

## DRAGONS AND RAIN GODS.<sup>1</sup>

BY G. ELLIOT SMITH, M.A., M.D., F.R.S.

**A**N adequate account of the development of the dragon-legend would represent the history of the expression of mankind's aspirations and fears during the past fifty centuries and more. For the dragon was evolved along with civilization itself. The search for the elixir of life, to turn back the years from old age and confer the boon of immortality, has been the great driving force that compelled men to build up the material and the intellectual fabric of civilization. The dragon-legend is the history of that search which has been preserved by popular tradition : it has grown up and kept pace with the constant struggle to grasp the unattainable goal of men's desires ; and the story has been constantly growing in complexity, as new incidents were drawn within its scope and confused with old incidents whose real meaning was forgotten or distorted. It has passed through all the phases with which the study of the spreading of rumours or the development of dreams has familiarized students of psychology. The simple original stories, which become blended and confused, their meaning distorted and reinterpreted by the rationalizing of incoherent incidents, are given the dramatic form with which the human mind invests all stories that make a strong appeal to its emotions, and then secondarily elaborated with a wealth of circumstantial detail. This is the history of popular legends and the development of rumours. But these phenomena are displayed in their most emphatic form in dreams.<sup>2</sup> In his waking state man restrains his roving fancies and exercises what Freud has called a "censorship" over the stream of his thoughts : but when he falls asleep, the "censor" dozes also ; and free rein is given to his un-

<sup>1</sup> An elaboration of a Lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on 8 November, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> In his lecture, "Dreams and Primitive Culture," delivered at the John Rylands Library on 10 April, 1918, Dr. Rivers has expounded the principles of dream-development.

restrained fancies to make a hotch-potch of the most varied and unrelated incidents, and to create a fantastic mosaic built up from fragments of his actual experience, bound together by the cement of his aspirations and fears. The myth resembles the dream because it has developed without any consistent and effective censorship. The individual who tells one particular phase of the story may exert the controlling influence of his mind over the version he narrates : but as it is handed on from man to man and generation to generation the "censorship" also is constantly changing. This lack of unity of control implies that the development of the myth is not unlike the building-up of a dream-story. But the dragon-myth is vastly more complex than any dream, because mankind as a whole has taken a hand in the process of shaping it ; and the number of centuries devoted to this work of elaboration has been far greater than the years spent by the average individual in accumulating the stuff of which most of his dreams have been made. But though the myth is enormously complex, so vast a mass of detailed evidence concerning every phase and every detail of its history has been preserved, both in the literature and the folk-lore of the world, that we are able to submit it to psychological analysis and determine the course of its development and the significance of every incident in its tortuous rambling.

In instituting these comparisons between the development of myths and dreams, I should like to emphasize the fact that the interpretation of the *myth* proposed in these pages is almost diametrically opposed to that suggested by Freud, and pushed to a *reductio ad absurdum* by his more reckless followers, and especially by Jung.

The dragon has been described as "the most venerable symbol employed in ornamental art and the favourite and most highly decorative motif in artistic design". It has been the inspiration of much, if not most, of the world's great literature in every age and clime, and the nucleus around which a wealth of ethical symbolism has accumulated throughout the ages. The dragon-myth represents also the earliest doctrine or systematic theory of astronomy and meteorology.

In the course of its romantic and chequered history the dragon has been identified with all of the gods and all of the demons of every religion. But it is most intimately associated with the earliest stratum of divinities, for it has been homologized with each of the members of the earliest Trinity, the Great Mother, the Water God, and the

Warrior Sun God, both individually and collectively. To add to the complexities of the story, the dragon-slayer is also represented by the same deities, either individually or collectively; and the weapon with which the hero slays the dragon is also homologous both with him and his victim, for it is animated by him who wields it, and its powers of destruction make it a symbol of the same power of evil which it itself destroys.

Such a fantastic paradox of contradictions has supplied the materials with which the fancies of men of every race and land, and every stage of knowledge and ignorance, have been playing for all these centuries. It is not surprising, therefore, that an endless series of variations of the story has been evolved, each decked out with topical allusions and distinctive embellishments. But throughout the complex tissue of this highly embroidered fabric the essential threads of the web and woof of its foundation can be detected with surprising constancy and regularity.

Within the limits of such an account as this it is obvious that I can deal only with the main threads of the argument and leave the interesting details of the local embellishments until some other time.

The fundamental element in the dragon's powers is the control of water. Both in its beneficent and destructive aspects water was regarded as animated by the dragon, who thus assumed the rôle of Osiris or his enemy Set. But when the attributes of the Water God became confused with those of the Great Mother, and her evil avatar, the lioness (Sekhet) form of Hathor in Egypt, or in Babylonia the destructive Tiamat, became the symbol of disorder and chaos, the dragon became identified with her also.

Similarly the third member of the Earliest Trinity also became the dragon. As the son and successor of the dead king Osiris the living king Horus became assimilated with him. When the belief became more and more insistent that the dead king had acquired the boon of immortality and was really alive, the distinction between him and the actually living king Horus became correspondingly minimized. This process of assimilation was advanced a further stage when the king became a god and was thus more closely identified with his father and predecessor. Hence Horus assumed many of the functions of Osiris; and amongst them those which in foreign lands contributed to making a dragon of the Water God. But if the distinction be-

tween Horus and Osiris became more and more attenuated with the lapse of time, the identification with his mother Hathor (Isis) was more complete still. For he took her place and assumed many of her attributes in the later versions of the great saga which is the nucleus of all the literature of mythology—I refer to the story of “The Destruction of Mankind”.

The attributes of these three members of the Trinity, Hathor, Osiris, and Horus, thus became intimately linked the one with the other; and in Susa, where the earliest pictorial representation of a real dragon developed, it received concrete form (Fig. 1) as a monster compounded of the lioness of Hathor (Sekhet) with the falcon (or eagle) of Horus, but with the human attributes and water-controlling powers which originally belonged to Osiris. In some parts of Africa



FIG. 1.—EARLY REPRESENTATION OF A “DRAGON” COMPOUNDED OF THE FOREPART OF AN EAGLE AND THE HINDPART OF A LION—(from an Archaic Cylinder-seal from Susa, after Jequier).



FIG. 2.—THE EARLIEST BABYLONIAN CONCEPTION OF THE DRAGON TIAMAT—(from a Cylinder-seal in the British Museum, after L. W. King).

the earliest “dragon” was nothing more than Hathor’s cow or the gazelle or antelope of Horus (Osiris) or of Set.

But if the dragon was compounded of all three deities, who was the slayer of the evil dragon?

The story of the dragon-conflict is really a recital of Horus’s vendetta against Set, intimately blended and confused with different versions of “The Destruction of Mankind”.<sup>1</sup> The commonplace incidents of the originally prosaic stories were distorted into an almost unrecognizable form, then secondarily elaborated without any attention to their original meaning, but with a wealth of circumstantial embellishment, in accordance with the usual methods of the human mind that I have already mentioned. The history of the legend is in fact the most complete, because it is the oldest and the most widespread, illustration of those instinctive tendencies of the human spirit to bridge the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide infra*, p. 350 *et seq.*

gaps in its disjointed experience, and to link together in a kind of mental mosaic the otherwise isolated incidents in the facts of daily life and the rumours and traditions that have been handed down from the story-teller's predecessors.

In the "Destruction of Mankind," which I shall discuss more fully in the following pages (p. 350 *et seq.*), Hathor does the slaying: in the later stories Horus takes his mother's place and earns his spurs as the Warrior Sun-god:<sup>1</sup> hence confusion was inevitably introduced between the enemies of Re, the original victims in the legend, and Horus's traditional enemies, the followers of Set. Against the latter it was Osiris himself who fought originally; and in many of the non-Egyptian variants of the legend it is the rain-god himself who is the warrior.

Hence all three members of the Trinity were identified, not only with the dragon, but also with the hero who was the dragon-slayer.

But the weapon used by the latter was also animated by the same Trinity, and in fact identified with them. In the Saga of the Winged Disk, Horus assumed the form of the sun equipped with the wings of his own falcon and the fire-spitting uræus serpents. Flying down from heaven in this form he was at the same time the god and the god's weapon. As a fiery bolt from heaven he slew the enemies of Re, who were now identified with his own personal foes, the followers of Set. But in the earlier versions of the myth (i.e. the "Destruction of Mankind"), it was Hathor who was the "Eye of Re" and descended from heaven to destroy mankind with fire; she also was the vulture (Mut); and in the earliest version she did the slaughter with a knife or an axe with which she was animistically identified.

But Osiris also was the weapon of destruction, both in the form of the flood (for he was the personification of the river) and the rain-storms from heaven. But he was also an instrument for vanquishing the demon, when the intoxicating beer or the sedative drink (the potency of which was due to the indwelling spirit of the god) was the chosen means of overcoming the dragon.

This, in brief, is the framework of the dragon-story. The early Trinity as the hero, armed with the Trinity as weapon, slays the

<sup>1</sup> Hence soldiers killed in battle and women dying in childbirth receive special consideration in the exclusive heaven of (Osiris's) Horus's Indian and American representatives, Indra and Tlaloc.

dragon, which again is the same Trinity. With its illimitable possibilities for dramatic development and fantastic embellishment with incident and ethical symbolism, this theme has provided countless thousands of story-tellers with the skeleton which they clothed with the living flesh of their stories, representing not merely the earliest theories of astronomy and meteorology, but all the emotional conflicts of daily life, the struggle between light and darkness, heat and cold, right and wrong, justice and injustice, prosperity and adversity, wealth and poverty. The whole gamut of human strivings and emotions was drawn into the legend until it became the great epic of the human spirit and the main theme that has appealed to the interest of all mankind in every age.

An ancient Chinese philosopher, Wang Fu, writing in the time of the Han Dynasty, enumerates the "nine resemblances" of the dragon. "His horns resemble those of a stag, his head that of a camel, his eyes those of a demon, his neck that of a snake, his belly that of a clam, his scales those of a carp, his claws those of an eagle, his soles those of a tiger, his ears those of a cow."<sup>1</sup> But this list includes only a small minority of the menagerie of diverse creatures which at one time or another have contributed their quota to this truly astounding hotch-potch.

This composite wonder-beast ranges from Western Europe to the Far East of Asia, and as we shall see, also even across the Pacific to America. Although in the different localities a great number of most varied ingredients enter into its composition, in most places where the dragon occurs the substratum of its anatomy consists of a serpent or a crocodile, usually with the scales of a fish for covering, and the feet and wings, and sometimes also the head, of an eagle, falcon, or hawk, and the forelimbs and sometimes the head of a lion. An association of anatomical features of so unnatural and arbitrary a nature can only mean that all dragons are the progeny of the same ultimate ancestors.

But it is not merely a case of structural or anatomical similarity, but also of physiological identity, that clinches the proof of the derivation of this fantastic brood from the same parents. Wherever the dragon is found, it displays a special partiality for water. It controls the rivers or seas, dwells in pools or wells, or in the clouds on the tops

<sup>1</sup> M. W. de Visser, "The Dragon in China and Japan," *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeling Letterkunde, Deel XIII, No. 2, 1913, p. 70.*

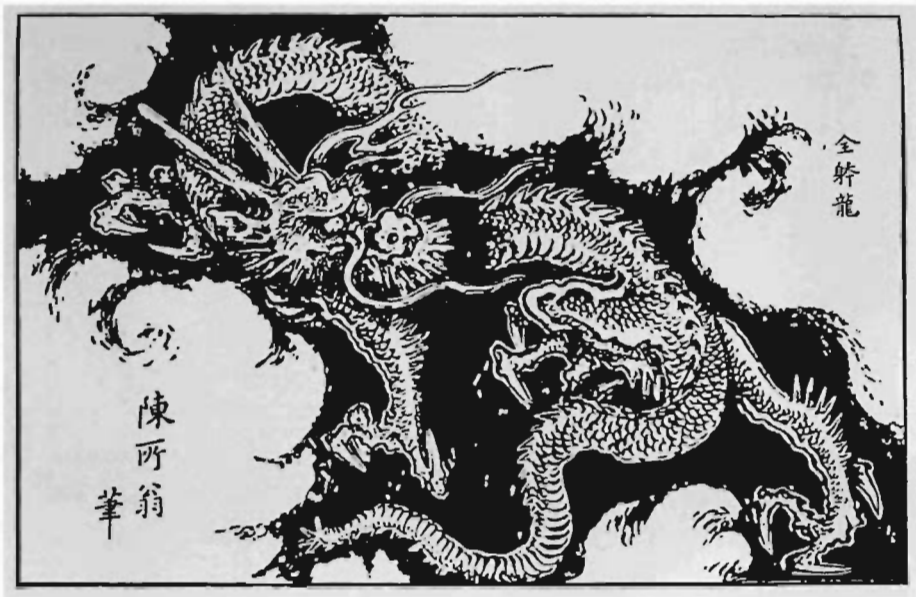


FIG. 4.—A MEDIEVAL PICTURE OF A CHINESE DRAGON UPON ITS CLOUD  
(After the late Professor W. Anderson)



FIG. 5.—A CHINESE DRAGON  
(After de Groot)

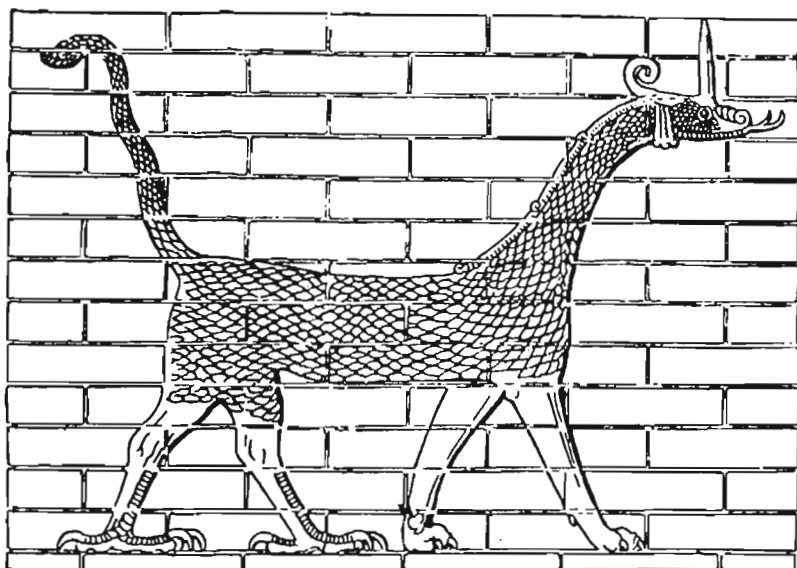


FIG. 6.—DRAGON FROM THE ISHTAR GATE OF BABYLON



FIG. 7.—BABYLONIAN WEATHER GOD



of mountains, regulates the tides, the flow of streams, or the rainfall, and is associated with thunder and lightning. Its home is a mansion at the bottom of the sea, where it guards vast treasures, usually pearls, but also gold and precious stones. In other instances the dwelling is upon the top of a high mountain; and the dragon's breath forms the rain-clouds. It emits thunder and lightning. Eating the dragon's heart enables the diner to acquire the knowledge stored in this "organ of the mind" so that he can understand the language of birds, and in fact of all the creatures that have contributed to the making of a dragon.

It should not be necessary to rebut the numerous attempts that have been made to explain the dragon-myth as a story relating to extinct monsters. Such fantastic claims can be made only by writers devoid of any knowledge of palæontology or of the distinctive features of the dragon and its history. But when the Keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, in a book that is not intended to be humorous,<sup>1</sup> seriously claims Dr. Andrews' discovery of a gigantic fossil snake as "proof" of the former existence of "the great serpent-devil Äpep," it is time to protest.

Those who attempt to derive the dragon from such living creatures as lizards like *Draco volans* or *Moloch horridus*<sup>2</sup> ignore the evidence of the composite and unnatural features of the monsters.

"Whatever be the origin of the Northern dragon, the myths, when they first became articulate for us, show him to be in all essentials the same as that of the South and East. He is a power of evil, guardian of hoards, the greedy withholder of good things from men; and the slaying of a dragon is the crowning achievement of heroes—of Siegmund, of Beowulf, of Sigurd, of Arthur, of Tristram—even of Lancelot, the *beau idéal* of mediæval chivalry" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. viii., p. 467). But if in the West the dragon is usually a "power of evil," in the far East he is equally emphatically a symbol of beneficence. He is identified with emperors and kings; he is the son of heaven, the bestower of all bounties, not merely to mankind directly, but also to the earth as well.

Even in our country his symbolism is not always wholly malevolent

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge, "The Gods of the Egyptians," 1904, vol. i., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gould's "Mythical Monsters," 1886.

otherwise—if for the moment we shut our eyes to the history of the development of heraldic ornament—dragons would hardly figure as the supporters of the arms of the City of London, and as the symbol of many of our aristocratic families, among which the Royal House of Tudor is included. It is only a few years since the Red Dragon of Cadwallader was added as an additional badge to the achievement of the Prince of Wales. But, “ though a common ensign in war, both in the East and the West, as an ecclesiastical emblem his opposite qualities have remained consistently until the present day. Whenever the dragon is represented, it symbolizes the power of evil, the devil and his works. Hell in mediæval art is a dragon with gaping jaws, belching fire.”

And in the East the dragon’s reputation is not always blameless. For it figures in some disreputable incidents and does not escape the sort of punishment that tradition metes out to his European cousins.

#### THE DRAGON IN AMERICA AND EASTERN ASIA.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, and probably also even for two or three hundred years earlier still, the leaven of the ancient civilizations of the Old World was at work in Mexico, Central America and Peru. The most obtrusive influences that were brought to bear, especially in the area from Yucatan to Mexico, were inspired by the Cambodian and Indonesian modifications of Indian beliefs and practices. The god who was most often depicted upon the ancient Maya and Aztec codices was the Indian rain-god Indra, who in America was provided with the head of the Indian elephant<sup>1</sup> (i.e. seems to have been confused with the Indian Ganesa) and given other attributes more suggestive of the Dravidian Nâga than his enemy, the Aryan deity. In other words the character of the American god, known as *Chac* by the Maya people and as *Tlaloc* by the Aztecs, is an interesting illustration of the effects of such a mixture of cultures as Dr. Rivers has studied in Melanesia.<sup>2</sup> Not only does the elephant-headed god in America represent a blend of the two great Indian rain-gods which in the Old World are mortal enemies, the one of the other (partly for

<sup>1</sup> “Precolumbian Representations of the Elephant in America,” *Nature*, Nov. 25, 1915, p. 340; Dec. 16, 1915, p. 425; and Jan. 27, 1916, p. 593

<sup>2</sup> “History of Melanesian Society,” Cambridge, 1914.

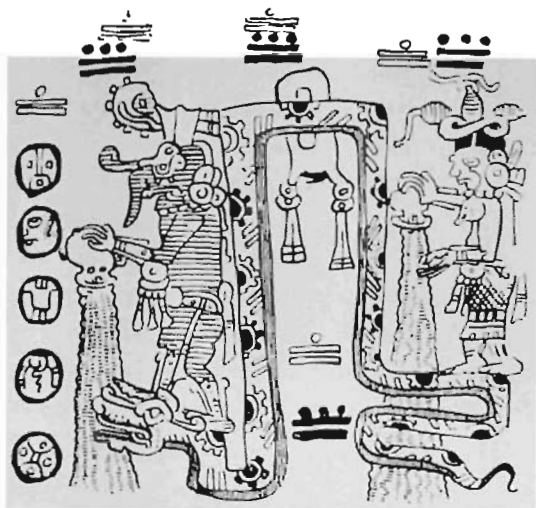


FIG. 8. REPRODUCTION OF A PICTURE IN THE MAYA CODX TROANO REPRESENTING THE RAIN GOD *CHAC* TREADING UPON THE SERPENT'S HEAD, WHICH IS INTERPOSED BETWEEN THE EARTH AND THE RAIN THE GOD IS POURING OUT OF A BOWL. A RAIN GODDESS STANDS UPON THE SERPENT'S TAIL.

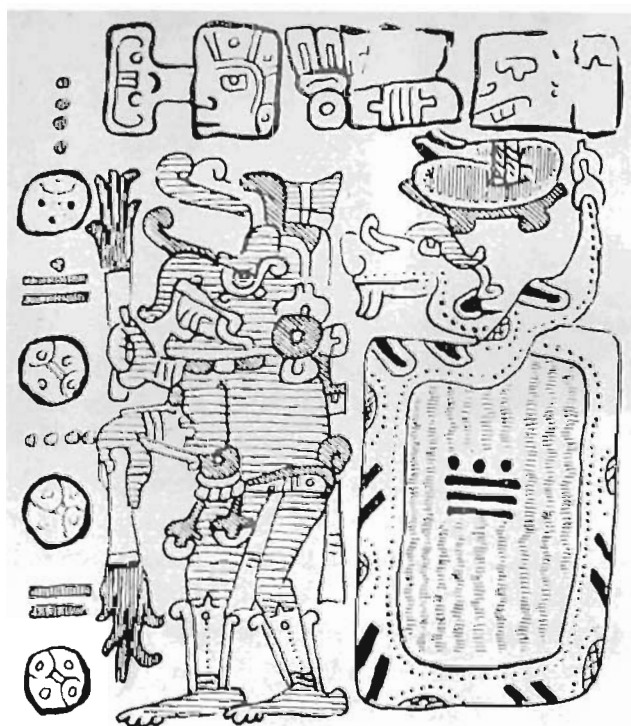


FIG. 9.—ANOTHER REPRESENTATION OF THE ELEPHANT-HEADED RAIN-GOD. HE IS HOLDING THUNDERBOLTS, CONVENTIONALISED IN A HAND-LIKE FORM. THE SERPENT IS CONVERTED INTO A SAC, HOLDING UP THE RAIN-WATERS.

the political reason that the Dravidians and Aryans were rival and hostile peoples), but all the traits of each deity, even those depicting the old Aryan conception of their deadly combat, are reproduced in America under circumstances which reveal an ignorance on the part of the artists of the significance of the paradoxical contradictions they are representing. But even many incidents in the early history of the Vedic gods, which were due to arbitrary circumstances in the growth of the legends, reappear in America. To cite one instance (out of scores which might be quoted), in the Vedic story Indra assumed many of the attributes of the god Soma. In America the name of the god of rain and thunder, the Mexican Indra, is *Tlaloc*, which is generally translated "pulque of the earth," from *tlal*[*l*]i, "earth," and *oc*[*tli*], "pulque, a fermented drink (like the Indian drink *soma*) made from the juice of the agave".<sup>1</sup>

The so-called "long-nosed god" (the elephant-headed rain-god) has been given the non-committal designation "god B," by Schellhas.<sup>2</sup>

I reproduce here a remarkable drawing (Fig. 8) from the Codex Troano, in which this god, whom the Maya people called *Chac*, is shown pouring the rain out of a water-jar (just as the deities of Babylonia and India are often represented), and putting his foot upon the head of a serpent, who is preventing the rain from reaching the earth. Here we find depicted with childlike simplicity and directness the Vedic conception of Indra overcoming the demon Vritra. Stempell describes this scene as "the elephant-headed god B standing upon the head of a serpent";<sup>3</sup> while Seler, who claims that god B is a tortoise, explains it as the serpent forming a footstool for the rain-god.<sup>4</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> H. Beuchat, "Manuel d' Archéologie Americaine," 1912, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> "Representation of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts," *Papers of the Peabody Museum*, vol. iv., 1904.

<sup>3</sup> *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Bd. 40, 1908, p. 716.

<sup>4</sup> "Die Tierbilder der mexikanischen und der Maya-Handschriften," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Bd. 42, 1910, pp. 75 and 77. In the remarkable series of drawings from Maya and Aztec sources reproduced by Seler in his articles in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, the *Peabody Museum Papers*, and his monograph on the *Codex Vaticanus*, not only is practically every episode of the dragon-myth of the Old World graphically depicted, but also every phase and incident of the legends from India (and Babylonia, Egypt and the Ægean) that contributed to the building-up of the myth.

Codex Cortes the same theme is depicted in another way, which is truer to the Indian conception of Vritra, as "the restrainer"<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 9).

The serpent (the American rattlesnake) restrains the water by coiling itself into a sac to hold up the rain and so prevent it from reaching the earth. In the various American codices this episode is depicted in as great a variety of forms as the Vedic poets of India described when they sang of the exploits of Indra. The Maya Chac is, in fact, Indra transferred to the other side of the Pacific and there only thinly disguised by a veneer of American stylistic design.

But the Aztec god Tlaloc is merely the Chac of the Maya people transferred to Mexico. Schellhas declares that the "god B," the "most common figure in the codices," is a "universal deity to whom the most varied elements, natural phenomena, and activities are subject". "Many authorities consider God B to represent Kukulcan, the Feathered Serpent, whose Aztec equivalent is Quetzalcoatl. Others identify him with Itzamna, the Serpent God of the East, or with Chac, the Rain God of the four quarters and the equivalent of Tlaloc of the Mexicans."<sup>2</sup>

From the point of view of its Indian analogies these confusions are peculiarly significant, for the same phenomena are found in India. The snake and the dragon can be either the rain-god of the East or the enemy of the rain-god; either the dragon-slayer or the evil dragon who has to be slain. The Indian word *Nāga*, which is applied to the beneficent god or king identified with the cobra, can also mean "elephant," and this double significance probably played a part in the confusion of the deities in America.

In the Dresden Codex the elephant-headed god is represented in one place grasping a serpent, in another issuing from a serpent's mouth, and again as an actual serpent (Fig. 10). Turning next to the attributes of these American gods we find that they reproduce with amazing precision those of Indra. Not only were they the divinities who controlled rain, thunder, lightning, and vegetation, but they also carried axes and thunderbolts (Fig. 10) like their homologues in the Old World. Like Indra, Tlaloc was intimately associated with the East and with the tops of mountains, where he had a special heaven, reserved for

<sup>1</sup> Compare Hopkins, "Religions of India," p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert J. Spinden, "Maya Art," p. 62.

Fig. 10.

A photographic reproduction of the 36th page of the Dresden Maya Codex.

Of the three pictures in the top row one represents the elephant-headed god *Chac* with a snake's body. He is pouring out rain. The central picture represents the lightning animal carrying fire down from heaven to earth. On the right *Chac* is shown in human guise carrying thunderweapons in the form of burning torches.

In the second row a goddess sits in the rain: her head is prolonged into that of a bird, holding a fish in its beak. The central picture shows *Chac* in his boat ferrying a woman across the water from the East. The third illustration depicts the familiar conflict between the vulture and serpent.

In the third row *Chac* is seen with his axe: in the central picture he is standing in the water looking up towards a rain-cloud; and on the right he is shown sitting in a hut resting from his labours.



FIG. 10. A PAGE (THE 36TH) OF THE DRESDEN MAYA CODIX

warriors who fell in battle and women who died in childbirth. As a water-god also he presided over the souls of the drowned and those who in life suffered from dropsical affections. Indra also specialized in the same branch of medicine.

In fact, if one compares the account of Tlaloc's attributes and achievements, such as is given in Mr. Joyce's "Mexican Archæology" or Professor Seler's monograph on the "Codex Vaticanus," with Professor Hopkins's summary of Indra's character ("Religions of India") the identity is so exact, even in the most arbitrary traits and confusions with other deities' peculiarities, that it becomes impossible for any serious investigator to refuse to admit that Tlaloc and Chac are merely American forms of Indra. Even so fantastic a practice as the representation of the American rain-god's face as composed of contorted snakes<sup>1</sup> finds its analogy in Siam, where in relatively recent times this curious device was still being used by artists.<sup>2</sup>

"As the god of fertility maize belonged to him [Tlaloc], though not altogether by right, for according to one legend he stole it after it had been discovered by other gods concealed in the heart of a mountain."<sup>3</sup> Indra also obtained soma from the mountain by similar means<sup>4</sup>

In the ancient civilization of America one of the most prominent deities was called the "Feathered Serpent," in the Maya language, Kukulcan, Quiché Gukumatz, Aztec Quetzalcoatl, the Pueblo "Mother of Waters". Throughout a very extensive part of America the snake, like the Indian Nâga, is the emblem of rain, clouds, thunder and lightning. But it is essentially and pre-eminently the symbol of rain; and the god who controls the rain, Chac of the Mayas, Tlaloc of the Aztecs, carried the axe and the thunderbolt like his homologues and prototypes in the Old World. In America also we find reproduced in full, not only the legends of the antagonism between the

<sup>1</sup> Seler, "Codex Vaticanus," Figs. 299-304.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, F. W. K. Müller, "Nang," *Int. Arch. f. Ethnolog.*, 1894, Suppl. zu Bd. vii., Taf. vii., where the mask of *Ravana* (a late surrogate of Indra in the *Ramayana*) reveals a survival of the prototype of the Mexican designs.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> For the incident of the stealing of the soma by Garuda, who in this legend is the representative of Indra, see Hopkins, "Religions of India," pp. 360-61.



thunder-bird and the serpent, but also the identification of these two rivals in one composite monster, which, as I have already mentioned, is seen in the winged disks, both in the Old World and the New.<sup>1</sup> Hardly any incident in the history of the Egyptian falcon or the thunder-birds of Babylonia, Greece or India, fails to reappear in America and find pictorial expression in the Maya and Aztec codices.

What makes America such a rich storehouse of historical data is the fact that it is stretched across the world almost from pole to pole ; and for many centuries the jetsam and flotsam swept on to this vast strand has made it a museum of the cultural history of the Old World, much of which would have been lost for ever if America had not saved it. But a record preserved in this manner is necessarily in a highly confused state. For essentially the same materials reached America in manifold forms. The original immigrants into America brought from North-Eastern Asia such cultural equipment as had reached the area east of the Yenesei at the time when Europe was in the Neolithic phase of culture. Then when ancient mariners began to coast along the Eastern Asiatic littoral and make their way to America by the Aleutian route there was a further infiltration of new ideas. But when more venturesome sailors began to navigate the open seas and exploit Polynesia, for centuries<sup>2</sup> there was a more or less constant influx of customs and beliefs, which were drawn from Egypt and Babylonia, from the Mediterranean and East Africa, from India and Indonesia, China and Japan, Cambodia and Oceania. One and the same fundamental idea, such as the attributes of the serpent as a water-god, reached America in an infinite variety of guises, Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Indonesian, Chinese and Japanese, and from this amazing jumble of confusion the local priesthood of Central America built up a system of beliefs which is distinctively American, though most of the ingredients and the principles of synthetic composition were borrowed from the Old World.

Every possible phase of the early history of the dragon-story and all the ingredients which in the Old World went to the making

<sup>1</sup> "The Influence of Ancient Egyptian Civilization in the East and in America," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 1916, Fig. 4, "The Serpent-Bird".

<sup>2</sup> Probably from about 300 B.C. to 700 A.D.

Fig. 11.

A. The so-called "sea-goat" of Babylonia, a creature compounded of the antelope and fish of Ea.

B. The "sea-goat" as the vehicle of Ea or Marduk.

C to K—a series of varieties of the *makara* from the Buddhist Ralls at Buddha Gaya and Mathura, circa 70 B.C.—70 A.D., after Cunningham ("Archæological Survey of India," Vol. III, 1873, Plates IX and XXIX).

L. The *makara* as the vehicle of Varuna, after Sir George Birdwood. It is not difficult to understand how, in the course of the easterly diffusion of culture, such a picture should develop into the Chinese Dragon or the American Elephant-headed God.



FIG. II.

of it have been preserved in American pictures and legends in a bewildering variety of forms and with an amazing luxuriance of complicated symbolism and picturesque ingenuity. In America, as in India and Eastern Asia, the power controlling water was identified both with a serpent (which in the New World, as in the Old, was often equipped with such inappropriate and arbitrary appendages, as wings, horns and crests) and a god, who was either associated or confused with an elephant. Now many of the attributes of these gods, as personifications of the life-giving powers of water, are identical with those of the Babylonian god Ea and the Egyptian Osiris, and their reputations as warriors with the respective sons and representatives, Marduk and Horus. The composite animal of Ea-Marduk, the "sea-goat" (the Capricornus of the Zodiac), was also the vehicle of Varuna in India, whose relationship to Indra was in some respects analogous to that of Ea to Marduk in Babylonia.<sup>1</sup> The Indian "sea-goat" or *makara* was in fact intimately associated both with Varuna and with Indra. This monster assumed a great variety of forms, such as the crocodile, the dolphin, the sea-serpent or dragon, or combinations of the heads of different animals with a fish's body (Fig. 11). Amongst these we find an elephant-headed form of the *makara*, which was adopted as far east as Indonesia and as far west as Scotland.

I have already called attention<sup>2</sup> to the part played by the *makara* in determining the development of the form of the elephant-headed god in America. Another form of the *makara* is described in the following American legend, which is interesting also as a mutilated version of the original dragon-story of the Old World.

In 1912 Hernández translated and published a Maya manuscript<sup>3</sup> which had been written out in Spanish characters in the early days

<sup>1</sup> For information concerning Ea's "Goat-Fish," which can truly be called the "Father of Dragons," as well as the prototype of the Indian *makara*, the mermaid, the "sea-serpent," the "dolphin of Aphrodite," and of most composite sea-monsters, see W. H. Ward's "Seal Cylinders of Western Asia," pp. 382 *et seq.* and 399 *et seq.*; and especially the detailed reports in de Morgan's *Mémoires* (Délégation en Perse).

<sup>2</sup> *Nature*, *op. cit.*, *supra*.

<sup>3</sup> Juan Martínez Hernández, "La Creación del Mundo segun los Mayas," Páginas Inéditas del MS. De Chumayel, *International Congress of Americanists, Proceedings of the XVIII. Session*, London, 1912, p. 164.

of the conquest of the Americas, but had been overlooked until six years ago. It is an account of the creation, and includes the following passages: "All at once came the water [? rain] after the dragon was carried away. The heaven was broken up; it fell upon the earth; and they say that *Cantul-ti-ku* (four gods), the four Baccab, were those who destroyed it. . . . 'The whole world,' said *Ah-uuc-chek-nale* (he who seven times makes fruitful), 'proceeded from the seven bosoms of the earth.' And he descended to make fruitful *Itzam-kab-ain* (the female whale with alligator-feet), when he came down from the central angle of the heavenly region" (p. 171).

Hernández adds that "the old fishermen of Yucatan still call the whale *Itzam*: this explains the name of *Itzaes*, by which the Mayas were known before the founding of Mayapan".

The close analogy to the Indra-story is suggested by the phrase describing the coming of the water "after the dragon was carried away". Moreover, the Indian sea-elephant *makara*, which was confused in the Old World with the dolphin of Aphrodite, and was sometimes also regarded as a crocodile, naturally suggests that the "female whale with the alligator-feet" was only an American version of the old Indian legend.

All this serves, not only to corroborate the inferences drawn from the other sources of information which I have already indicated, but also to suggest that, in addition to borrowing the chief divinities of their pantheon from India, the Maya people's original name was derived from the same mythology.<sup>1</sup>

It is of considerable interest and importance to note that in the earliest dated example of Maya workmanship (from Tuxtla, in the Vera Cruz State of Mexico), for which Spinden assigns a tentative date of 235 B.C., an unmistakable elephant figures among the four hieroglyphs which Spinden reproduces (*op. cit.*, p. 171). A similar hieroglyphic sign is found in the Chinese records of the Early Chow Dynasty (John Ross, "The Origin of the Chinese People," 1916, p. 152).

The use of the numerals four and seven in the narrative translated

<sup>1</sup> From the folk-lore of America I have collected many interesting variants of the Indra story and other legends (and artistic designs) of the elephant. I hope to publish these in the near future.

by Hernández, as in so many other American documents, is itself, as Mrs. Zelia Nuttall has so conclusively demonstrated,<sup>1</sup> a most striking and conclusive demonstration of the link with the Old World.

Indra was not the only Indian god who was transferred to America, for all the associated deities, with the characteristic stories of their exploits,<sup>2</sup> are also found depicted with childlike directness of incident, but amazingly luxuriant artistic phantasy, in the Maya and Aztec codices.

We find scattered throughout the islands of the Pacific the familiar stories of the dragon. One mentioned by the Bishop of Wellington refers to a New Zealand dragon with jaws like a crocodile's, which spouted water like a whale. It lived in a fresh-water lake.<sup>3</sup> In the same number of the same *Journal* Sir George Grey gives extracts from a Maori legend of the dragon, which he compares with corresponding passages from Spenser's "Faery Queen". "Their strict verbal and poetical conformity with the New Zealand legends are such as at first to lead to the impression either that Spenser must have stolen his images and language from the New Zealand poets, or that they must have acted unfairly by the English bard" (p. 362). The Maori legend describes the dragon as "in size large as a monstrous whale, in shape like a hideous lizard; for in its huge head, its limbs, its tail, its scales, its tough skin, its sharp spines, yes, in all these it resembled a lizard" (p. 364).

Now the attributes of the Chinese and Japanese dragon as the controller of rain, thunder and lightning are identical with those of the American elephant-headed god. It also is associated with the East and with the tops of mountains. It is identified with the Indian Nāga, but the conflict involved in this identification is less obtrusive than it is either in America or in India. In Dravidian India the rulers and the gods are identified with the serpent: but among the Aryans, who were hostile to the Dravidians, the rain-god is the enemy of the Nāga. In America the confusion becomes more pronounced because Tlaloc (Chac) represents both Indra and his enemy the serpent. The representation in the codices of his conflict with the serpent is merely a tra-

<sup>1</sup> *Peabody Museum Papers*, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Wilfrid Jackson's "Shells as Evidence of the Migration of Early Culture," pp. 50-66.

<sup>3</sup> "Notes on the Maoris, etc.," *Journal of the Ethnological Society*, vol. i., 1869, p. 368.

dition which the Maya and Aztec scribes followed, apparently without understanding its meaning.

In China and Japan the Indra-episode plays a much less prominent part, for the dragon is, like the Indian Nâga, a beneficent creature, which approximates more nearly to the Babylonian Ea or the Egyptian Osiris. It is not only the controller of water, but the impersonation of water and its life-giving powers : it is identified with the emperor, with his standard, with the sky, and with all the powers that give, maintain, and prolong life and guard against all kinds of danger to life. In other words, it is the bringer of good luck, the rejuvenator of mankind, the giver of immortality.

But if the physiological functions of the dragon of the Far East can thus be assimilated to those of the Indian Nâga and the Babylonian and Egyptian Water God, who is also the king, anatomically he is usually represented in a form which can only be regarded as the Babylonian composite monster, as a rule stripped of his wings, though not of his avian feet.

In America we find preserved in the legends of the Indians an accurate and unmistakable description of the Japanese dragon (which is mainly Chinese in origin). Even Spinden, who "does not care to dignify by refutation the numerous empty theories of ethnic connections between Central America" [and in fact America as a whole] "and the Old World," makes the following statement (in the course of a discussion of the myths relating to horned snakes in California) : "a similar monster, possessing antlers, and sometimes wings, is also very common in Algonkin and Iroquois legends, although rare in art. As a rule the horned serpent is a water spirit and an enemy of the thunder bird. Among the Pueblo Indians the horned snake seems to have considerable prestige in religious belief. . . . It lives in the water or in the sky and is connected with rain or lightning."<sup>1</sup>

Thus we find stories of a dragon equipped with those distinctive tokens of Chinese origin, the deer's antlers ; and along with it a snake with less specialized horns suggesting the Cerastes of Egypt and Babylonia. A horned viper distantly akin to the Cerastes of the Old World does occur in California ; but its "horns" are so insignificant as to make it highly improbable that they could have been in any way responsible for the obtrusive role played by horns in these widespread

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

American stories. But the proof of the foreign origin of these stories is established by the horned serpent's achievements.

It "lives in the water or the sky" like its homologue in the Old World, and it is "a water spirit". Now neither the Cobra nor the Cerastes is actually a water serpent. Their achievements in the myths therefore have no possible relationship with the natural habits of the real snakes. They are purely arbitrary attributes which they have acquired as the result of a peculiar and fortuitous series of historical incidents.

It is therefore utterly inconceivable and in the highest degree improbable that this long chain of chance circumstances should have happened a second time in America, and have been responsible for the creation of the same bizarre story in reference to one of the rarer American snakes of a localized distribution, whose horns are mere vestiges, which no one but a trained morphologist is likely to have noticed or recognized as such.

But the American horned serpent, like its Babylonian and Indian homologues, is also the enemy of [the thunder bird. Here is a further corroboration of the transmission to America of ideas which were the chance result of certain historical events in the Old World, which I have mentioned in this lecture.

In the figure on page 335 I reproduce a remarkable drawing of an American dragon. If the Algonkin Indians had not preserved legends of a winged serpent equipped with deer's antlers, no value could be assigned to this sketch: but as we know that this particular tribe retains the legend of just such a wonder-beast, we are justified in treating this drawing as something more than a jest.

"Petroglyphs are reported by Mr. John Criley as occurring near Ava, Jackson County, Illinois. The outlines of the characters observed by him were drawn from memory and submitted to Mr. Charles S. Mason, of Toledo, Ohio, through whom they were furnished to the Bureau of Ethnology. Little reliance can be placed upon the accuracy of such drawing, but from the general appearance of the sketches the originals of which they are copies were probably made by one of the middle Algonquin tribes of Indians.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I quote this and the following paragraphs verbatim from Garrick Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," *10th Annual Report, 1888-89, Bureau of Ethnology (Smithsonian Institute)*, p. 78.



"The 'Piasa' rock, as it is generally designated, was referred to by the missionary explorer Marquette in 1675. Its situation was immediately above the city of Alton, Illinois."

Marquette's remarks are translated by Dr. Francis Parkman as follows :—

"On the flat face of a high rock were painted, in red, black, and green, a pair of monsters, each 'as large as a calf, with horns like a deer, red eyes, a beard like a tiger, and a frightful expression of countenance. The face is something like that of a man, the body covered with scales ; and the tail so long that it passes entirely round the body, over the head, and between the legs, ending like that of a fish.'"

Another version, by Davidson and Struve, of the discovery of the petroglyph is as follows :—

"Again they (Joliet and Marquette) were floating on the broad bosom of the unknown stream. Passing the mouth of the Illinois, they soon fell into the shadow of a tall promontory, and with great astonishment beheld the representation of two monsters painted on its lofty limestone front. According to Marquette, each of these frightful figures had the face of a man, the horns of a deer, the beard of a tiger, and the tail of a fish so long that it passed around the body, over the head, and between the legs. It was an object of Indian worship and greatly impressed the mind of the pious missionary with the necessity of substituting for this monstrous idolatry the worship of the true God."

A footnote connected with the foregoing quotation gives the following description of the same rock :—

"Near the mouth of the Piasa creek, on the bluff, there is a smooth rock in a cavernous cleft, under an overhanging cliff, on whose face 50 feet from the base, are painted some ancient pictures or hieroglyphics, of great interest to the curious. They are placed in a horizontal line from east to west, representing men, plants and animals. The paintings, though protected from dampness and storms, are in great part destroyed, marred by portions of the rock becoming detached and falling down."

Mr. McAdams, of Alton, Illinois, says, "The name Piasa is Indian and signifies, in the Illini, the bird which devours men". He furnishes a spirited pen-and-ink sketch, 12 by 15 inches in size and purporting to represent the ancient painting described by Marquette.

On the picture is inscribed the following in ink: "Made by Wm. Dennis, April 3rd, 1825". The date is in both letters and figures. On the top of the picture in large letters are the two words, "FLYING DRAGON". This picture, which has been kept in the old Gilham family of Madison county and bears the evidence of its age, is reproduced as Fig. 3.

He also publishes another representation with the following remarks :—

"One of the most satisfactory pictures of the Piasa we have ever seen is in an old German publication entitled 'The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated. Eighty illustrations from Nature, by H. Lewis, from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico,' published about the year 1839 by Arenz & Co., Dusseldorf, Germany. One of the

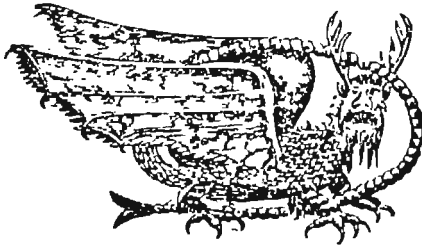


FIG. 3.—WM. DENNIS'S DRAWING OF THE "FLYING DRAGON" DEPICTED ON THE ROCKS AT PIASA, ILLINOIS.

large full-page plates in this work gives a fine view of the bluff at Alton, with the figure of the Piasa on the face of the rock. It is represented to have been taken on the spot by artists from Germany. . . . In the German picture there is shown just behind the rather dim outlines of the second face a ragged crevice, as though of a fracture. Part of the bluff's face might have fallen and thus nearly destroyed one of the monsters, for in later years writers speak of but one figure. The whole face of the bluff was quarried away in 1846-47."

The close agreement of this account with that of the Chinese and Japanese dragon at once arrests attention. The anatomical peculiarities are so extraordinary that if Père Marquette's account is trustworthy there is no longer any room for doubt of the Chinese or Japanese derivation of this composite creature. If the account is not accepted we will be driven, not only to attribute to the pious seventeenth-century missionary serious dishonesty or culpable gullibility, but also to credit him with

a remarkably precise knowledge of Mongolian archæology. When Algonkin legends are recalled, however, I think we are bound to accept the missionary's account as substantially accurate.

Minns claims that representations of the dragon are unknown in China before the Han dynasty. But the legend of the dragon is much more ancient. The evidence has been given in full by de Visser.<sup>1</sup>

He tells us that the earliest reference is found in the *Yih King*, and shows that the dragon was "a water animal akin to the snake, which [used] to sleep in pools during winter and arises in the spring". "It is the god of thunder, who brings good crops when he appears in the rice fields (as rain) or in the sky (as dark and yellow clouds), in other words when he makes the rain fertilize the ground" (p. 38).

In the *Shu King* there is a reference to the dragon as one of the symbolic figures painted on the upper garment of the emperor Hwang Ti (who according to the Chinese legends, which of course are not above reproach, reigned in the twenty-seventh century B.C.). In this ancient literature there are numerous references to the dragon, and not merely to the legends, *but also to representations* of the benign monster on garments, banners and metal tablets.<sup>2</sup> "The ancient texts . . . are short, but sufficient to give us the main conceptions of Old China with regard to the dragon. In those early days [just as at present] he was the god of water, thunder, clouds, and rain, the harbinger of blessings, and the symbol of holy men. As the emperors are the holy beings on earth, the idea of the dragon being the symbol of Imperial power is based upon this ancient conception" (*op. cit.*, p. 42).

In the fifth appendix to the *Yih King*, which has been ascribed to Confucius (i.e. three centuries earlier than the Han dynasty mentioned by Mr. Minns), it is stated that "*K'ien* (Heaven) is a horse, *Kw'un* (Earth) is a cow, *Chen* (Thunder) is a dragon" (*op. cit.*, p. 37).<sup>3</sup>

The philosopher Hwai Nan Tsze (who died 122 B.C.) declared that the dragon is the origin of all creatures, winged, hairy, scaly, and

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 35 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See de Visser, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> There can be no doubt that the Chinese dragon is the descendant of the early Babylonian monster, and that the inspiration to create it probably reached Shensi during the third millennium B.C. by the route indicated in my "Incense and Libations" (*Bull. John Rylands Library*, vol. iv., No. 2, p. 239). Some centuries later the Indian dragon reached the Far East via Indonesia and mingled with his Babylonian cousin in Japan and China.

mailed ; and he propounded a scheme of evolution (de Visser, p. 65). He seems to have tried to explain away the fact that he had never actually witnessed the dragon performing some of the remarkable feats attributed to it : " Mankind cannot see the dragons rise : wind and rain assist them to ascend to a great height " (*op. cit.*, p. 65). Confucius also is credited with the frankness of a similar confession : " As to the dragon, we cannot understand his riding on the wind and clouds and his ascending to the sky. To-day I saw Lao Tsze ; is he not like the dragon ? " (p. 65).

This does not necessarily mean that these learned men were sceptical of the beliefs which tradition had forged in their minds, but that the dragon had the power of hiding itself in a cloak of invisibility, just as clouds (in which the Chinese saw dragons) could be dissipated in the sky. The belief in these powers of the dragon was as sincere as that of learned men of other countries in the beneficent attributes which tradition had taught them to assign to their particular deities. In the passages I have quoted the Chinese scholars were presumably attempting to bridge the gap between the ideas inculcated by faith and the evidence of their senses, in much the same sort of spirit as, for instance, actuated Dean Buckland last century, when he claimed that the glacial deposits of this country afforded evidence in confirmation of the Deluge described in the Book of Genesis.

The tiger and the dragon, the gods of wind and water, are the keystones of the doctrine called *fung shui*, which Professor de Groot has described in detail.<sup>1</sup>

He describes it " as a quasi-scientific system, supposed to teach men where and how to build graves, temples, and dwellings, in order that the dead, the gods, and the living may be located therein exclusively, or as far as possible, under the auspicious influences of Nature ". The dragon plays a most important part in this system, being " the chief spirit of water and rain, and at the same time representing one of the four quarters of heaven (i.e. the East, called the Azure Dragon, and the first of the seasons, spring). " The word Dragon comprises the high grounds in general, and the water streams which have their sources therein or wind their way through them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Religious System of China," vol. iii., chap. xii., pp. 936-1056.

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is taken almost verbatim from de Visser, *op. cit.*, pp. 59 and 60.

The attributes thus assigned to the Blue Dragon, his control of water and streams, his dwelling on high mountains whence they spring, and his association with the East, will be seen to reveal his identity with the so-called "god B" of American archæologists, the elephant-headed god *Tlaloc* of the Aztecs, *Chac* of the Mayas, whose more direct parent was Indra.

It is of interest to note that, according to Gerini,<sup>1</sup> the word *Nâga* denotes not only a snake but also an elephant. Both the Chinese dragon and the Mexican elephant-god are thus linked with the *Nâga*, who is identified both with Indra himself and Indra's enemy *Vritra*. This is another instance of those remarkable contradictions that one meets at every step in pursuing the dragon. In the confusion resulting from the blending of hostile tribes and diverse cultures the Aryan deity who, both for religious and political reasons, is the enemy of the *Nâgas* becomes himself identified with a *Nâga*!

I have already called attention (*Nature*, Jan. 27, 1916) to the fact that the graphic form of representation of the American elephant-headed god was derived from Indonesian pictures of the *makara*. In India itself the *makara* (see Fig. 11) is represented in a great variety of forms, most of which are prototypes of different kinds of dragons. Hence the homology of the elephant-headed god with the other dragons is further established and shown to be genetically related to the evolution of the protean manifestations of the dragon's form.

The dragon in China is "the heavenly giver of fertilizing rain" (*op. cit.*, p. 36). In the *Shu King* "the emblematic figures of the ancients are given as the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountain, the *dragon*, and the variegated animals (pheasants) which are depicted on the upper sacrificial garment of the Emperor" (p. 39). In the *Li Ki* the unicorn, the phoenix, the tortoise, and the dragon are called the four *ling* (p. 39), which de Visser translates "spiritual beings," creatures with enormously strong vital spirit. The dragon possesses the most *ling* of all creatures (p. 64). The tiger is the deadly enemy of the dragon (p. 42).

The dragon sheds a brilliant light at night (p. 44), usually from his glittering eyes. He is the giver of omens (p. 45), good and bad,

<sup>1</sup>G. E. Gerini, "Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia," *Asiatic Society's Monographs*, No. 1, 1909, p. 146.

rains and floods. The dragon-horse is a vital spirit of Heaven and Earth (p. 58) and also of river water: it has the tail of a huge serpent.

The ecclesiastical vestments of the Wu-ist priests are endowed with magical properties which are considered to enable the wearer to control the order of the world, to avert unseasonable and calamitous events, such as drought, untimely and superabundant rainfall, and eclipses. These powers are conferred by the decoration upon the dress. Upon the back of the chief vestment the representation of a range of mountains is embroidered as a symbol of the world: on each side (the right and left) of it a large dragon arises above the billows to represent the fertilizing rain. They are surrounded by gold-thread figures representing clouds and spirals typifying rolling thunder.<sup>1</sup>

A ball, sometimes with a spiral decoration, is commonly represented in front of the Chinese dragon. The Chinese writer Koh Hung tells us that "a spiral denotes the rolling of thunder from which issues a flash of lightning".<sup>2</sup> De Visser discusses this question at some length and refers to Hirth's claim that the Chinese triquetrum, i.e., the well-known three-comma shaped figure, the Japanese *mitsu-tomoe*, the ancient spiral, represents thunder also.<sup>3</sup> Before discussing this question, which involves the consideration of the almost world-wide belief in a thunder-weapon and its relationship to the spiral ornament, the octopus,

<sup>1</sup> De Visser, p. 102, and de Groot, vi., p. 1265, Plate XVIII. The reference to "a range of mountains . . . as a symbol of the world" recalls the Egyptian representation of the eastern horizon as two hills between which Hathor or her son arises (see Budge, "Gods of the Egyptians," vol. ii., p. 101; and compare Griffith's "Hieroglyphs," p. 30): the same conception was adopted in Mesopotamia (see Ward, "Seal Cylinders of Western Asia," fig. 412, p. 156) and in the Mediterranean (see Evans, "Mycenæan Tree and Pillar Cult," pp. 37 *et seq.*). It is a remarkable fact that Sir Arthur Evans, who, upon p. 64 of his memoir, reproduces two drawings of the Egyptian "horizon" supporting the sun's disk, should have failed to recognize in it the prototype of what he calls "the horns of consecration". Even if the confusion of the "horizon" with a cow's horns was very ancient (for the horns of the Divine Cow supporting the moon made this inevitable), this rationalization should not blind us as to the real origin of the idea, which is preserved in the ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Cretan and Chinese pictures (see Fig. 26, facing p. 188).

<sup>2</sup> De Visser, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> P. 104, The Chinese triquetrum has a circle in the centre and five or eight commas.

the pearl, the swastika and triskele, let us examine further the problem of the dragon's ball (see Fig. 12).

De Groot regards the dragon as a thunder-god and therefore, like Hirth, assumes that the supposed thunder-ball is being *belched forth* and not being *swallowed* by the dragon. But de Visser, as the result of a conversation with Mr. Kramp and the study of a Chinese picture in Blacker's "Chats on Oriental China" (1908, p. 54), puts forward the suggestion that the ball is the moon or the pearl-moon which the dragon is swallowing, thereby causing the fertilizing rain. The Chinese themselves refer to the ball as the "precious pearl," which, under the influence of Buddhism in China, was identified with "the pearl that grants all desires" and is under the special protection of the Nâga, i.e., the dragon. Arising out of this de Visser puts the conundrum: "Was the ball originally also a pearl, not of Buddhism but of Taoism?"

In reply to this question I may call attention to the fact that the germs of civilization were first planted in China by people strongly imbued with the belief that the pearl was the quintessence of life-giving and prosperity-conferring powers:<sup>1</sup> it was not only identified with the moon, but also was itself a particle of moon-substance which fell as dew into the gaping oyster. It was the very people who held such views about pearls and gold who, when searching for alluvial gold and fresh-water pearls in Turkestan, were responsible for transferring these same life-giving properties to jade; and the magical value thus attached to jade was the nucleus, so to speak, around which the earliest civilization of China was crystallized.

As we shall see, in the discussion of the thunder-weapon (p. 362), the luminous pearl, which was believed to have fallen from the sky, was homologized with the thunderbolt, with the functions of which its own magical properties were assimilated.

Kramp called de Visser's attention to the fact that the Chinese hieroglyphic character for the dragon's ball is compounded of the signs for *jewel* and *moon*, which is also given in a Japanese lexicon as *divine pearl*, the pearl of the bright moon.

"When the clouds approached and covered the moon, the ancient

<sup>1</sup> See on this my paper "The Origin of Early Siberian Civilization," now being published in the *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*.



FIG. 12.—PHOTOGRAPH OF A CHINESE EMBROIDERY IN THE MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART REPRESENTING THE DRAGON AND THE PEARL-MOON SYMBOL



Chinese may have thought that the dragons had seized and swallowed this pearl, more brilliant than all the pearls of the sea" (de Visser, p. 108).

The difficulty de Visser finds in regarding his own theory as wholly satisfactory is, first, the red colour of the ball, and secondly, the spiral pattern upon it. He explains the colour as possibly an attempt to represent the pearl's lustre. But de Visser seems to have overlooked the fact that red and rose-coloured pearls obtained from the conch-shell were used in China and Japan.<sup>1</sup>

"The spiral is much used in delineating the sacred pearls of Buddhism, so that it might have served also to design those of Taoism; although I must acknowledge that the spiral of the Buddhist pearl goes upward, while the spiral of the dragon is flat" (p. 103).

De Visser sums up the whole argument in these words:—

"These are, however, all mere suppositions. The only facts we know are: the eager attitude of the dragons, ready to grasp and swallow the ball; the ideas of the Chinese themselves as to the ball being the moon or a pearl; the existence of a kind of sacred "moon-pearl"; the red colour of the ball, its emitting flames and its spiral-like form. As the three last facts are in favour of the thunder theory, I should be inclined to prefer the latter. Yet I am convinced that the dragons do not *belch out* the thunder. If their trying to *grasp* or *swallow* the thunder could be explained, I should immediately accept the theory concerning the thunder-spiral, especially on account of the flames it emits. But I do not see the reason why the god of thunder should persecute thunder itself. Therefore, after having given the above facts that the reader may take them into consideration, I feel obliged to say: 'non liquet'" (p. 108).

It does not seem to have occurred to the distinguished Dutch scholar, who has so lucidly put the issue before us, that his demonstration of the fact of the ball being the pearl-moon about to be swallowed by the dragon does not preclude it being also confused with the thunder. Elsewhere in this volume I have referred to the origin of the spiral symbolism and have shown that it became associated with the pearl *before* it became the symbol of thunder. The pearl-association in fact was

<sup>1</sup> Wilfrid Jackson, "Shells as Evidence of the Migrations of Early Culture," p. 106.

one of the links in the chain of events which made the pearl and the spirally-coiled arm of the octopus the sign of thunder.<sup>1</sup>

It seems quite clear to me that de Visser's pearl-moon theory is the true interpretation. But when the pearl-ball was provided with the spiral, painted red, and given flames to represent its power of emitting light and shining by night, the fact of the spiral ornamentation and of the pearl being one of the surrogates of the thunder-weapon was rationalized into an identification of the ball with thunder and the light it was emitting as lightning. It is, of course, quite irrational for a thunder-god to swallow his own thunder : but popular interpretations of subtle symbolism, the true explanation of which is deeply buried in the history of the distant past, are rarely logical and almost invariably irrelevant.

In his account of the state of Brahmanism in India after the times of the two earlier Vedas, Professor Hopkins<sup>2</sup> throws light upon the real significance of the ball in the dragon-symbolism. "Old legends are varied. The victory over Vritra is now expounded thus : Indra, who slays Vritra, is the sun. Vritra is the moon, who swims into the sun's mouth on the night of the new moon. The sun rises after swallowing him, and the moon is invisible because he is swallowed. The sun vomits out the moon, and the latter is then seen in the west, and increases again, to serve the sun as food. In another passage it is said that when the moon is invisible he is hiding in plants and waters."

This seems to clear away any doubt as to the significance of the ball. It is the pearl-moon, which is both swallowed and vomited by the dragon.

The snake takes a more obtrusive part in the Japanese than in the Chinese dragon and it frequently manifests itself as a god of the sea. The old Japanese sea-gods were often female water-snakes. The cultural influences which reached Japan from the south by way of Indonesia—many centuries before the coming of Buddhism—naturally emphasized the serpent form of the dragon and its connexion with the ocean.

But the river-gods, or "water-fathers," were real four-footed dragons identified with the dragon-kings of Chinese myth, but at the

<sup>1</sup> I shall discuss this more fully in "The Birth of Aphrodite".

<sup>2</sup> "Religions of India," p. 197.

same time were strictly homologous with the Nāga Rajas or cobra-kings of India.

The Japanese "Sea Lord" or "Sea Snake" was also called "Abundant-Pearl-Prince," who had a magnificent palace at the bottom of the sea. His daughter ("Abundant-Pearl-Princess") married a youth whom she observed, reflected in the well, sitting on a cassia tree near the castle gate. Ashamed at his presence at her lying-in she was changed into a *wani* or crocodile (de Visser, p. 139), elsewhere described as a dragon (*makara*). De Visser gives it as his opinion that the *wani* is "an old Japanese dragon, or serpent-shaped sea-god, and the legend is an ancient Japanese tale, dressed in an Indian garb by later generations" (p. 140). He is arguing that the Japanese dragon existed long before Japan came under Indian influence. But he ignores the fact that at a very early date both India and China were diversely influenced by Babylonia, the great breeding place of dragons; and, secondly, that Japan was influenced by Indonesia, and through it by the West, for many centuries before the arrival of such later Indian legends as those relating to the palace under the sea, the castle gate and the cassia tree. As Aston (quoted by de Visser) remarks, all these incidents and also the well that serves as a mirror, "form a combination not unknown to European folklore".

After de Visser had given his own views, he modified them (on p. 141) when he learned that essentially the same dragon-stories had been recorded in the Kei Islands and Minahassa (Celebes). In the light of this new information he frankly admits that "the resemblance of several features of this myth with the Japanese one is so striking, that we may be sure that the latter is of Indonesian origin." He goes further when he recognizes that "probably the foreign invaders, who in prehistoric times conquered Japan, came from Indonesia, and brought the myth with them" (p. 141). The evidence recently brought together by W. J. Perry in his book "The Megalithic Culture of Indonesia" makes it certain that the people of Indonesia in turn got it from the West.

An old painting reproduced by F. W. K. Müller,<sup>1</sup> who called de Visser's attention to these interesting stories, shows Hohodemi (the

<sup>1</sup> "Mythe der Kei-Insulaner und Verwandtes," *Zeitsch. f. Ethnologie*, vol. xxv., 1893, pp. 533 *et seq.*

youth on the cassia tree who married the princess) returning home mounted on the back of a crocodile, like the Indian Varuna upon the *makara* in a drawing reproduced by the late Sir George Birdwood.<sup>1</sup>

The *wani* or crocodile thus introduced from India, *via* Indonesia, is really the Chinese and Japanese dragon, as Aston has claimed. Aston refers to Japanese pictures in which the Abundant-Pearl-Prince and his daughter are represented with dragon's heads appearing over their human ones, but in the old Indonesian version they maintain their forms as *wani* or crocodiles.

The dragon's head appearing over a human one is quite an Indian motive, transferred to China and from there to Korea and Japan (de Visser, p. 142), and, I may add, also to America.

[Since the foregoing paragraphs have been printed, the Curator of the Liverpool Museum has kindly called my attention to a remarkable series of Maya remains in the collection under his care, which were obtained in the course of excavations made by Mr. T. W. F. Gann, M.R.C.S., an officer in the Medical Service of British Honduras (see his account of the excavations in Part II. of the 19th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution of Washington). Among them is a pottery figure of a *wani* or *makara* in the form of an alligator, equipped with diminutive deer's horns (like the dragon of Eastern Asia); and its skin is studded with circular elevations, presumably meant to represent the spots upon the star-spangled "Celestial Stag" of the Aryans (p. 130). As in the Japanese pictures mentioned by Aston, a human head is seen emerging from the creature's throat. It affords a most definite and convincing demonstration of the sources of American culture.]

The jewels of flood and ebb in the Japanese legends consist of the pearls of flood and ebb obtained from the dragon's palace at the bottom of the sea. By their aid storms and floods could be created to destroy enemies or calm to secure safety for friends. Such stories are the logical result of the identification of pearls with the moon, the influence of which upon the tides was probably one of the circumstances which was responsible for bringing the moon into the circle of the great scientific theory of the life-giving powers of water. This in turn played a great, if not decisive, part in originating the earliest belief in a sky world, or heaven.

<sup>1</sup> See Fig. 11.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE DRAGON.

The American and Indonesian dragons can be referred back primarily to India, the Chinese and Japanese varieties to India and Babylonia. The dragons of Europe can be traced through Greek channels to the same ultimate source. But the cruder dragons of Africa are derived either from Egypt, from the Ægean, or from India. All dragons that strictly conform to the conventional idea of what such a wonder-beast should be can be shown to be sprung from the fertile imagination of ancient Sumer, the "great breeding place of monsters" (Minns).

But the history of the dragon's evolution and transmission to other countries is full of complexities ; and the dragon-myth is made up of many episodes, some of which were not derived from Babylonia.

In Egypt we do not find the characteristic dragon and dragon-story. Yet all of the ingredients out of which both the monster and the legends are compounded have been preserved in Egypt, and in perhaps a more primitive and less altered form than elsewhere. Hence, if Egypt does not provide dragons for us to dissect, it does supply us with the evidence without which the dragon's evolution would be quite unintelligible.

Egyptian literature affords a clearer insight into the development of the Great Mother, the Water God, and the Warrior Sun God than we can obtain from any other writings of the origin of this fundamental stratum of deities. And in the three legends: The Destruction of Mankind, The Story of the Winged Disk, and The Conflict between Horus and Set, it has preserved the germs of the great Dragon Saga. Babylonian literature has shown us how this raw material was worked up into the definite and familiar story, as well as how the features of a variety of animals were blended to form the composite monster. India and Greece, as well as more distant parts of Africa, Europe, and Asia, and even America have preserved many details that have been lost in the real home of the monster.

In the earliest literature that has come down to us from antiquity a clear account is given of the original attributes of Osiris. "Horus comes, he recognizes his father in thee [Osiris], youthful in thy name of 'Fresh Water'." "Thou art indeed the Nile, great on the fields at the beginning of the seasons ; gods and men live by the moisture that is

in thee." He is also identified with the inundation of the river. "It is Unis [the dead king identified with Osiris] who inundates the land." He also brings the wind and guides it. It is the breath of life which raises the king from the dead as an Osiris. The wine-press god comes to Osiris bearing wine-juice and the great god becomes "Lord of the overflowing wine": he is also identified with barley and with the beer made from it. Certain trees also are personifications of the god.

But Osiris was regarded not only as the waters upon earth, the rivers and streams, the moisture in the soil and in the bodies of animals and plants, but also as "the waters of life that are in the sky".

"As Osiris was identified with the waters of earth and sky, he may even become the sea and the ocean itself. We find him addressed thus: 'Thou art great, thou art green, in thy name of Great Green (Sea); lo, thou art round as the Great Circle (Okeanos); lo, thou art turned about, thou art round as the circle that encircles the Haunebu (Ægeans)."

This series of interesting extracts from Professor Breasted's "Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt" (pp. 18-26) gives the earliest Egyptians' own ideas of the attributes of Osiris. The Babylonians regarded Ea in almost precisely the same light and endowed him with identical powers. But there is an important and significant difference between Osiris and Ea. The former was usually represented as a man, that is, as a dead king, whereas Ea was represented as a man wearing a fish-skin, as a fish, or as the composite monster with a fish's body and tail, which was the prototype of the Indian *makara* and "the father of dragons".

In attempting to understand the creation of the dragon it is important to remember that, although Osiris and Ea were regarded primarily as personifications of the beneficent life-giving powers of water, as the bringers of fertility to the soil and the givers of life and immortality to living creatures, they were also identified with the destructive forces of water, by which men were drowned or their welfare affected in various ways by storms of sea and wind.

Thus Osiris or the fish-god Ea could destroy mankind. In other words the fish-dragon, or the composite monster formed of a fish and an antelope, could represent the destructive forces of wind and water. Thus even the malignant dragon can be the homologue of the usually

beneficent gods Osiris and Ea, and their Aryan surrogates Mazdah and Varuna.

By a somewhat analogous process of archaic rationalization the sons respectively of Osiris and Ea, the sun-gods Horus and Marduk, acquired a similarly confused reputation. Although their outstanding achievements were the overcoming of the powers of evil, and, as the givers of light, conquering darkness, their character as warriors made them also powers of destruction. The falcon of Horus thus became also a symbol of chaos, and as the thunder-bird became the most obtrusive feature in the weird anatomy of the composite Mesopotamian dragon and his more modern bird-footed brood, which ranges from Western Europe to the Far East of Asia and America.

That the sun-god derived his functions directly or indirectly from Osiris and Hathor is shown by his most primitive attributes, for in "the earliest sun-temples at Abusir, he appears as the source of life and increase". "Men said of him: 'Thou hast driven away the storm, and hast expelled the rain, and hast broken up the clouds'."<sup>1</sup> Horus was in fact the son of Osiris and Hathor, from whom he derived his attributes. The invention of the sun-god was not, as most scholars pretend, an attempt to give direct expression to the fact that the sun is the source of fertility. That is a discovery of modern science. The sun-god acquired his attributes secondarily (and for definite historical reasons) from his parents, who were responsible for his birth.

The quotation from the Pyramid Texts is of special interest as an illustration of one of the results of the assimilation of the idea of Osiris as the controller of water with that of a sky-heaven and a sun-god. The sun-god's powers are rationalized so as to bring them into conformity with the earliest conception of a god as a power controlling water.

Breasted attempts to interpret the statements concerning the storm and rain-clouds as references to the enemies of the sun, who steal the sky-god's eye, i.e., obscure the sun or moon. The incident of Horus's loss of an eye, which looms so large in Egyptian legends, is possibly more closely related to the earliest attempts at explaining eclipses of the sun and moon, the "eyes" of the sky. The obscuring of the sun and moon by clouds is a matter of little significance to the Egyptian: but the modern Egyptian *fellah*, and no doubt his predecessors also,

<sup>1</sup> Breasted, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

regard eclipses with much concern. Such events excite great alarm, for the peasants consider them as actual combats between the powers of good and evil.

In other countries where rain is a blessing and not, as in Egypt, merely an unwelcome inconvenience, the clouds play a much more prominent part in the popular beliefs. In the Rig-Veda the power that holds up the clouds is evil: as an elaboration of the ancient Egyptian conception of the sky as a Divine Cow, the Great Mother, the Aryan Indians regarded the clouds as a herd of cattle which the Vedic warrior-god Indra (who in this respect is the homologue of the Egyptian warrior Horus) stole from the powers of evil and bestowed upon mankind. In other words, like Horus, he broke up the clouds and brought rain.

The antithesis between the two aspects of the character of these ancient deities is most pronounced in the case of the other member of this most primitive Trinity, the Great Mother. She was the great beneficent giver of life, but also the controller of life, which implies that she was the death-dealer. But this evil aspect of her character developed only under the stress of a peculiar dilemma in which she was placed. On a famous occasion in the very remote past the great Giver of Life was summoned to rejuvenate the ageing king. The only elixir of life that was known to the pharmacopœia of the times was human blood: but to obtain this life-blood the Giver of Life was compelled to slaughter mankind. She thus became the destroyer of mankind in her lioness *avatar* as Sekhet.

The earliest known pictorial representation of the dragon (Fig. 1) consists of the forepart of the sun-god's falcon or eagle united with the hindpart of the mother-goddess's lioness. The student of modern heraldry would not regard this as a dragon at all, but merely a gryphon or griffin. A recent writer on heraldry has complained that, "in spite of frequent corrections, this creature is persistently confused in the popular mind with the *dragon*, which is even more purely imaginary".<sup>1</sup> But the investigator of the early history of these wonder-beasts is compelled, even at the risk of incurring the herald's censure, to regard the gryphon as one of the earliest known tentative efforts at dragon-making. But though the fish, the falcon or eagle, and the composite eagle-lion

<sup>1</sup> G. W. Eve, "Decorative Heraldry," 1897, p. 35.



monster are early known pictorial representations of the dragon, good or bad, the serpent is probably more ancient still (Fig. 2).

The earliest form assumed by the power of evil was the serpent : but it is important to remember that, as each of the primary deities can be a power of either good or evil, any of the animals representing them can symbolize either aspect. Though Hathor in her cow manifestation is usually benevolent and as a lioness a power of destruction, the cow may become a demon in certain cases and the lioness a kindly creature. The falcon of Horus (or its representatives, eagle, hawk, woodpecker, dove, redbreast, etc.) may be either good or bad : so also the gazelle (antelope or deer), the crocodile, the fish, or any of the menagerie of creatures that enter into the composition of good or bad demons.

"The Nâgas are semi-divine serpents which very often assume human shapes and whose kings live with their retinues in the utmost luxury in their magnificent abodes at the bottom of the sea or in rivers or lakes. When leaving the Nâga world they are in constant danger of being grasped and killed by the gigantic semi-divine birds, the Garudas, which also change themselves into men " (de Visser, p. 7).

"The Nâgas are depicted in three forms : common snakes, guarding jewels ; human beings with four snakes in their necks ; and winged sea-dragons, the upper part of the body human, but with a horned, ox-like head, the lower part of the body that of a coiling-dragon. Here we find a link between the snake of ancient India and the four-legged Chinese dragon " (p. 6), hidden in the clouds, which the dragon himself emitted, like a modern battleship, for the purpose of rendering himself invisible. In other words, the rain clouds were the dragon's breath. The fertilizing rain was thus in fact the vital essence of the dragon, being both water and the breath of life.

"We find the Nâga king not only in the possession of numberless jewels and beautiful girls, but also of mighty charms, bestowing supernatural vision and hearing. The palaces of the Nâga kings are always described as extremely splendid, abounding with gold and silver and precious stones, and the Nâga women, when appearing in human shape, were beautiful beyond description " (p. 9).

De Visser records the story of an evil Nâga protecting a big tree that grew in a pond, who failed to emit clouds and thunder when the tree was cut down, because he was neither despised nor wounded : for

his body became the support of the stūpa and the tree became a beam of the stūpa (p. 16). This aspect of the Nāga as a tree-demon is rare in India, but common in China and Japan. It seems to be identical with the Mediterranean conception of the pillar of wood or stone, which is both a representative of the Great Mother and the chief support of a temple.<sup>1</sup>

In the magnificent city that king Yaçaḥketu saw, when he dived into the sea, "wishing trees that granted every desire" were among the objects that met his vision. There were also palaces of precious stones and gardens and tanks, and, of course, beautiful maidens (de Visser, p. 20).

In the Far Eastern stories it is interesting to note the antagonism of the dragon to the tiger, when we recall that the lioness-form of Hathor was the prototype of the earliest malevolent dragon.

There are five sorts of dragons : serpent-dragons ; lizard-dragons ; fish-dragons ; elephant-dragons ; and toad-dragons (de Visser, p. 23).

"According to de Groot, the blue colour is chosen in China because this is the colour of the East, from where the rain must come ; this quarter is represented by the Azure Dragon, the highest in rank among all the dragons. We have seen, however, that the original sūtra already prescribed to use the blue colour and to face the East. . . . Indra, the rain-god, is the patron of the East, and Indra-colour is *nila*, dark blue or rather blue-black, the regular epithet of the rain clouds. If the priest had not to face the East but the West, this would agree with the fact that the Nāgas were said to live in the western quarter and that in India the West corresponds with the blue colour. Facing the East, however, seems to point to an old rain ceremony in which Indra was invoked to raise the blue-black clouds" (de Visser, pp. 30 and 31).

### THE DRAGON MYTH.

The most important and fundamental legend in the whole history of mythology is the story of the "Destruction of Mankind". "It was discovered, translated, and commented upon by Naville ("La Destruction des hommes par les Dieux," in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. iv., pp. 1-19, reproducing Hay's copies made at the beginning of [the nineteenth] century ; and

<sup>1</sup> Arthur J. Evans, "Mycenæan Tree and Pillar Cult," pp. 88 *et seq.*

"L'Inscription de la Destruction des hommes dans le tombeau de Ramsès III," in the *Transactions*, vol. viii., pp. 412-20); afterwards published anew by Herr von Bergmann (*Hieroglyphische Inscripten*, pls. lxxv.-lxxxii., and pp. 55, 56); completely translated by Brugsch (*Die neue Weltordnung nach Vernichtung des sündigen Menschengeschlechts nach einer Altägyptischen Ueberlieferung*, 1881); and partly translated by Lauth (*Aus Ägyptens Vorzeit*, pp. 70-81) and by Lefébure ("Une chapitre de la chronique solaire," in the *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache*, 1883, pp. 32, 33)".<sup>1</sup>

Important commentaries upon this story have been published also by Brugsch and Gauthier.<sup>2</sup>

As the really important features of the story consist of the incoherent and contradictory details, and it would take up too much space to reproduce the whole legend here, I must refer the reader to Maspero's account of it (*op. cit.*), or to the versions given by Erman in his "Life in Ancient Egypt" (p. 267, from which I quote) or Budge in "The Gods of the Egyptians," vol. i., p. 388.

Although the story as we know it was not written down until the time of Seti I (*circa* 1300 B.C.), it is very old and had been circulating as a popular legend for more than twenty centuries before that time. The narrative itself tells its own story because it is composed of many contradictory interpretations of the same incidents flung together in a highly confused and incoherent form.

The other legends to which I shall have constantly to refer are "The Saga of the Winged Disk," "The Feud between Horus and Set," "The Stealing of Re's Name by Isis," and a series of later variants and confusions of these stories.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Maspero, "The Dawn of Civilization," p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> H. Brugsch, "Die Alraune als altägyptische Zauberpflanze," *Zeit. f. Ägypt. Sprache*, Bd. 29, 1891, pp. 31-3; and Henri Gauthier, "Le nom hiéroglyphique de l'argile rouge d'Éléphantine," *Revue Égyptologique*, t. xi<sup>e</sup>, Nos. i.-ii., 1904, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> These legends will be found in the works by Maspero, Erman and Budge, to which I have already referred. A very useful digest will be found in Donald A. Mackenzie's "Egyptian Myth and Legend". Mr. Mackenzie does not claim to have any first-hand knowledge of the subject, but his exceptionally wide and intimate knowledge of Scottish folk-lore, which has preserved a surprisingly large part of the same legends, has enabled him to present the Egyptian stories with exceptional clearness and

The Egyptian legends cannot be fully appreciated unless they are studied in conjunction with those of Babylonia and Assyria,<sup>1</sup> the mythology of Greece,<sup>2</sup> Persia,<sup>3</sup> India,<sup>4</sup> China,<sup>5</sup> Indonesia,<sup>6</sup> and America.<sup>7</sup>

For it will be found that essentially the same stream of legends was flowing in all these countries, and that the scribes and painters have caught and preserved certain definite phases of this verbal currency. The legends which have thus been preserved are not to be regarded as having been directly derived the one from the other but as collateral phases of a variety of waves of story spreading out from one centre. Thus the comparison of the whole range of homologous legends is peculiarly instructive and useful; because the gaps in the Egyptian series, for example, can be filled in by necessary phases which are missing in Egypt itself, but are preserved in Babylonia or Greece, Persia or India, China or Britain, or even Oceania and America.

The incidents in the Destruction of Mankind may be briefly summarized :—

As Re grows old "the men who were begotten of his eye"<sup>8</sup> show signs of rebellion. Re calls a council of the gods and they advise him

sympathetic insight. But I refer to his book specially because he is one of the few modern writers who has made the attempt to compare the legends of Egypt, Babylonia, Crete, India and Western Europe. Hence the reader who is not familiar with the mythology of these countries will find his books particularly useful as works of reference in following the story I have to unfold: "Teutonic Myth and Legend," "Egyptian Myth and Legend," "Indian Myth and Legend," "Myths of Babylonia and Assyria" and "Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe".

<sup>1</sup> See Leonard W. King, "Babylonian Religion," 1899.

<sup>2</sup> For a useful collection of data see A. B. Cook, "Zeus".

<sup>3</sup> Albert J. Carnoy, "Iranian Views of Origins in connexion with Similar Babylonian Beliefs," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. xxxvi., 1916, pp. 300-20; and "The Moral Deities of Iran and India and their Origins," *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. xxi., No. i., January, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkins, "Religions of India".

<sup>5</sup> De Groot, "The Religious System of China".

<sup>6</sup> Perry, "The Megalithic Culture of Indonesia," Manchester, 1918.

<sup>7</sup> H. Beuchat, "Manuel d' Archéologie Américaine," Paris, 1912; T. A. Joyce, "Mexican Archæology," and especially the memoir by Seler on the "Codex Vaticanus" and his articles in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* and elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> I.e. the offspring of the Great Mother of gods and men, Hathor, the "Eye of Re".

to "shoot forth his Eye<sup>1</sup> that it may slay the evil conspirators. . . . Let the goddess Hathor descend [from heaven] and slay the men on the mountains [to which they had fled in fear]." As the goddess complied she remarked: "it will be good for me when I subject mankind," and Re replied, "I shall subject them and slay them". Hence the goddess received the additional name of *Sekhmet* from the word "to subject". The destructive *Sekhmet*<sup>2</sup> *avatar* of Hathor is represented as a fierce lion-headed goddess of war wading in blood. For the goddess set to work slaughtering mankind and the land was flooded with blood.<sup>3</sup> Re became alarmed and determined to save at least some remnant of mankind. For this purpose he sent messengers to Elephantine to obtain a substance called *d'd* in the Egyptian text, which he gave to the god Sektet of Heliopolis to grind up in a mortar. When the slaves had crushed barley to make beer the powdered *d'd* was mixed with it so as to make it red like human blood. Enough of this blood-coloured beer was made to fill 7000 jars. At nighttime this was poured out upon the fields, so that when the goddess came to resume her task of destruction in the morning she found the fields inundated and her face was mirrored in the fluid. She drank of the fluid and became intoxicated so that she no longer recognized mankind.<sup>4</sup>

Thus Re saved a remnant of mankind from the bloodthirsty, terrible Hathor. But the god was weary of life on earth and withdrew to heaven upon the back of the Divine Cow.

There can be no doubt as to the meaning of this legend, highly confused as it is. The king who was responsible for introducing irriga-

<sup>1</sup> That is, Hathor, who as the moon is the "Eye of Re".

<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere in these pages I have used the more generally adopted spelling "*Sekhet*".

<sup>3</sup> Mr. F. Ll. Griffith tells me that the translation "flooding the land" is erroneous and misleading. Comparison of the whole series of stories, however, suggests that the amount of blood shed rapidly increased in the development of the narrative: at first the blood of a single victim; then the blood of mankind; then 7000 jars of a substitute for blood; then the red inundation of the Nile.

<sup>4</sup> This version I have quoted mainly from Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-9, but with certain alterations which I shall mention later. In another version of the legend wine replaces the beer and is made out of "the blood of those who formerly fought against the gods," *cf.* Plutarch, *De Iside* (ed. Parthey) 6.

tion came to be himself identified with the life-giving power of water. He was the river : his own vitality was the source of all fertility and prosperity. Hence when he showed signs that his vital powers were failing it became a logical necessity that he should be killed to safeguard the welfare of his country and people.<sup>1</sup>

The time came when a king, rich in power and the enjoyment of life, refused to comply with this custom. When he realized that his virility was failing he consulted the Great Mother, as the source and giver of life, to obtain an elixir which would rejuvenate him and obviate the necessity of being killed. The only medicine in the pharmacopœia of those times that was believed to be useful in minimizing danger to life was human blood. Wounds that gave rise to severe hæmorrhage were known to produce unconsciousness and death. If the escape of

<sup>1</sup> It is still the custom in many places, and among them especially the regions near the headwaters of the Nile itself, to regard the king or rain-maker as the impersonation of the life-giving properties of water and the source of all fertility. When his own vitality shows signs of failing he is killed, so as not to endanger the fruitfulness of the community by allowing one who is weak in life-giving powers to control its destinies. Much of the evidence relating to these matters has been collected by Sir James Frazer in "The Dying God," 1911, who quotes from Dr. Seligman the following account of the Dinka "Osiris":

"While the mighty spirit Lerpiu is supposed to be embodied in the rain-maker, it is also thought to inhabit a certain hut which serves as a shrine. In front of the hut stands a post to which are fastened the horns of many bullocks that have been sacrificed to Lerpiu; and in the hut is kept a very sacred spear which bears the name of Lerpiu and is said to have fallen from heaven six generations ago. As fallen stars are also called Lerpiu, we may suspect that an intimate connexion is supposed to exist between meteorites and the spirit which animates the rain-maker" (Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 32). Here then we have a house of the dead inhabited by Lerpiu, who can also enter the body of the rain-maker and animate him, as well as the ancient spear and the falling stars, which are also animate forms of the same god, who obviously is the homologue of Osiris, and is identified with the spear and the falling stars.

In spring when the April moon is a few days old bullocks are sacrificed to Lerpiu. "Two bullocks are led twice round the shrine and afterwards tied by the rain-maker to the post in front of it. Then the drums beat and the people, old and young, men and women, dance round the shrine and sing, while the beasts are being sacrificed, 'Lerpiu, our ancestor, we have brought you a sacrifice. Be pleased to cause rain to fall.' The blood of the bullocks is collected in a gourd, boiled in a pot on the fire, and eaten by the old and important people of the clan. The horns of the animals are attached to the post in front of the shrine" (pp. 32 and 33).

the blood of life could produce these results it was not altogether illogical to assume that the exhibition of human blood could also add to the vitality of living men and so "turn back the years from their old age," as the Pyramid Texts express it.

Thus the Great Mother, the giver of life to all mankind, was faced with the dilemma that, to provide the king with the elixir to restore his youth, she had to slay mankind, to take the life she herself had given to her own children. Thus she acquired an evil reputation which was to stick to her throughout her career. She was not only the beneficent creator of all things and the bestower of all blessings : but she was also a demon of destruction who did not hesitate to slaughter even her own children.

In course of time the practice of human sacrifice was abandoned and substitutes were adopted in place of the blood of mankind. Either the blood of cattle,<sup>1</sup> who by means of appropriate ceremonies could be transformed into human beings (for the Great Mother herself was the Divine Cow and her offspring cattle), was employed in its stead ; or red ochre was used to colour a liquid which was used ritually to replace the blood of sacrifice. When this phase of culture was reached the goddess provided for the king an elixir of life consisting of beer stained red by means of red ochre, so as to simulate human blood.

But such a mixture was doubly potent, for the barley from which the beer was made and the drink itself was supposed to be imbued with the life-giving powers of Osiris, and the blood-colour reinforced its therapeutic usefulness. The legend now begins to become involved and confused. For the goddess is making the rejuvenator for the king, who in the meantime has died and become deified as Osiris ; and the beer, which is the vehicle of the life-giving powers of Osiris, is now being used to rejuvenate his son and successor, the living king Horus, who in the version that has come down to us is replaced by the sun-god Re.

<sup>1</sup> In Northern Nigeria an official who bore the title of Killer of the Elephant throttled the king "as soon as he showed signs of failing health or growing infirmity". The king-elect was afterwards conducted to the centre of the town, called Head of the Elephant, where he was made to lie down on a bed. Then a black ox was slaughtered and its blood allowed to pour all over his body. Next the ox was flayed, and the remains of the dead king, which had been disembowelled and smoked for seven days over a slow fire, were wrapped up in the hide and dragged along to the place of burial, where they were interred in a circular pit" (Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 35).

It is Re who is king and is growing old : he asks Hathor, the Great Mother, to provide him with the elixir of life. But comparison with some of the legends of other countries suggests that Re has usurped the place previously occupied by Horus and originally by Osiris, who as the real personification of the life-giving power of water is obviously the appropriate person to be slain when his virility begins to fail. Dr. C. G. Seligman's account of the Dinka rain-maker Lerpui, which I have already quoted (p. 113) from Sir James Frazer's "Dying God," suggests that the slain king or god was originally Osiris.

The introduction of Re into the story marks the beginning of the belief in the sky-world or heaven. Hathor was originally nothing more than an amulet to enhance fertility and vitality. Then she was personified as a woman and identified with a cow. But when the view developed that the moon controlled the powers of life-giving in women and exercised a direct influence upon their life-blood, the Great Mother was identified with the moon. But how was such a conception to be brought into harmony with the view that she was also a cow? The human mind displays an irresistible tendency to unify its experience and to bridge the gaps that necessarily exist in its broken series of scraps of knowledge and ideas. No break is too great to be bridged by this instinctive impulse to rationalize the products of diverse experience. Hence, early man, having identified the Great Mother both with a cow and the moon, had no compunction in making "the cow jump over the moon" to become the sky. The moon then became the "Eye" of the sky and the sun necessarily became its other "Eye". But, as the sun was clearly the more important "Eye," seeing that it determined the day and gave warmth and light for man's daily work, it was the more important deity. Therefore Re, at first the Brother-Eye of Hathor, and afterwards her husband, became the supreme sky-deity, and Hathor merely one of his Eyes.

When this stage of theological evolution was reached, the story of the "Destruction of Mankind" was re-edited, and Hathor was called the "Eye of Re". In the earlier versions she was called into consultation solely as the giver of life and, to obtain the life-blood, she cut men's throats with a knife.

But as the Eye of Re she was identified with the fire-spitting uræus-serpent which the king or god wore on his forehead. She was both the moon and the fiery bolt which shot down from the sky to slay



the enemies of Re. For the men who were originally slaughtered to provide the blood for an elixir now became the enemies of Re. The reason for this was that, human sacrifice having been abandoned and substitutes provided to replace the human blood, the story-teller was at a loss to know why the goddess killed mankind. A reason had to be found—and the rationalization adopted was that men had rebelled against the gods and had to be killed. This interpretation was probably the result of a confusion with the old legend of the fight between Horus and Set, the rulers of the two kingdoms of Egypt. The possibility also suggests itself that a pun made by some priestly jester may have been the real factor that led to this mingling of two originally separate stories. In the "Destruction of Mankind" the story runs, according to Budge,<sup>1</sup> that Re, referring to his enemies, said: *mā-ten set uār er set*, "Behold ye them (*set*) fleeing into the mountain (*set*)". The enemies were thus identified with the mountain or stone and with Set, the enemy of the gods.<sup>2</sup>

In Egyptian hieroglyphics the symbol for stone is used as the determinative for Set. When the "Eye of Re" destroyed mankind and the rebels were thus identified with the followers of Set, they were regarded as creatures of "stone". In other words the Medusa-eye petrified the enemies. From this feeble pun on the part of some ancient Egyptian scribe has arisen the world-wide stories of the influence of the "Evil Eye" and the petrification of the enemies of the gods.<sup>3</sup> As the name for Isis in Egyptian is "*Set*," it is possible that the confusion of the Power of Evil with the Great Mother may also have been facilitated by an extension of the same pun.

It is important to recognize that the legend of Hathor descending from the moon or the sky in the form of destroying fire had nothing whatever to do, in the first instance, with the phenomena of lightning

<sup>1</sup> "Gods of the Egyptians," vol. i., p. 392.

<sup>2</sup> The eye of the sun-god, which was subsequently called the eye of Horus and identified with the Uræus-snake on the forehead of Re and of the Pharaohs, the earthly representatives of Re, finally becoming synonymous with the crown of Lower Egypt, was a mighty goddess, Uto or Buto by name" (Alan Gardiner, Article "Magic (Egyptian)" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 268, quoting Sethe.

<sup>3</sup> For an account of the distribution of this story see E. Sidney Hartland, "The Legend of Perseus"; also W. J. Perry, "The Megalithic Culture of Indonesia".

and meteorites. It was the result of verbal quibbling after the destructive goddess came to be identified with the moon, the sky and the "Eye of Re". But once the evolution of the story on these lines prepared the way, it was inevitable that in later times the powers of destruction exerted by the fire from the sky should have been identified with the lightning and meteorites.

When the destructive force of the heavens was attributed to the "Eye of Re" and the god's enemies were identified with the followers of Set, it was natural that the traditional enemy of Set who was also the more potent other "Eye of Re" should assume his mother's rôle of punishing rebellious mankind. That Horus did in fact take the place at first occupied by Hathor in the story is revealed by the series of trivial episodes from the "Destruction of Mankind" that reappear in the "Saga of the Winged Disk". The king of Lower Egypt (Horus) was identified with a falcon, as Hathor was with the vulture (Mut): like her, he entered the sun-god's boat<sup>1</sup> and sailed up the river with him: he then mounted up to heaven as a winged disk, i.e. the sun of Re equipped with his own falcon's wings. The destructive force displayed by Hathor as the Eye of Re was symbolized by her identification with Tefnut, the fire-spitting uræus-snake. When Horus assumed the form of the winged disk he added to his insignia two fire-spitting serpents to destroy Re's enemies. The winged disk was at once the instrument of destruction and the god himself. It swooped (or flew) down from heaven like a bolt of destroying fire and killed the enemies of Re. By a confusion with Horus's other fight against the

<sup>1</sup> The original "boat of the sky" was the crescent moon, which, from its likeness to the earliest form of Nile boat, was regarded as the vessel in which the moon (seen as a faint object upon the crescent), or the goddess who was supposed to be personified in the moon, travelled across the waters of the heavens. But as this "boat" was obviously part of the moon itself, it also was regarded as an animate form of the goddess, the "Eye of Re". When the Sun, as the other "Eye," assumed the chief rôle, Re was supposed to traverse the heavens in his own "boat," which was also brought into relationship with the actual boat used in the Osirian burial ritual.

The custom of employing the name "dragon" in reference to a boat is found in places as far apart as Scandinavia and China. It is the direct outcome of these identifications of the sun and moon with a boat animated by the respective deities. In India the *Makari*, the prototype of the dragon, was sometimes represented as a boat which was looked upon as the fish-*avatar* of Vishnu, Buddha or some other deity.

followers of Set, the enemies of Re become identified with Set's army and they are transformed into crocodiles, hippopotami and all the other kinds of creatures whose shapes the enemies of Osiris assume.

In the course of the development of these legends a multitude of other factors played a part and gave rise to transformations of the meaning of the incidents.

The goddess originally slaughtered mankind, or perhaps it would be truer to say, made a human sacrifice, to obtain blood to rejuvenate the king. But, as we have seen already, when the sacrifice was no longer a necessary part of the programme, the incident of the slaughter was not dropped out of the story, but a new explanation of it was framed. Instead of simply making a human sacrifice, mankind as a whole was destroyed for rebelling against the gods, the act of rebellion being murmuring about the king's old age and loss of virility. The elixir soon became something more than a rejuvenator: it was transformed into the food of the gods, the ambrosia that gave them their immortality, and distinguished them from mere mortals. Now when the development of the story led to the replacement of the single victim by the whole of mankind, the blood produced by the wholesale slaughter was so abundant that the fields were flooded by the life-giving elixir. By the sacrifice of men the soil was renewed and refertilized. When the blood-coloured beer was substituted for the actual blood the conception was brought into still closer harmony with Egyptian ideas, because the beer was animated with the life-giving powers of Osiris. But Osiris was the Nile. The blood-coloured fertilizing fluid was then identified with the annual inundation of the red-coloured waters of the Nile. Now the Nile waters were supposed to come from the First Cataract at Elephantine. Hence by a familiar psychological process the previous phase of the legend was recast, and by confusion the red ochre (which was used to colour the beer red) was said to have come from Elephantine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is an instance of the well-known tendency of the human mind to blend numbers of different incidents into one story. An episode of one experience, having been transferred to an earlier one, becomes rationalized in adaptation to its different environment. This process of psychological transference is the explanation of the reference to Elephantine as the source of the *d'd*, and has no relation to actuality. The naive efforts of Brugsch and Gauthier to study the natural products of Elephantine for the purpose of identifying *d'd* were therefore wholly misplaced.

Thus we have arrived at the stage where, by a distortion of a series of phases, the new incident emerges that by means of a human sacrifice the Nile flood can be produced. By a further confusion the goddess, who originally did the slaughter, becomes the victim. Hence the story assumed the form that by means of the sacrifice of a beautiful and attractive maiden the annual inundation can be produced. As the most potent symbol of life-giving it is essential that the victim should be sexually attractive, i.e. that she should be a virgin and the most beautiful and desirable in the land. When the practice of human sacrifice was abandoned a figure or an animal was substituted for the maiden in ritual practice, and in legends the hero rescued the maiden, as Andromeda was saved from the dragon.<sup>1</sup> The dragon is the personification of the monsters that dwell in the waters as well as the destructive forces of the flood itself. But the monsters were no other than the followers of Set; they were the victims of the slaughter who became identified with the god's other traditional enemies, the followers of Set. Thus the monster from whom Andromeda is rescued is merely another representative of herself!

But the destructive forces of the flood now enter into the programme. In the phases we have so far discussed it was the slaughter of mankind which caused the inundation: but in the next phase it is the flood itself which causes the destruction, as in the later Egyptian and the borrowed Sumerian, Babylonian, Hebrew—and in fact the world-wide—versions. Re's boat becomes the ark; the winged disk which was despatched by Re from the boat becomes the dove and the other birds sent out to spy the land, as the winged Horus spied the enemies of Re.

Thus the new weapon of the gods—we have already noted Hathor's knife and Horus's winged disk, which is the fire from heaven, the lightning and the thunderbolt—is the flood. Like the others it can be either a beneficent giver of life or a force of destruction.

But the flood also becomes a weapon of another kind. One of the earlier incidents of the story represents Hathor in opposition to Re. The goddess becomes so maddened with the zest of killing that the god becomes alarmed and asks her to desist and spare some representatives of the race. But she is deaf to entreaties. Hence the god is

<sup>1</sup> In Hartland's "Legend of Perseus" a collection of variants of this story will be found.

said to have sent to Elephantine for the red ochre to make a sedative draught to overcome her destructive zeal. We have already seen that this incident had an entirely different meaning—it was merely intended to explain the obtaining of the colouring matter wherewith to redden the sacred beer so as to make it resemble blood as an elixir for the god. It was brought from Elephantine, because the red waters of inundation of the Nile were supposed by the Egyptians to come from Elephantine.

But according to the story inscribed in Seti I's tomb, the red ochre was an essential ingredient of the sedative mixture (prepared under the direction of Re by the Sekti<sup>1</sup> of Heliopolis) to calm Hathor's murderous spirit.

It has been claimed that the story simply means that the goddess became intoxicated with beer and that she became genially inoffensive solely as the effect of such inebriation. But the incident in the Egyptian story closely resembles the legends of other countries in which some herb is used specifically as a sedative. In most books on Egyptian mythology the word (*d'd*) for the substance put into the drink to colour it is translated "mandragora," from its resemblance to the Hebrew word *dudaim* in the Old Testament, which is often translated "mandrakes" or "love-apples". But Gauthier has clearly demonstrated that the Egyptian word does not refer to a vegetable but to a mineral substance, which he translates "red clay"<sup>2</sup>. Mr. F. Ll. Griffith tells me, however, that it is "red ochre". In any case, mandrake is not found at Elephantine (which, however, for the reasons I have already given, is a point of no importance so far as the identification of the substance is concerned), nor in fact anywhere in Egypt.

But if some foreign story of the action of a sedative drug had become blended with and incorporated in the highly complex and composite Egyptian legend the narrative would be more intelligible. The mandrake is such a sedative as might have been employed to calm the murderous frenzy of a maniacal woman. In fact it is closely allied to hyoscyamus, whose active principle, hyoscin, is used in modern medicine precisely for such purposes. I venture to suggest that a folk-tale describing the effect of opium or some other "drowsy syrup" has been absorbed into the legend of the Destruction of Mankind, and has provided the starting point of all those incidents in the dragon-story in which poison or some

<sup>1</sup> In the version I have quoted from Erman he refers to "the god Sektet".

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, *supra*.

sleep-producing drug plays a part. For when Hathor defies Re and continues the destruction, she is playing the part of her Babylonian representative Tiamat, and is a dragon who has to be vanquished by the drink which the god provides.

The red earth which was pounded in the mortar to make the elixir of life and the fertilizer of the soil also came to be regarded as the material out of which the new race of men was made to replace those who were destroyed.

The god fashioned mankind of this earth and, instead of the red ochre being merely the material to give the blood-colour to the draught of immortality, the story became confused : actual blood was presented to the clay images to give them life and consciousness.

In a later elaboration the remains of the former race of mankind were ground up to provide the material out of which their successors were created. This version is a favourite story in Northern Europe, and has obviously been influenced by an intermediate variant which finds expression in the Indian legend of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. Instead of the material for the elixir of the gods being pounded by the Sekti of Heliopolis and incidentally becoming a sedative for Hathor, it is the milk of the Divine Cow herself which is churned to provide the *amrita*.

#### THE THUNDER-WEAPON.<sup>1</sup>

In the development of the dragon-story we have seen that the instruments of destruction were of a most varied kind. Each of the three primary deities, Hathor, Osiris and Horus can be a destructive power as well as a giver of life and of all kinds of boons. Every homologue or surrogate of these three deities can become a weapon for dragon-destroying, such as the moon or the lotus of Hathor, the water

<sup>1</sup> The history of the thunder-weapon cannot wholly be ignored in discussing the dragon-myth because it forms an integral part of the story. It was animated both by the dragon and the dragon-slayer. But an adequate account of the weapon would be so highly involved and complex as to be unintelligible without a very large series of illustrations. Hence I am referring here only to certain aspects of the subject. Pending the preparation of a monograph upon the thunder-weapon, I may refer the reader to the works of Blinkenberg, d'Alviella, Ward, Evans and A. B. Cook (to which frequent reference is made in these pages) for material, especially in the form of illustrations, to supplement my brief and unavoidably involved summary.

or the beer of Osiris, the sun or the falcon of Horus. Originally Hathor used a flint knife or axe : then she did the execution as "the Eye of Re," the moon, the fiery bolt from heaven : Osiris sent the destroying flood and the intoxicating beer, each of which, like the knife, axe and moon of Hathor, were animated by the deity. Then Horus came as the winged disk, the falcon, the sun, the lightning and the thunderbolt. As the dragon-story was spread abroad in the world any one of these "weapons" was confused with any of (or all) the rest. The Eye of Re was the fire-spitting uræus-serpent ; and foreign people, like the Greeks, Indians and others, gave the Egyptian verbal simile literal expression and converted it into an actual Cyclopean eye planted in the forehead, which shot out the destroying fire.

The warrior god of Babylonia is called the bright one,<sup>1</sup> the sword or lightning of Ishtar, who was herself called both the sword or lightning of heaven.

In the Ægean area also the sons of Zeus and the progeny of heaven may be axes, stone implements, meteoric stones and thunderbolts. In a Swahili tale the hero's weapon is "a sword like a flash of lightning".

According to Bergaigne,<sup>2</sup> the myth of the celestial drink *soma*, brought down from heaven by a bird ordinarily called *cyena*, "eagle," is parallel to that of Agni, the celestial fire brought by Mâtariçvan. This parallelism is even expressly stated in the Rig Veda, verse 6 of hymn I to Agni and Soma. Mâtariçvan brought the one from heaven, the eagle brought the other from the celestial mountain.

Kuhn admits that the eagle represents Indra ; and Lehmann regards the eagle who takes the fire as Agni himself. It is patent that both Indra and Agni are in fact merely specialized forms of Horus of the Winged Disk Saga, in one of which the warrior sun-god is represented, in the other the living fire. The elixir of life of the Egyptian story is represented by the *soma*, which by confusion is associated with the eagle : in other words, the god Soma is the homologue not only of Osiris, but also of Horus.

Other incidents in the same original version are confused in the Greek story of Prometheus. He stole the fire from heaven and brought

<sup>1</sup> As in Egypt Osiris is described as "a ray of light" which issued from the moon (Hathor), *i.e.* was born of the Great Mother.

<sup>2</sup> "Religion védique," *i.*, p. 173, quoted by S. Reinach, "Ætos Prometheus," *Revue archéologique*, 4<sup>ie</sup> série, tome x., 1917, p. 72.

it to earth : but, in place of the episode of the elixir, which is adopted in the Indian story just mentioned, the creation of men from clay is accredited by the Greeks to the "flaming one," the "fire eagle" Prometheus.

The double axe was the homologue of the winged disk which fell, or rather flew, from heaven as the tangible form of the god. This fire from heaven inevitably came to be identified with the lightning. According to Blinkenberg (*op. cit.*, p. 19) "many points go to prove that the double-axe is a representation of the lightning (see Usener, p. 20)". He refers to the design on the famous gold ring from Mycenæ where "the sun, the moon, a double curved line presumably representing the rainbow, and the double-axe, i.e. the lightning": but "the latter is placed lower than the others, probably because it descends from heaven to earth," like Horus when he assumed the form of the winged disk and flew down to earth as a fiery bolt to destroy the enemies of Re.

The recognition of the homology of the winged disk with the double axe solves a host of problems which have puzzled classical scholars within recent years. The form of the double axe on the Mycenæan ring<sup>1</sup> and the painted sarcophagus from Hagia Triada in Crete (and especially the oblique markings upon the axe) is probably a suggestion of the double series of feathers and the outlines of the individual feathers respectively on the wings. The position of the axe upon a symbolic tree is not intended, as Blinkenberg claims (*op. cit.*, p. 21), as "a ritual representation of the trees struck by lightning": but is the familiar scene of the Mesopotamian culture-area, the tree of life surmounted by the winged disk.<sup>2</sup>

The bird poised upon the axe in the Cretan picture is the homologue of the falcon of Horus : it is in fact a second representation of the winged disk itself. This interpretation is not affected by the consideration that the falcon may be replaced by the eagle, pigeon, woodpecker or raven, for these substitutions were repeatedly made by the ancient priesthoods in flagrant defiance of the proprieties of ornithological homologies. The same phenomenon is displayed even more obtrusively in Central America and Mexico, where the ancient sculptors

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, Fig. 4, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> William Hayes Ward, "The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia," chapter xxxviii.



and painters represented the bird perched upon the tree of life as a falcon, an eagle, a vulture, a macaw or even a turkey.<sup>1</sup>

The incident of the winged disk descending to effect the sun-god's purposes upon earth probably represents the earliest record of the recognition of thunder and lightning and the phenomena of rain as manifestations of the god's powers. All gods of thunder, lightning, rain and clouds derive their attributes, and the arbitrary graphic representation of them, from the legend which the Egyptian scribe has preserved for us in the Saga of the Winged Disk.

The sacred axe of Crete is represented elsewhere as a sword which became the visible impersonation of the deity.<sup>2</sup> There is a Hittite story of a sword-handle coming to life. Hose and McDougall refer to the same incident in certain Sarawak legends; and the story is true to the original in the fact that the sword fell from the sun.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Arthur Evans describes as "the aniconic image of the god" a stone pillar on which crude pictures of a double axe have been scratched. These representations of the axe in fact serve the same purpose as the winged disk in Egypt, and, as we shall see subsequently, there was an actual confusion between the Egyptian symbol and the Cretan axe.

The obelisk at Abusir was the aniconic representative of the sun-god Re, or rather, the support of the pyramidal apex, the gilded surface of which reflected the sun's rays and so made manifest the god's presence in the stone.

The Hittites seem to have substituted the winged disk as a representation of the sun: for in a design copied from a seal<sup>4</sup> we find the Egyptian symbol borne upon the apex of a cone.

The transition from this to the great double axe from Hagia Triada in the Candia Museum<sup>5</sup> is a relatively easy one, which was materially helped, as we shall see, by the fact that the winged disk was actually homologized with an axe or knife as alternative weapons used by the sun-god for the destruction of mankind.

In Dr. Seligman's account of the Dinka rain-maker (*supra*, p. 354)

<sup>1</sup> Seler, "Codex Vaticanus, No. 3773," vol. i., p. 77 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> "The Pagan Tribes of Borneo," 1912, vol. ii., p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, Fig. 8, c, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> There is an excellent photograph of this in Donald McKenzie's "Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe," facing p. 160.

we have already seen that the Soudanese Osiris was identified with a spear and falling stars.

According to Dr. Budge<sup>1</sup> the Egyptian hieroglyph used as the determinative of the word *neter*, meaning god or spirit, is the axe with a handle. Mr. Griffith, however, interprets it as a roll of yellow cloth ("Hieroglyphics," p. 46). On Hittite seals the axe sometimes takes the place of the god Teshub.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Arthur Evans endeavours to explain these conceptions by a vague appeal to certain natural phenomena (*op. cit.*, pp. 20 and 21); but the identical traditions of widespread peoples are much too arbitrary and specific to be interpreted by any such speculations.

Sanchoniathon's story of Baetylos being the son of Ouranos is merely a poetical way of saying that the sun-god fell to earth in the form of a stone or a weapon, as a Zeus Kappôtas or a Horus in the form of a winged disk, flying down from heaven to destroy the enemies of Re.

"The idea of their [the weapons] flying through the air or falling from heaven, and their supposed power of burning with inner fire or shining in the nighttime," was not primarily suggested, as Sir Arthur Evans claims (*op. cit.*, p. 21), "by the phenomena associated with meteoric stones," but was a rationalization of the events described in the early Egyptian and Babylonian stories.

They "shine at night" because the original weapon of destruction was the moon as the Eye of Re. They "burn with inward fire," like the Babylonian Marduk, when in the fight with the dragon Tiamat "he filled his body with burning flame" (King, *op. cit.*, p. 71), because they *were* fire, the fire of the sun and of lightning, the fire spat out by the Eye of Re.

Further evidence in corroboration of these views is provided by the fact that in the Ægean area the double-axe replaces the moon between the cow's horns (Evans, *op. cit.*, Fig. 3, p. 9).

In King's "Babylonian Religion" (pp. 70 and 71) we are told how the gods provided Marduk with an invincible weapon in preparation for the combat with the dragon: and the ancient scribe himself sets forth a series of its homologues:—

<sup>1</sup> "The Gods of the Egyptians," vol. i., pp. 63 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

He made ready his bow . . .  
 He slung a spear . . .  
 The bow and quiver . . .  
 He set the lightning in front of him,  
 With burning flame he filled his body.

An ancient Egyptian writer has put on record further identifications of weapons. In the 95th Chapter of the Book of the Dead, the deceased is reported to have said: "I am he who sendeth forth terror into the powers of rain and thunder. . . . I have made to flourish my knife which is in the hand of Thoth in the powers of rain and thunder" (Budge, "Gods of the Egyptians," vol. i., p. 414).

The identification of the winged disk with the thunderbolt which emerges so definitely from these homologies is not altogether new, for it was suggested some years ago by Count d'Alviella<sup>1</sup> in these words:—

"On seeing some representations of the Thunderbolt which recall in a remarkable manner the outlines of the Winged Globe, it may be asked if it was not owing to this latter symbol that the Greeks transformed into a winged spindle the Double Trident derived from Assyria. At any rate the transition, or, if it be preferred, the combination of the two symbols is met with in those coins from Northern Africa where Greek art was most deeply impregnated with Phœnician types. Thus on coins of Bocchus II, King of Mauretania, figures are found which M. Lajard connected with the Winged Globe, and M. L. Müller calls Thunderbolts, but which are really the result of crossing between these two emblems".

The thunderbolt, however, is not always, or even commonly, the direct representative of the winged disk. It is more often derived from lightning or some floral design.<sup>2</sup>

According to Count d'Alviella<sup>3</sup> "the Trident of Siva at times exhibits the form of a lotus calyx depicted in the Egyptian manner".

"Perhaps other transformations of the *trisula* might still be found at Boro-Budur [in Java]. . . . The same Disk which, when transformed into a most complicated ornament, is sometimes crowned by a Trident, is also met with between two serpents—which brings us back to the origin of the Winged Circle—the Globe of Egypt with the

<sup>1</sup> "The Migration of Symbols," pp. 220 and 221.

<sup>2</sup> Blinkenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 256.

uræi" (see d'Alviella's Fig. 158). "Moreover this ornament, between which and certain forms of the *trisula* the transition is easily traced, commonly surmounts the entrance to the pagodas depicted in the bas-reliefs—in exactly the same manner as the Winged Globe adorns the lintel of the temples in Egypt and Phœnicia."

Thus we find traces of a blending of the two homologous designs, derived independently from the lotus and the winged disk, which acquired the same symbolic significance.

The weapon of Poseidon, the so-called "Trident of Neptune," is "sometimes crowned with a trilobate lotus flower, or with three lotus buds; in other cases it is depicted in a shape that may well represent a fishing spear" (Blinkenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 53 and 54).

"Even if Jacobsthal's interpretation of the flower as a common Greek symbol for fire be not accepted, the conventionalization of the trident as a lotus blossom is quite analogous to the change, on Greek soil, of the Assyrian thunderweapon to two flowers pointing in opposite directions" (p. 54).

But the conception of a flower as a symbol of fire cannot thus summarily be dismissed. For Sir Arthur Evans has collected all the stages in the transformation of Egyptian palmette pillars into the rayed pillars of Cyprus, in which the leaflets of the palmette become converted (in the Cypro-Mycenæan derivatives) into the rays which he calls "the natural concomitant of divinities of light".<sup>1</sup>

The underlying motive which makes such a transference easy is the Egyptian conception of Hathor as a sacred lotus from which the sun-god Horus is born. The god of light is identified with the water-plant, whether lotus, iris or lily; and the lotus form of Horus can be correlated with its Hellenic surrogate, Apollo Hyakinthos. "The fleur-de-lys type now takes its place beside the sacred lotus" (*op. cit.*, p. 50). The trident and the fleur-de-lys are thunderweapons because they represent forms of Horus or his mother.

The classical keraunos is still preserved in Tibet as the *dorje*, which is identified with Indra's thunderbolt, the *vajra*.<sup>2</sup> This word is also applied to the diamond, the "king of stones," which in turn acquired many of the attributes of the pearl, another of the Great

<sup>1</sup> "Mycenæan Tree and Pillar Cult," pp. 51 and 52.

<sup>2</sup> See Blinkenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-8.

Mother's surrogates, which is reputed to have fallen from heaven like the thunderbolt.<sup>1</sup>

The Tibetan *dorje*, like its Greek original, is obviously a conventionalized flower, the leaf-design about the base of the corona being quite clearly defined.

The influence of the Winged-Disk Saga is clearly revealed in such Greek myths as that relating to Ixion. "Euripides is represented by Aristophanes as declaring that *Aithér* at the creation devised

The eye to mimic the wheel of the sun."<sup>2</sup>

When we read of Zeus in anger binding Ixion to a winged wheel made of fire, and sending him spinning through the air, we are merely dealing with a Greek variant of the Egyptian myth in which Re despatched Horus as a winged disk to slay his enemies. In the Hellenic version the sky-god is angry with the father of the centaurs for his ill-treatment of his father-in-law and his behaviour towards Hera and her cloud-manifestation: but though distorted all the incidents reveal their original inspiration in the Egyptian story and its early Aryan variants.

It is remarkable that Mr. A. B. Cook, who compared the wheel of Ixion with the Egyptian winged disk (pp. 205-10), did not look deeper for a common origin of the two myths, especially when he got so far as to identify Ixion with the sun-god (p. 211).

Blinkenberg sums up the development of the thunder-weapon thus: "From the old Babylonian representation of the lightning, i.e. two or three zigzag lines representing flames, a tripartite thunder-weapon was evolved and carried east and west from the ancient seat of civilization.

<sup>1</sup> I must defer consideration of the part played by certain of the Great Mother's surrogates in the development of the thunder-weapon's symbolism and the associated folk-lore. I have in mind especially the influence of the octopus and the cow. The former was responsible in part for the use of the spiral as a thunder-symbol; and the latter for the beliefs in the special protective power of thunderstones over cows (see Blinkenberg, *op. cit.*). The thunderstone was placed over the lintel of the cow-shed for the same purpose as the winged disk over the door of an Egyptian temple. Until the relations of the octopus to the dragon have been set forth it is impossible adequately to discuss the question of the seven-headed dragon, which ranges from Scotland to Japan and from Scandinavia to the Zambesi. In "The Birth of Aphrodite" I shall call attention to the basal factors in its evolution.

<sup>2</sup> A. B. Cook, "Zeus," vol. i., p. 198.

Together with the axe (in Western Asia Minor the double-edged, and towards the centre of Asia the single-edged, axe) it became a regular attribute of the Asiatic thunder-gods. . . . The Indian trisula and the Greek triaina are both its descendants" (p. 57).

Discussing the relationship of the sun-god to thunder, Dr. Rendel Harris refers to the fact that Apollo's "arrows are said to be lightnings," and he quotes Pausanias, Apollodorus and Mr. A. B. Cook in substantiation of his statements.<sup>1</sup> Both sons of Zeus, Dionysus and Apollo, are "concerned with the production of fire".

According to Hyginus, Typhon was the son of Tartarus and the Earth: he made war against Jupiter for dominion, and, being struck by lightning, was thrown flaming to the earth, where Mount Ætna was placed upon him.<sup>2</sup>

In this curious variant of the story of the winged disk, the conflict of Horus with Set is merged with the Destruction, for the son of Tartarus [Osiris] and the Earth [Isis] here is not Horus but his hostile brother Set. Instead of fighting for Jupiter (Re) as Horus did, he is against him. The lightning (which is Horus in the form of the winged disk) strikes Typhon and throws him flaming to earth. The episode of Mount Ætna is the antithesis of the incident in the Indian legend of the churning of the ocean: Mount Meru is placed in the sea upon the tortoise *avatar* of Vishnu and is used to churn the food of immortality for the gods. In the Egyptian story the red ochre brought from Elephantine is pounded with the barley.

The story told by Hyginus leads up to the vision in Revelations (xii., 7 *et seq.*): "There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

<sup>1</sup> "The Ascent of Olympus," p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Tartarus ex Terra procreavit Typhonem, immani magnitudine, specieque portentosa, cui centum capita draconum ex humeris enata erant. Hic Jovem provocavit, si vellet secum de regno centare. Jovis fulmine ardenti pectus ejus percussit. Cui cum flagraret, montem Ætnam, qui est in Sicilia, super eum imposuit; qui ex eo adhuc ardere dicitur" (Hyginus, fab. 152).

In the later variants the original significance of the Destruction of Mankind seems to have been lost sight of. The life-giving Great Mother tends to drop out of the story and her son Horus takes her place. He becomes the warrior-god, but he not only assumes his mother's rôle but he also adopts her tactics. Just as she attacked Re's enemies in the capacity of the sky-god's "Eye," so Horus as the other "Eye," the sun, to which he gave his own falcon's wings, attacked in the form of the winged disk. The winged disk, like the other "Eye of Re," was not merely the sky weapon which shot down to destroy mankind, but also was the god Horus himself. This early conception involved the belief that the thunderbolt and lightning represented not merely the fiery weapon but the actual god.

The winged disk thus exhibits the same confusion of attributes as we have already noticed in Osiris and Hathor. It is the commonest symbol of life-giving and beneficent protective power: yet it is the weapon used to slaughter mankind. It is in fact the healing caduceus as well as the baneful thunder-weapon.

#### THE DEER.

One of the most surprising features of the dragon in China, Japan and America, is the equipment of deer's horns.

In Babylonia both Ea and Marduk are intimately associated with the antelope or gazelle, and the combination of the head of the antelope (or in other cases the goat) with the body of a fish is the most characteristic manifestation of either god. In Egypt both Osiris and Horus are at times brought into relationship with the gazelle or antelope, but more often it represents their enemy Set. Hence, in some parts of Africa, especially in the west, the antelope plays the part of the dragon in Asiatic stories.<sup>1</sup> The cow<sup>2</sup> of Hathor (Tiamat) may represent the dragon also. In East Africa the antelope assumes the rôle of the hero,<sup>3</sup> and is the representative of Horus. In the Ægean area, Asia Minor

<sup>1</sup> Frobenius, "The Voice of Africa," vol. ii., p. 467 *inter alia*.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 468.

<sup>3</sup> J. F. Campbell, "The Celtic Dragon Myth," with the "Geste of Fraoch and the Dragon," translated with Introduction by George Henderson, Edinburgh, 1911, p. 136.

and Europe the antelope, gazelle or the deer, may be associated with the Great Mother.<sup>1</sup>

In India the god Soma's chariot is drawn by an antelope. I have already suggested that Soma is only a specialized form of the Babylonian Ea, whose evil *avatar* is the dragon: there is thus suggested another link between the antelope and the latter. The Ea-element explains the fish-scales and the antelope provides the horns. I shall return to the discussion of this point later.

Vayu or Pavana, the Indian god of the winds, who afterwards became merged with Indra, rides upon an antelope like the Egyptian Horus. Soma's attributes also were in large measure taken over by Indra. Hence in this complex tissue of contradictions we once more find the dragon-slayer acquiring the insignia, in this case the antelope, of his mortal enemy.

I have already referred to the fact that the early Babylonian deities could also be demons. Tiamat, the dragon whom Marduk fought, was merely the malevolent *avatar* of the Great Mother. The dragon acquired his covering of fish-scales from an evil form of Ea.

In his Hibbert Lectures Professor Sayce claimed that the name of Ea was expressed by an ideograph which signifies literally "the antelope" (p. 280). "Ea was called 'the antelope of the deep,' 'the antelope the creator,' 'the lusty antelope'. We should have expected the animal of Ea to have been the fish: the fact that it is not so points to the conclusion that the culture-god of Southern Babylonia was an amalgamation of two earlier deities, one the divine antelope and the other the divine fish." Ea was "originally the god of the river and was also associated with the snake". Nina was also both the fish-goddess and the divinity whose name is interchanged with that of the deep. Professor Sayce then refers to "the curious process of development which transformed the old serpent-goddess, 'the lady Nina,' into the embodiment of all that was hostile to the powers of heaven; but after all, Nina had sprung from the fish-god of the deep [who also was

<sup>1</sup> For example the red deer occupies the place usually taken by the goddess's lions upon a Cretan gem (Evans, "Mycenæan Tree and Pillar Cult," Fig. 32, p. 56): on the bronze plate from Heddemheim (A. B. Cook, "Zeus," vol. i., pl. xxxiv., and p. 620) Isis is represented standing on a hind: Artemis, another *avatar* of the same Great Mother, was intimately associated with deer.



both antelope and serpent as well, see p. 282], and Tiamat is herself 'the deep' in Semitic dress" (p. 283).

"At times Ea was regarded as a gazelle rather than as an antelope." The position of the name in the list of animals shows what species of animal must be meant. *Lulim*, "a stag," seems to be a re-duplicated form of the same word. Both *lulim* and *elim* are said to be equivalent to *sarru*, king (p. 284).

Certain Assyriologists, from whom I asked for enlightenment upon these philological matters, express some doubt as to the antiquity or to the reality of the association of the names of Ea and the word for an antelope, gazelle or stag. But whatever the value of the linguistic evidence, the archæological, at any rate as early as the time of Nebuchadnezzar I, brings both Ea and Marduk into close association with a strange creature equipped with the horns of an antelope or gazelle. The association with the antelope of the homologous deities in India and Egypt leaves the reality of the connexion in no doubt. I had hoped that Professor Sayce's evidence would have provided some explanation of the strange association of the antelope. But whether or not the philological data justify the inferences which Professor Sayce drew from them, there can be no doubt concerning the correctness of his statement that Ea was represented both by fish and antelope, for in the course of his excavations at Susa M. J. de Morgan brought to light representations of Ea's animal consisting of an antelope's head on the body of a fish.<sup>1</sup> He also makes the statement that the ideogram of Ea, *turahu-apsu*, means "antelope of the sea". I have already (p. 329) referred to the fact that this "antelope of the sea," the so-called "goat-fish," is identical with the prototype of the dragon.

If his claim that the names of Ea meant both a "fish" and an "antelope" were well founded, the pun would have solved this problem, as it has done in the case of many other puzzles in the history of early civilization. But if this is not the case, the question is still open for solution. As Set was held to be personified in all the desert animals, the gazelle was identified with the demon of evil for this reason. In her important treatise on "The Asiatic Dionysos" Miss Gladys Davis tells us that "in his aspect of Moon 'the lord of stars'

<sup>1</sup> J. de Morgan, article on "Koudourrous," *Mem. Del. en Perse*, t. 7, 1905. Figures on p. 143 and p. 148: see also an earlier article on the same subject in tome i. of the same series.

Soma has in this character the antelope as his symbol. In fact, one of the names given to the moon by the early Indians was 'mṛiga-piplu' or marked like an antelope" (p. 202). Further she adds: "The Sanskrit name for the lunar mansion over which Soma presides is 'mṛiga-śiras' or the deer-headed." If it be admitted that Soma is merely the Aryan specialization of Ea and Osiris, as I have claimed, Sayce's association of Ea with the antelope is corroborated, even if it is not explained.

In China the dragon was sometimes called "the celestial stag" (de Groot, *op. cit.*, p. 1143). In Mexico the deer has the same intimate celestial relations as it has in the Old World (see Seler, *Zeit. f. Ethnologie*, Bd. 41, p. 414). I have already referred to the remarkable Maya deer-crocodile *makara* in the Liverpool Museum (p. 344).

The systematic zoology of the ancients was lacking in the precision of modern times; and there are reasons for supposing that the antelope and gazelle could exchange places the one with the other in their divine rôles; the deer and the rabbit were also their surrogates. In India a spotted rabbit can take the place of the antelope in playing the part of what we call "the man in the moon". This interpretation is common, not only in India, but also in China, and is repeatedly found in the ancient Mexican codices (Seler, *op. cit.*). In the spread of the ideas we have just been considering from Babylonia towards the north we find that the deer takes the place of the antelope.

In view of the close resemblance between the Indian god Soma and the Phrygian Dionysus, which has been demonstrated by Miss Gladys Davis, it is of interest to note that in the service of the Greek god a man was disguised as a stag, slain and eaten.<sup>1</sup>

Artemis also, one of the many *avatars* of the Great Mother, who was also related to the moon, was closely associated with the deer.

I have already referred to the fact that in Africa the dragon rôle of the female antelope may be assumed by the cow or buffalo. In the case of the gods Soma and Dionysus their association with the antelope or deer may be extended to the bull. Miss Davis (*op. cit.*) states that in the Homa Yasht the deer-headed lunar mansion over which the god presides is spoken of as "leading the Paurvas," i.e. Pleiades: "Mazda brought to thee (Homa) the star-studded spirit-fashioned girdle (the belt of Orion) leading the Paurvas. Now the Bull-Dionysus

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Cook, "Zeus," vol. i., p. 674.

was especially associated with the Pleiades on ancient gems and in classical mythology—which form part of the sign Taurus.” The bull is a sign of Haoma (Homa) or Soma. The belt of the thunder-god Thor corroborates the fact of the diffusion of these Babylonian ideas as far as Northern Europe.

### THE RAM.

The close association of the ram with the thunder-god is probably related with the fact that the sun-god Amon in Egypt was represented by the ram with a distinctive spiral horn. This spiral became a distinctive feature of the god of thunder throughout the Hellenic and Phœnician worlds and in those parts of Africa which were affected by their influence or directly by Egypt.

An account of the widespread influence of the ram-headed god of thunder in the Soudan and West Africa has been given by Frobenius.<sup>1</sup>

But the ram also became associated with Agni, the Indian fire-god, and the spiral as a head-appendage became the symbol of thunder throughout China and Japan, and from Asia spread to America where such deities as Tlaloc still retain this distinctive token of their origin from the Old World.

In Europe this association of the ram and its spiral horn played an even more obtrusive part.

The octopus as a surrogate of the Great Mother was primarily responsible for the development of the life-giving attributes of the spiral motif. But the close connexion of the Great Mother with the dragon and the thunder-weapon prepared the way for the special association of the spiral with thunder, which was confirmed when the ram with its spiral horn became the God of Thunder.

### THE PIG.

The relationship of the pig to the dragon is on the whole analogous to that of the cow and the stag, for it can play either a beneficent or a malevolent part. But the nature of the special circumstances which gave the pig a peculiar notoriety as an unclean animal are so intimately associated with the “Birth of Aphrodite” that I shall defer the discussion of them for my lecture on the history of the goddess.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. i., pp. 212-27.

## CERTAIN INCIDENTS IN THE DRAGON MYTH.

Throughout the greater part of the area which tradition has peopled with dragons, iron is regarded as peculiarly lethal to the monsters. This seems to be due to the part played by the "smiths" who forged iron weapons with which Horus overcame Set and his followers,<sup>1</sup> or in the earlier versions of the legend the metal weapons by means of which the people of Upper Egypt secured their historic victory over the Lower Egyptians. But the association of meteoric iron with the thunderbolt, the traditional weapon for destroying dragons, gave added force to the ancient legend and made it peculiarly apt as an incident in the story.

But though the dragon is afraid of iron, he likes precious gems and *k'ung-ts'ing* ("The Stone of Darkness") and is fond of roasted swallows.

The partiality of dragons for swallows was due to the transmission of a very ancient story of the Great Mother, who in the form of Isis was identified with the swallow. In China, so ravenous is the monster for this delicacy, that anyone who has eaten of swallows should avoid crossing the water, lest the dragon whose home is in the deep should devour the traveller to secure the dainty morsel of swallow. But those who pray for rain use swallows to attract the beneficent deity. Even in England swallows flying low are believed to be omens of coming rain—a tale which is about as reliable as the Chinese variant of the same ancient legend.

"The beautiful gems remind us of the Indian dragons; the pearls of the sea were, of course, in India as well as China and Japan, considered to be in the special possession of the dragon-shaped sea-gods" (de Visser, p. 69). The cultural drift from West to East along the southern coast of India was effected mainly by sailors who were searching for pearls. Sharks constituted the special dangers the divers had to incur in exploiting pearl-beds to obtain the precious "giver of life". But at the time these great enterprises were first undertaken in the Indian Ocean the people dwelling in the neighbourhood of the chief pearl-beds regarded the sea as the great source of all life-giving virtues and the god who exercised these powers was incarnated in a fish. The sharks therefore had to be brought into harmony with this scheme, and

<sup>1</sup> Budge, "Gods of the Egyptians," vol. i., p. 476.

they were rationalized as the guardians of the storehouse of life-giving pearls at the bottom of the sea.

I do not propose to discuss at present the diffusion to the East of the beliefs concerning the shark and the modifications which they underwent in the course of these migrations in Melanesia and elsewhere ; but in my lecture upon "the Birth of Aphrodite" I shall have occasion to refer to its spread to the West and explain how the shark's rôle was transferred to the dog-fish in the Mediterranean. The dog-fish then assumed a terrestrial form and became simply the dog who plays such a strange part in the magical ceremony of digging up the mandrake.

At present we are concerned merely with the shark as the guardian of the stores of pearls at the bottom of the sea. He became identified with the Nâga and the dragon, and the store of pearls became a vast treasure-house which it became one of the chief functions of the dragon to guard. This episode in the wonder-beast's varied career has a place in most of the legends ranging from Western Europe to Farthest Asia. Sometimes the dragon carries a pearl under his tongue or in his chin as a reserve of life-giving substance.

Mr. Donald Mackenzie has called attention<sup>1</sup> to the remarkable influence upon the development of the Dragon Myth of the familiar Egyptian representation of the child Horus with a finger touching his lips. On some pretence or other, many of the European dragon-slaying heroes, such as Sigurd and the Highland Finn, place their fingers in their mouths. This action is usually rationalized by the statement that the hero burnt his fingers while cooking the slain monster.

### THE ETHICAL ASPECT.

So far in this discussion I have been dealing mainly with the problems of the dragon's evolution, the attainment of his or her distinctive anatomical features and physiological attributes. But during this process of development a moral and ethical aspect of the dragon's character was also emerging.

Now that we have realized the fact of the dragon's homology with the moon-god it is important to remember that one of the primary functions of this deity, which later became specialized in the Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> "Egyptian Myth and Legend," pp. 340 *et seq.*

god Thoth, was the measuring of time and the keeping of records. The moon, in fact, was the controller of accuracy, of truth, and order, and therefore the enemy of falsehood and chaos. The identification of the moon with Osiris, who from a dead king eventually developed into a king of the dead, conferred upon the great Father of Waters the power to exact from men respect for truth and order. For even if at first these ideas were only vaguely adumbrated and not expressed in set phrases, it must have been an incentive to good discipline when men remembered that the record-keeper and the guardian of law and order was also the deity upon whose tender mercies they would have to rely in the life after death. Set, the enemy of Osiris, who is the real prototype of the evil dragon, was the antithesis of the god of justice : he was the father of falsehood and the symbol of chaos. He was the prototype of Satan, as Osiris was the first definite representative of the Deity of which any record has been preserved.

The history of the evil dragon is not merely the evolution of the devil, but it also affords the explanation of his traditional peculiarities, his bird-like features, his horns, his red colour, his wings and cloven hoofs, and his tail. They are all of them the dragon's distinctive features ; and from time to time in the history of past ages we catch glimpses of the reality of these identifications. In one of the earliest woodcuts (Fig. 14) found in a printed book Satan is depicted as a monk with the bird's feet of the dragon. A most interesting intermediate phase is seen in a Chinese water-colour in the John Rylands Library, in which the thunder-dragon is represented in a form almost exactly reproducing that of the devil of European tradition (Fig. 13.).

Early in the Christian era, when ancient beliefs in Egypt became disguised under a thin veneer of Christianity, the story of the conflict between Horus and Set was converted into a conflict between Christ and Satan. M. Clermont-Ganneau has described an interesting bas-relief in the Louvre in which a hawk-headed St. George, clad in Roman military uniform and mounted on a horse, is slaying a dragon which is represented by Set's crocodile.<sup>1</sup> But the Biblical references to Satan leave no doubt as to his identity with the dragon, who is

<sup>1</sup> "Horus et St. George d'après un bas-relief inédit du Louvre," *Revue Archéologique*, Nouvelle Série, t. xxxii., 1876, p. 196, pl. xviii. It is right to explain that M. Clermont-Ganneau's interpretation of this relief has not been accepted by all scholars.



FIG. 13.—THE GOD OF THUNDER  
(From a Chinese drawing (? 17th Century) in the John Rylands Library)



FIG. 14. FROM JOANNES DE TURRECREMATA'S "MEDITATIONES SEU  
CONTEMPLATIONES". Rome: Ulrich Han, 1467



specifically mentioned in the Book of Revelations as "the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan" (xx. 2).

The devil Set was symbolic of disorder and darkness, while the god Osiris was the maintainer of order and the giver of light. Although the moon-god, in the form of Osiris, Thoth and other deities, thus came to acquire the moral attributes of a just judge, who regulated the movements of the celestial bodies, controlled the waters upon the earth, and was responsible for the maintenance of order in the Universe, the ethical aspect of his functions was in large measure disguised by the material importance of his duties. In Babylonia similar views were held with respect to the beneficent water-god Ea, who was the giver of civilization, order and justice, and Sin, the moon-god, who "had attained a high position in the Babylonian pantheon," as "the guide of the stars and the planets, the overseer of the world at night". "From that conception a god of high moral character soon developed." "He is an extremely beneficent deity, he is a king, he is the ruler of men, he produces order and stability, like Shamash and like the Indian Varuṇa and Mitra, but besides that, he is also a judge, he loosens the bonds of the imprisoned, like Varuṇa. His light, like that of Varuṇa, is the symbol of righteousness. . . . Like the Indian Varuṇa and the Iranian Mazdāh, he is a god of wisdom."

When these Egyptian and Babylonian ideas were borrowed by the Aryans, and the Iranian Mazdāh and the Indian Varuṇa assumed the rôle of the beneficent deity of the former more ancient civilizations, the material aspect of the functions of the moon-god became less obtrusive; and there gradually emerged the conception, to which Zarathustra first gave concrete expression, of the beneficent god Ahura Mazdāh as "an omniscient protector of morality and creator of marvellous power and knowledge". "He is the most-knowing one, and the most-seeing one. No one can deceive him. He watches with radiant eyes everything that is done in open or in secret." "Although he has a strong personality he has no anthropomorphic features." He has shed the material aspects which loomed so large in his Egyptian, Babylonian and earlier Aryan prototypes, and a more ethereal conception of a God of the highest ethical qualities has emerged.

The whole of this process of transformation has been described with deep insight and lucid exposition by Professor Cumont, from whose im-

portant and convincing memoir I have quoted so freely in the foregoing paragraphs.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of a beneficent Deity of such moral grandeur inevitably emphasized the baseness and the malevolence of the "Power of Evil". No longer are the gods merely glorified human beings who can work good or evil as they will ; but there is now an all-powerful God controlling the morals of the universe, and in opposition to Him "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan".

<sup>1</sup> Albert J. Carnoy, "The Moral Deities of Iran and India and their Origins," *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. xxi., No. 1, Jan. 1917, p. 58.