Cracow, 1873, x. 47 f.

⁷ *Archiv für slav. Philologie*, xiv. [1892] 179.

⁸ Ralston, p. 176.

⁹ *Ib.* p. 174.

In the Ukraine the flying witch is usually called a snake; in a Slovak tale the sons of a Baba Yaga are described as "baneful snakes." One of the tastes which characterize the snake of fable is sometimes attributed to the Baba Yaga also. She is supposed "to love to suck the white breasis of beautiful women." Like the Snake, also, she keeps guard over and knows the use of the founts of "Living Water"—that water which cures wounds and restores the dead to life. . . . But, as a general rule, the Baba Yaga is described as a being utterly malevolent and always hungering after human flesh. According to some traditions, she even feeds on the souls of the dead. The White Russians, for instance, affirm that "Death gives the dead to the Baba Yaga, with whom she often goes prowling about."¹

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II. J. G. Frazer, *GEZ. Index*, s.vv. 'Serpent,' 'Snake'; C. F. Oldham, *The Sun and the Serpent*, London, 1905; *E.Brill*, s.v. 'Serpent-Worship'; *Mag. herausgegeben von der lettisch-literarischen Gesellschaft*, vi. xiv. [1868]; see artt. OLD PRUSSIANS and NATURA (Lettish, Lithuanian, and Old Prussian) for further literature.

III. W. R. S. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, London, 1872; A. Brückner, 'Mythologische Studien,' iii. in *Archiv für slav. Philologie*, xiv. [1892].

END WELSFORD.

SETTLEMENTS.—I. Origin and development.—Settlements (university, college, public school, or generically social) represent an attempt made by the Christian spirit in the latter part of the 19th cent. to obviate one of the gravest moral and social dangers attendant on the growth of great cities. In the days of small towns all classes—the feudal chief or lord of the manor, the leading citizens, the tradesmen, the working people—were housed not very far apart. In the cluster of villages which afterwards expanded into the metropolis there was a similar juxtaposition of the various social grades. This meant always the possibility, and often the reality, of neighbourly relations. Rich and poor, high and low, were personally known to each other and could be mutually helpful. But the expansion of the town and the absorption of the adjoining villages almost entirely swept away the old neighbourliness. The well-to-do chose for their residence the most desirable regions, where the soil, the elevation, the salubrity of the atmosphere, made for the general amenity of life. The less desirable areas were left to the inflowing tide of the wage-earning poor. Thus arose that menace to civic stability and negation of Christian neighbourliness known as the residential separation of the classes. Revolutionary Paris had shown what fearful evils might result. It was to bridge over the social chasm thus formed that the settlement came into being. It was the direct outcome of the Christian spirit.

The first modern settlement practically began when the Rev. Samuel Barnett and his well-to-do bride decided to accept the living of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, which the then Bishop of London described as the worst parish in his diocese, inhabited mainly by a criminal population, and one which had, he feared, been much corrupted by doles. Animated by as profound a spirit of Christian self-sacrifice as any Francis or Damien, the pair who were married on 28th January 1873 entered on their work in Whitechapel on March 6 of the same year. Two years later they paid their first visit together to Oxford, when they talked over to the men 'the mighty problems of poverty and the people.' Mrs. Barnett writes: 'We used to ask each undergraduate as he developed interest to come and stay in Whitechapel and see for himself: and they came, some to spend a few weeks, some for the Long Vacation, while others took lodgings in East London.' Among these men

¹ Ralston, p. 162 f.

was Arnold Toynbee (1852-83), who stayed with the Barnetts rather oftener than the other men, and once for a few weeks took rooms in Commercial Road; but his health was too fragile to bear the pain and strain of residence, and the experiment soon ended.

It was in the rooms of Mr. Cosmo Lang (afterwards Archbishop of York) that the undergraduates in Oxford first gathered to support the founding of a settlement to enable men to live with the poor.' After eleven years of service at St. Jude's in Whitechapel, the settlement premises having been built, Canon Barnett consented to become its Warden. On the anniversary of Arnold Toynbee's death, 10th March 1884, when Balliol Chapel was filled with men to do honour to his memory, and after Barnett had spoken on Arnold's example, the idea came to Mrs. Barnett and to Mr. Bolton King, 'Let us call the settlement Toynbee Hall.' So the first settlement began in the spirit of Arnold Toynbee. And of him Benjamin Jowett wrote:

'The "imitation of Christ" was to him the essence of Christianity; the life of Christ needed no other witness. His labours among the poor were constantly sustained by the conviction that some better thing was reserved both for them and for us: he saw them as they were in the presence of God; he thought of them as the heirs of immortality.'¹

Thus, prompted by the ethical and religious motive, the first university settlement at Toynbee Hall was founded in 1884. The aim of this, as of every true settlement, was to heal the breach between the classes, to bring at least representatives of all classes into helpful contact, to create a better mutual understanding, to promote by personal friendship and social study a truer civic synthesis. In other words, the settlement is designed to bring those who have many social advantages, such as education, influence, leisure, or wealth, into touch with those who have few social advantages or none, to become acquainted with the real needs of the people, to supply where lacking the elements of social leadership, and to smooth down the rough edges of social antagonism.

This general idea is capable of vast variation. There are in the British Isles nearly 50 settlements; in the United States, it is reckoned, more than 400. Kindred institutions have sprung up in Paris, Berlin, and other cities on the Continent. Almost every settlement has developed differently. The two chief causes of difference are the difference of the neighbourhood and the difference of the staff. Some settlements are pre-eminently academic; they have become a permanent resident society for university extension. Others have been intensely ecclesiastical in motive. Others, again, have been what may be termed broadly religious, shading off into merely ethical or cultural centres. A number of settlements, particularly in America, have been chiefly training schools for social workers. American settlements are often on a larger scale than British. With characteristic munificence money is poured out on large buildings and in many salaries. Perhaps the most important work of the American settlements has been the development of a common spirit and of a civic unity amid the crowd of different nationalities and languages among which they were planted.

Women's settlements, both in England and in America, have done excellent work, chiefly among women and children, in tending invalid children, in providing children's country holidays, maintaining maternity societies, co-operating with employment exchanges and care committees, training and shepherding domestic servants, health visiting, relief committee work, and training of social workers. Where the women's settlement works in conjunction with the men's settlement, the effect

¹ Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution*, London, 1887, prefatory memoir, p. xvii.