The Temple and the House
THE MARRIAGE OF EARTH AND SKY

The King of Siam consecrates his queen by pouring water onto her head (page 95)
The Temple and the House

by

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Preface

The theory put forward in this book is that houses were originally neither shelters nor dwellings but temples, that is to say buildings erected for ritual purposes. To those who would reject this theory out of hand I suggest a comparison with men's hats.

Fifty years ago all males within the area of our Western civilization were wearing hats whenever they went out of doors, as their ancestors had done for centuries. In those days most people would have said that as hats kept our heads warm in winter, cool in summer and dry in rain, they had obviously been invented for these purposes. Nowadays most men consider hats unnecessary and, if they wear them at all, do so only on ceremonial occasions. The hat, that is to say, is going back to what was in fact its original function, that of forming part of a ceremonial costume. This is much easier to believe today than it would have been fifty years ago, and the example of the hat may make it easier to contemplate a similar origin for the house.

How did the custom of going bareheaded start? Did people in different parts of the Western world, after wearing hats for centuries, come simultaneously and independently to the conclusion that they were unnecessary, or did the fashion start in some one place and then spread? Everything that we know of the history of fashions leads us to think that the latter was the case, and what applies to fashions applies equally to customs, which are merely fashions that have become permanent. Going bareheaded started as a fashion and has now, in many parts, become a custom.

In this book much evidence is adduced to suggest that the custom of building houses did not arise independently in different
parts of the world, but spread as part of a religious complex, or series of religious complexes, originating somewhere in the Ancient East. But this is not all. Every year archaeologists are pushing the beginnings of civilization further and further back, and every year they are detecting hitherto unsuspected contacts between widely separated areas. It is becoming more and more difficult to believe that there are any communities, large or small, in any part of the world, which have developed their culture in isolation.

The book goes a good deal further than merely arguing the original sanctity of the house in its setting in the Ancient East, and those who can accept this may find some of my other theories far-fetched. This may be because some of the chapters were added at a fairly late stage of the book’s progress, and I have not been able to do as much research on them as I could have wished. There must, for example, be more to be found out about fosterage if one knew where to look for it. In theory, I suppose, one should go on trying till one is satisfied that there is no more to be learnt, but in practice the time arrives when one feels that research cannot profitably be carried further. This happened to me last winter, when the snow confined me to the house for two months; successive chapters, after being rewritten more than once, sometimes as a result of my wife’s criticisms, began to assume what I felt must be their final form.

I should like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Ellen Ettlinger for some valuable suggestions and many references, particularly to works in German; to Professor Daryll Forde for some useful references; to Mrs. B. Z. Seligman, whose hospitality included the use of her library; and to Miss B. J. Kirkpatrick, Librarian to the Royal Anthropological Institute, who, as always, has been most helpful. I should also mention Mr. Donald Moore, of the National Museum of Wales, whose invitation to read a paper to the Cambrian Archaeological Association led me to set down, for the first time, some of the ideas which I have developed in this book.

_Cefnilla Court, Usk, Mon._

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Abbreviations

AA    The American Anthropologist
AMM   Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, by W. R. Lethaby
ERE   Hastings’s Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
FL    Folk-Lore
FLJ   The Folk-Lore Journal
FLR   The Folk-Lore Record
FOT   Folklore in the Old Testament, by J. G. Frazer
GB    The Golden Bough, by J. G. Frazer
HSAI  Handbook of the South American Indians
JAF   The Journal of American Folklore
JRAI  The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
K & C  Kings and Councillors, by A. M. Hocart
PC    Primitive Culture, by E. B. Tylor
SNR   Sudan Notes and Records
Introduction

This book is intended as an inquiry into the origin of the dwelling-house; I have ventured upon it because the subject has seemed to me an interesting and even an important one, and so far as I can learn no such inquiry has been attempted. The few writers who have referred to the origin of houses have assumed house-building to have come instinctively or naturally to man, and have thereby begged the question. Even Professor Grahame Clark, perhaps our leading authority on early houses, has made assumptions which seem to me unjustified. ‘Shelter from the elements’, he says, ‘is one of the basic economic needs of man’, and he goes on to say that ‘it can be assumed in view of the elaborate structures built by quite lowly animals that the most primitive men were capable of building artificial structures for themselves’.¹

Animals, however, build instinctively; the beaver builds its dam, the squirrel its drey, the swallow its nest of mud and the weaver-bird its nest of leaves sewn together, but there is no reason to believe that man possesses any of the instincts which enable these creatures to behave as they do. Gorillas are said to make themselves rude platforms in trees, and if man has any such instinct at all, which is more than doubtful, it can hardly be supposed to go further than this.

Even if the most primitive men were, as Professor Clark says, capable of building artificial structures, it by no means follows that they did so. We are all of us capable of doing many things which we never have done, the reason being that before we do

¹ J. G. D. Clark, Prehistoric Europe, 129.
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anything we have to have not merely the capacity but an adequate stimulus. Professor Clark might perhaps say that need would provide an adequate stimulus, but only if he failed to realize that nobody can feel a need for something of which he has never seen or of which he has never heard. Early man can no more have felt the need of a house than can 18th century man have felt the need for a car. This was a rich man’s toy for long before it became anyone’s need and, as we shall see, the house may have been developed for purposes other than shelter against the elements.

House-building is still by no means universal. Many tribes of South–East Asia, Australia and South America have no regular dwellings, and the Ona, who live in the almost Arctic climate of Tierra del Fuego, though they know how to make conical huts, and make quite elaborate ones for their religious ceremonies, usually content themselves with a windbreak of skins. And this though they have no proper clothing, but only skin cloaks. If people who can build houses can be content to live in such conditions without them it can hardly be maintained that people who had never heard of houses, and who lived in more equable climates, would necessarily build them.

No more thought seems to have been given to the origin of building techniques than to the origin of houses. Let us consider a passage from Banister Fletcher’s History of Architecture, a standard work which, as it deserves, has often been reprinted. On the first page we are told that ‘caves were manifestly the first form of human dwelling, and inevitably suggested the raising of stone walls. Natural arbours would suggest huts with tree-trunks for walls and closely laid branches, covered with turf, for roofs. Tents of sheepskin speak for themselves, and are still much in use among Bedouin Arabs.’ Caves may have been the first form of human dwelling, but if so they did not inevitably suggest the raising of stone walls, for the first cave men probably lived half a million years ago and the first stone wall is unlikely to have been built much before 10,000 B.C. Log huts are a good deal later, and probably did not exist outside Northern Europe till they were taken to North America by Scandinavian colonists. Neither of

1 HSAI, i, 110, 120, pl. 37.
these techniques is at all easy until the skill has been acquired. For
the corners of log huts, in particular, a skilled man with a good
axe is needed. And what in nature would suggest to early man
‘closely laid branches covered with turf’? As for Bedouin tents, if
they could speak they would say that they are made not of sheep-
skin but of woven goats’ hair, a far more sophisticated material.

Earliest man, then, having never seen or heard of a house, could
form no idea of one, and even if he could have formed an idea
would not have known how to begin. Buildings even of the
simplest construction require not only materials but techniques
and tools, and it takes experiment and practice to develop these.
The first house-builder, if he really started from scratch, must have
been a man of amazing genius. He had to provide himself with a
design for something entirely new, and with a technique for
using materials and tools for purposes for which they had never
been used before. When Banister Fletcher set men who had never
seen a house the task of making one with stone or log walls he
imposed on them a task harder than any that has been imposed on
a modern architect. He has, in fact, fallen into the common
mistake of regarding the familiar as the obvious.

Anyone who wishes to study any aspect of human behaviour
should start by banishing from his vocabulary such words as
‘evident’, ‘obvious’, ‘natural’, ‘innate’, ‘instinctive’, which are
all question-begging terms, and especially should he banish the
most misleading term of all—‘primitive’. The use of this word has
led to more muddled thinking than all the other words in the
dictionary put together. It is used to mean ‘of or belonging to the
earliest men’, ‘of or belonging to the beginnings of civilization’,
‘of or belonging to modern non-literate societies’, and you are
often uncertain whether those who use the word are referring to
the first men to stand erect, the first men to grow corn, or the
Masai, let us say, of today. There is no justification for assuming
that these three sets of people have culturally anything in common.
Of the first two classes I know nothing, and nor does anyone else,
but of modern non-literate society I have experience, as I was for
some years an administrator in the Southern Sudan, and was the
first European that many naked Africans had seen. Some of them
I got to know very well. Mentally they were, on the average, rather brighter than the average uneducated European, for some of them were of high intelligence. They were also very sensible within the limited purview of their experience, but took little interest in anything outside it. Their customs and beliefs were entirely traditional, and the idea of altering them was quite foreign to their minds. They thus had nothing in common with the ‘primitive man’ of Frazer, who is always asking himself questions and giving himself the wrong answers, or with the members of the ‘primitive society’ of some modern anthropologists, which is always adjusting its customs and institutions to its needs. I have said all this because I shall in the course of this book mention many rites, customs and beliefs observed or held by many peoples, civilized and uncivilized, and not a single one of these rites, customs or beliefs originated with these peoples or with their known ancestors. All have come down from the prehistoric past, and no suggestion that I may make as to their origin can be in conflict with any known fact.

Having, I trust, sufficiently cleared the ground, I can now begin my own investigation into the origin of temples and houses. These have in common that they are dwellings, temples the dwellings of gods and houses the dwellings of men. With them we must class palaces, which are the dwellings of kings and queens, and tombs, which are the dwellings of the dead.

These we must distinguish in the first place from public buildings such as courts of justice, parliament houses, town halls and theatres. A study of these buildings suggests that they were once temples or palaces, or at any rate that the activities carried on in them were once carried on in temples and palaces. The Attic drama was carried on in the precincts of the temple of Dionysus, whose altar stood in the centre of the orchestra. Money is so called because the first Roman money was coined in the temple of Juno Moneta. The Roman basilicas were built for public business, but the word ‘basilica’ means in Greek ‘king’s house’. In mediaeval Europe public business was often transacted in the naves of churches, the chancel alone being regarded as the House of God. Mediaeval kings gave judgment in their palaces and even in
their beds. The Palace of Westminster, though used solely for the purposes of Parliament, is still administered by a high official of the Court.

From individual dwellings we must next distinguish communal dwellings. Under this head we may include monasteries, colleges, hospitals, barracks, prisons and hotels. Monasteries were originally aggregations of the cells of individual monks, and colleges and hospitals were attached to monasteries. Barracks and prisons came to form part of castles when these outgrew their rôle of fortified dwellings. Inns probably began with the paying guest.

Finally we come to private buildings other than dwellings. Of these there are two kinds, the first consisting of factories, shops and offices and the second of such buildings as barns, stables, outside kitchens and privies. The former offer no problem, for dwelling-houses were, and to a great extent still are, used for these purposes. The latter are to provide for what cannot properly be kept or done in the house.

We shall later see reason to think that the temple and tomb are later than the palace and the house. What we have now to consider, as a general preliminary to our study of the house, is whether the palace is a glorified house, the house a modified palace, or whether the two developed independently. If the palace is a glorified house we should expect to find architectural features appearing first in a modest form in houses and later in a more grandiose form in palaces. If the house is a modified palace we should expect to find features appearing first in palaces and later in a simpler form in houses. If they developed independently we should expect to find no, or at least few, features in common.

There is probably no country in which there is better evidence for change and development in house plans and building techniques over the last six hundred years than there is in this country, in which a competent student of architecture can date any building to within about twenty-five years. And what we learn from careful dating is that the features of all houses are copied from palaces of a somewhat earlier date. I do not mean necessarily palaces of the king, for few early ones of these have survived, but the palatial dwellings of the rich and powerful. As Braun
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says: 'The story of the homes of England is one of new ideas and inventions copied by humbler persons from those of better state. A noticeable feature of each building is that, as new improvements in design render existing houses out of date in some particular respect, these structures sink lower and lower in the scale.'

This statement would not be disputed by anyone who has attempted a serious study of the subject, and can be confirmed by many examples. Let us take one. 'The fate of the battened door', says H. Forrester, 'has been that which has befallen most constructional methods under the stress of new architectural forms. In the 14th century it belonged to the finest buildings. Then, abandoned in important houses except for doors of no significance, it continued to be the normal one for ordinary dwellings. Ultimately it was considered too inferior for the front entrance even of workers' cottages, and suitable only for back doors and those to outhouses.'

Such facts suggest a picture very different from that painted by romantically minded writers, who have represented the sturdy peasant as ignoring the mansions of the rich and building with his own hands the house he has designed to suit his needs, but they correspond to what Sir Cyril Fox and I found when we were surveying the old houses of Monmouthshire. In the four hundred farmhouses of the 16th and 17th centuries which we examined we found no feature which was not to be found in the large houses of the day, or the day before, and this applies not merely to their architecture but to the details of their ornamentation. A type of moulding for window frames, first used, so far as I know, in the great mansion of Longleat in Wiltshire about 1575, came into fashion in Monmouthshire farmhouses about 1600 and went out again about 1630. These examples may seem trifling, but they are straws which show which way the wind blows, and it blows in a different direction from that popularly supposed. And it is not merely in ornamental features that the great houses have always led the small; features found in all modern houses, such as staircase, larders and bathrooms, were once found only

2 The Timber-framed Houses of Essex, 43.
in the houses of the upper classes, and it is in them that improvements have always been made. And this is typical of what happens in all forms of culture change. All new features start in the palaces and spread to the cottages; they start in the capitals and spread to the provinces; they start in the centres of civilization and spread to the wilds. No peasant, backwoodsman or savage ever started anything new. This may sound extravagant, but no scrap of evidence to refute it has ever been produced.

Seeing, then, that there is much evidence for, and no evidence against, the view that all improvements to the house started at the top, the conclusion suggests itself that the house itself started at the top, that is to say that the first person to have a house was the most important person, the divine king or his predecessor, not forgetting the divine queen. These were sacred personages, and the house was sacred because it was there that they performed their sacred functions, which we shall come to later.
I

The House as Temple

For us a house is a purely secular building, and we never think of it as having anything in common with a temple or church. For many peoples, however, a house is anything but a purely secular building. Elwin says, for example, that among the Saora of Eastern India 'every house is in a sense a temple, for nearly every sacrifice begins indoors. The ancestors use it as a hostelry on their visits to earth, and there are half a dozen resident deities.' ¹ By the Purum of the Indo-Chinese border the house is divided into two parts. One contains the altar of the house-god and a ritually important post, which is the first part of the house to be erected and near which the owner sleeps.²

In a Mongolian tent the family altar is on the left of the bed as one enters. There are offertory dishes, prayer-wheels, censers and vessels for holy water, and a lighted oil lamp is placed on the shrine every evening. The god of fire seems to be the principal object of worship.³ In Manchu houses the ancestors of the family and the god of the hearth are worshipped.⁴

The sanctity of Chinese houses was expressed in various ways. Paper door-gods were pasted on the doors to protect the house against evil spirits. Near the door was the altar of T'ü-ti, the

¹ V. Elwin, The Religion of an Indian Tribe, 40.
² R. Needham in AA, lx, 90.
³ G. Montell in JRAI, 1940, 82.
⁴ J. G. S. Lockhart in FL, 1890, 489.
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protector of the family. Elsewhere other gods, including Tsao-shen, the kitchen-god, had their place. In the main room or hall of every house was the ancestral altar. The ever-burning lamp and the ceremonies connected with this altar suggested that the dead continued to help the family and supervise its conduct.\(^1\)

Of the Ainu of Japan Munro says: 'The house of the Ainu was a place for the worship of the kamui almost as much as a house. The Ainu seem never to have had temples. The nearest thing to such was the house of the village chief. This was much larger than ordinary houses and was often resorted to on great occasions such as the Bear Festival. . . . In times of emergency or communal anxiety special services of supplication might be held there, but as a rule every man's house was his temple, enshrining the hearth-fire sacred to Kamui Fuchi.'\(^2\) In some ceremonies the goddess of the hearth and the spirits of dead are worshipped together.\(^3\) This seems to me an interesting example of the way in which sacredness spreads from the originally sacred building to ordinary houses.

In the Melanesian island of Santa Cruz when a man of distinction dies his ghost becomes a duka. A stock of wood is set up in his house to represent him and offerings are made to it. It is renewed from time to time till the man is forgotten or replaced by a newer duka.\(^4\)

The Peruvians, Micmacs, Natchez and others kept the bodies of their dead in their houses or temples, believing that this would enable the spirits to warn them of the approach of enemies and advise with the priests about the affairs of the tribe.\(^5\) In the minds of the Hidatsa Indians the centre posts of their houses are living beings and they hold them sacred.\(^6\)

'In the house of each family head' of the Anang of Nigeria 'is found the shrine honouring the ancestors. It is always located at the end of the room opposite the fireplace, so that the smoke will not bother the souls of ancestors visiting the shrine to partake of

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\(^2\) N. G. Munro, Ainu Creed and Cult, 55.
\(^3\) Ibid. 85.
\(^4\) ERE, i, 431.
\(^5\) ERE, i, 433.
\(^6\) K. B. Smith, Primitive Man and His Ways, 80.
sacrifices offered to them." Of the Baila of Rhodesia Edwin Smith says that: 'The family altar is an unmarked spot at the foot of the central pole of the hut and other spots just within the doorway; it is there that the mother and father offer their prayers and gifts to their respective ancestors. This corresponds to the space at the back of the hut which the head of every Zulu family reserves for the ancestors, and where he makes his offerings and says his prayers.'

Comparable cults are known in Europe. The Mordvins of East Russia have a special place for sacrifice in every house, with a pit to catch the blood. Sacrifices are made to the spirit or guardian deity of the homestead. In the belief of the ancient Finns, 'the domestic spirit lived under the floor. A separate room, or at least a corner of the house, was consecrated to him. It may be that the hearth or the fire was to some extent involved in the cult, for certain formulas relate to the "mother of the fire". The domestic spirit was also thought of as the true owner of the ground on which the house was built, and when it was built propitiatory sacrifices were offered to him.'

So it was with the Romans; 'the oldest Roman religion', we are told, 'was the worship of the Lar and Penates. Each family had in its home an altar with a continually burning fire where the ancestors and the house gods were worshipped.' It was, however, only the patricians who performed these rites.

Widespread as these cults are, they are very far from being universal. Many tribes are not reported as having ancestral cults, and of those that have them by no means all perform rites within the house. In those I have cited the ancestors appear sometimes as honoured guests, and sometimes as residents watchful to check any breach of traditional behaviour. The ancestors, too, seem not to be distinguished very clearly from the domestic deities. All this is what one might expect if cults which were originally royal had been taken over by non-royal persons, but not if the latter had developed them independently.

2 JRAI, 1952, 27.  
3 J. Abercomby in FLJ, 1889, 84.  
4 A. Sauvageot, Les Anciens Finnois, 120.  
5 J. Polak, in Symbolae van Oven, 252.
It has been suggested that if ancestors are worshipped in houses it is because they were buried in the houses, and a Latin commentator on Vergil has been cited in support. He says that it was an ancient Greek and Roman custom to bury the dead in the house, and that it is in consequence of this custom that the Lares and Penates are honoured in the houses. ¹ We are also told that in Germany 'ceremonial acts of law took place on the hearth because in the olden days the house was the burial-place of the man of the house or the father of the clan'. ² But this evidence is not very strong. The Greeks had no household cult of ancestors, and though in some tribes people are buried in the house, this does not seem to be done by any of the peoples whom I have mentioned above.

Finally let us see what we can find of the sanctity of the house in this country. There is a saying that an Englishman's house is his castle, but it would be more accurate to say that it is his palace. Its strength does not lie in its ability to stand a siege, but in the cloak of sanctity which the law throws over the house of the sovereign, and, though to a lesser extent, over the houses of his lieges. The fact of this sanctity is brought out by Pollock and Maitland in their History of English Law, when they are describing the process by which the king's jurisdiction was extended. In Cnut's time the king's peace only covered deeds of violence done to persons or at places specially protected by the royal power. In those days every householder had his peace, and if you broke it by fighting in his house you had to pay him compensation. The Norman kings, or their justices, extended the king's peace by extending the sanctity of his residence, at first to include those travelling to and from his court, then to all travellers on his highway, and at length to the whole country. ³ Thus the householder's peace, always less extensive than the king's, was eventually absorbed by it.

In Scotland, it seems, a householder still has his peace. There a special name is given to the offence of feloniously assaulting a man in his own house; it is called hamesucken, a word also used in the

old law of England. Offences committed in a house are generally punished more severely than those committed outside.\(^1\) This may be a survival of Roman law. Polak, whom I quoted above on Roman religion, goes on to say: ‘The house in that olden time played the part of a temple, and so the inviolability rests on a religious basis. Disturbance of the domestic peace was an insult to the house gods. . . . In later times it was forgotten why rites had to be performed when a house had to be forcibly entered to make an arrest or search for stolen goods. The house of a malefactor could be demolished, but the fact that a temple was often built on such a site suggests that the practice of demolition had a religious basis.’\(^2\) In the Middle Ages in many towns of France and Flanders the penalty of house demolition was prescribed for various offences. It was unknown in England except in the Cinque Ports, where a burgess who refused to perform his civic duties rendered himself liable to have his house communally demolished.\(^3\)

In this country a rite has still to be performed before a house can be forcibly entered; the police must obtain a search warrant signed by a magistrate. This is perhaps the last survival of the house’s sanctity.

\(^1\) Chambers’s *Encyclopaedia*, s.v. ‘house’.
II

The Foundation Sacrifice

In the last chapter we saw that among many peoples houses are sacred because they are equivalent to temples, that is to say that they are places where divine beings, whether gods or ancestral spirits, are worshipped. But before a temple can be used for worship it has to be consecrated, that is to say that rites have to be performed which have the effect of separating it from the secular world and converting it and the ground on which it stands into a sacred world, to which gods will be willing to resort, and where in return for the services rendered to them by persons dedicated to their service they will confer prosperity upon the community by which the temple has been built.

The gods, however, will not resort to any spot on which their worshippers build a temple; they insist on choosing the spot for themselves, and show their displeasure if their wishes are disregarded. Realizing this, builders of temples in many parts of the world have taken precautions to see that the site they propose is acceptable to the gods, and house-builders in this, as in many other respects, have followed their example.

It might be suggested that it was the other way round, that is to say that the rites which we shall review in the next few pages were devised by house-builders and later copied by temple-builders. But it can hardly be supposed that the earliest men performed rites, any more than apes can be supposed to perform rites. Can it really be that they lived in shelters of sorts for
uncounted millennia and then all came to the conclusion that they
could not go on doing so without performing elaborate rites? And
that these rites should later have been copied by kings, priests
and all those responsible for building temples, palaces, town
gates, bridges and tombs? To say the least, it seems very unlikely.

The purpose of these rites is variously stated. In some cases it is
said to be in order to secure the favour of deities or other super-
natural beings, that is to say the purpose which we suggested
above. In others it is said to be to drive or keep away evil spirits,
witches or diseases, or to make the buildings safe from the attacks
of human enemies or wild animals. This comes to much the same
thing, for one gains the favour of the gods by defeating or keeping
at bay their enemies.

The principal rites are those for ensuring that the site to be built
on finds favour with the gods, those for consecrating it after
divine approval has been secured, and those performed when
the foundations are laid. There are also rites performed during
building, when the building is finished and when the owner takes
possession.

Builders of churches have commonly believed that the site on
which to build will be divinely indicated. The abbey of Herford
in Germany was erected on a site shown, in answer to prayer, by
a snow-white cow bearing a burning taper on each horn. Accord-
ing to legend, the monks of Cluny were unable to agree where
the abbey should be built. One of them, a mason, flung his
hammer into the air and the abbey was built where it fell. Some-
times the divine will has been indicated by a flame or light seen
in a bush, as in the case of the Monmouthshire church of Llantilio
Pertholey.¹ According to tradition there was a difficulty in finding
a site for another Monmouthshire church, that of Kilgwrwg, so two
heifers were yoked together and the church was built
where they lay down.²

If a church is built without divine permission, it is liable to be
pulled down. At Sundal in Norway the church was destroyed by
an avalanche in 1660. 'It was decided to build it on the other side
of the river, but each night the work done on the previous day

¹ ERE, vi, 109.
² FL, 1937, 55.
was pulled down. So the peasants took a staff and cast it into the water; at the spot where it touched the bank an untamed foal was harnessed, and at the spot where the foal first stood still the church was built.\textsuperscript{1} The last two anecdotes remind one of the story of Cadmus who, on the instruction of the Delphic oracle, followed a cow and built Thebes where she lay down.

Similar stories come from other lands. In Japan, under the Emperor Kotoku, a Buddhist temple was erected on the spot where a white deer was seen quietly moving. A man at Ratnapiri in India vowed that he would build a mosque wherever a bull that he let loose stopped. Hence the present mosque at Balapur. When Raja Darrava was hunting, a hare turned and killed one of his hounds. Admiring its bravery, he chose the spot as the site of the town of Dharwar.\textsuperscript{2} When the Bechuana found a new village, they sew the eyelids of a bullock together and allow it, thus blinded, to wander for four days. Where they find it they kill and eat it, and build on the spot.\textsuperscript{3}

Steps are also taken to secure auspicious sites for houses. In Sweden would-be builders ask permission of the fairies and are careful to avoid building near fairy dwellings. Similar precautions are taken in the Faroes and Galloway. A Yugoslav farmer wishing to build rolls a cake down the hillside; if it falls on its face the hill spirit is favourable. Among the Huzules of the Carpathians a suitable spot is that on which a would-be builder’s cattle lie down. Having chosen such a spot he sleeps on it, and if he has good dreams, especially of fine cattle, all is well; if not he goes elsewhere.\textsuperscript{4}

To select a site for a house, a Hindu is advised to dig a pit, smear the sides with clay, and place in it a lighted lamp. If it burns brightly and uniformly the ground is fit for building. Among the Mundas of Chota Nagpur holes are dug where the four corners are to be, and a little rice placed in each with a prayer to the deity. If next morning the rice is found untouched, the deity approves.\textsuperscript{5} The Shans of Burma lay a grain of rice from each of

\textsuperscript{1} FL, 1909, 315.  
\textsuperscript{2} FL, 1918, 131.  
\textsuperscript{3} ERE, vi, 111.  
\textsuperscript{4} ERE, vi, 110.  
\textsuperscript{5} ERE, loc. cit.
ten baskets on the site; if they are there next morning the omen is favourable.¹

Important families in China never select a site for a building without recourse to geomancy.² In some of the Moluccas a prospective builder places a coil of rope, a bottle of water and an egg on the site and watches all night. If by next morning no dog or cat has approached the site and if the rope is found to be of the same length, the bottle full and the egg uncorrupted, the omens are favourable.

The Maravi of Nyasaland take an opposite view to that of the Mundas and Shans. They place a small quantity of flour under a tree. If next day it is undisturbed the ancestral spirits have declined to eat it and the site is abandoned. Among the Hos of West Africa the priest pours a mixture of meal and water on to the ground and after a prayer throws four cowries on to it. If at least two fall with the opening upwards, the site is approved.³

It is interesting to find a rope trick similar to that of the Moluccas in Norway. The ancient Norse measured the ground for a new house several times. If the measurements grew longer they thought that the owner’s prosperity would increase, and vice versa.⁴ We are not told if they abandoned the site if the measurements grew shorter.

It is surprising to find so wide a range of prognostications, and yet to find omens drawn from cattle in various parts of Europe and in India and South Africa.

An auspicious site having been secured, the next proceeding, in many parts of the world, is to consecrate it. The ancient Etruscans, when founding a city, did this by ploughing round the site with a bull and a cow. When a Buddhist temple is to be erected, eight round stones are sprinkled with holy water and buried round the site to mark the limits from which evil spirits are warned off. Among the Akamba of Kenya a medicine man, having ascertained by divination that the site for a new village is

¹ FL, 1918, 128.
² M. C. Yang, A Chinese Village, 88.
³ ERE, loc. cit.
⁴ P. B. du Chaillu, The Viking Age, ii, 73.
lucky, kills a goat and sprinkles the blood and the contents of the stomach round the boundary. The purpose of these rites is clear, even if it is not expressly stated, as in the case of the Buddhist temple. It is to draw a line between the sacred and the profane. This is done in the case of Christian churchyards; ‘God’s acre’ is consecrated so that the faithful dead may rest in it in peace, untroubled by the Devil, who is lurking outside. It is the same with towns and villages, in which the members of the community may live in peace, protected by a mystic circle from molestation by evil spirits. This is a permanent barrier, to be renewed periodically by some such ceremony as ‘beating the bounds’.

In the case of houses the ceremony is performed once for all, and seems to have a very limited distribution. We have examples from India. When a house is to be built in Central India an astrologer calculates the direction in which Shesh Nag, the world serpent, is lying, and lays the first brick or stone accordingly. This will make the house less susceptible to earthquakes, which are caused by the movements of Shesh Nag. In South Canara a large square is marked out on the ground with lines of whitewash, with magical symbols at the corners. Flowers and boiled rice are laid round a roughly drawn human figure at the centre which represents the earth spirit. It is believed that if the rite is omitted there will be no luck about the house. In Burma the Shans will not begin a new house till the owner has on his birthday offered sacrifice to the earth spirit.¹ In the first of these rites Shesh Nag is a cosmic figure, and the rite involving this creature is pretty certainly part of a cosmic ritual associated originally with a temple. The second also suggests a simplified form of a temple rite. In some parts of Germany ‘pious people of the old faith still sprinkle the site with holy water and bless it. Formerly a priest performed this function, and by its means all evil, all ghosts and demons, were exorcized’.² The fact that this rite was performed by a priest indicates that it was of ecclesiastical origin. There is, in fact, no reason to suppose that these customs, or the ideas at the back of them, are ‘primitive’ in any possible sense of that much abused word.

¹ FL, 1918, 132-4.  
² ERE, loc. cit.
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We now come to the foundation sacrifice, which is more important, more widespread and more homogeneous than the customs discussed above. In England it exists only as a vestigial survival, not for private houses, but for churches and public buildings such as schools, hospitals and town halls. For them it is still the custom to have a formal ‘laying of the foundation stone’, and to put under this stone coins, newspapers and other objects, substitutes for the victims of former times. The tradition of these victims has not long been extinct, for as late as 1871 Lord Leigh was accused of having built an obnoxious person into the foundations of a bridge at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire.\(^1\) I shall now give some examples from various parts of the world, taking it by continents and giving the sacred and important buildings first.

It is said that Oran, one of the companions of St. Columba, offered himself, or the lot fell on him, to be buried alive under the monastery of Iona. Clonmacnois is said to have been consecrated by the similar burial of a leper who was in St. Patrick’s retinue. There are legends of human sacrifice at the foundation of various important buildings in Wales, Denmark, Thuringia and Serbia.\(^2\)

The Picts are said to have bathed their foundation stones in human blood to propitiate the earth spirit.\(^3\)

In Aberdeenshire the first stone laid is that behind the fireplace. A chicken is struck upon it until it is covered with blood. This ensures that the pot on the fire will be well filled so long as he for whom the house was built continues to occupy it. In Leitrim it was usual to kill a hen and allow the blood to drip into holes at the four corners of the house. It is said that in Morbihan, at the building of a church or house, an ox would be killed as an offering to the earth spirits that they might not destroy the building. In Anjou and Maine the custom of burying in the foundations a small, live animal was continued till recent times.\(^4\)

Passing to Asia, we are told that the Arabs east of the Dead Sea, when they pitch a tent, kill a sheep and ask leave of the jinn

\(^1\) ERE, vi, 114.
\(^2\) ERE, ii, 850–1.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) ERE, vi, 112.
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In possession. At Nebk in Syria it is said that every house must have a foundation sacrifice, or one of the workmen would die. Every house not ransomed by the sacrifice of an animal must be redeemed by a human life.

In India the king who built the fort at Lohabad was warned in a dream that the favour of the god of the hill would be won by burying a man and a woman under the foundation, and a Maratha offered his son and daughter-in-law. When Raja Sala Byne was building the fort at Sialkot the foundations of the south-east bastion kept on giving way. A soothsayer told him they would not stand till the blood of an only son was shed, so the only son of a widow was sacrificed.

When the cathedral was built at Shanghai it was said that the municipal council required human bodies to bury under the foundations, and for a week people were afraid to go out at night. In Japan it was formerly believed that a wall would be secure if built on the body of a willing victim.

The Nagas of Manipur used to put a human head under the main post of a new house. The Malays, before building a house, select a lucky day and site. They then dig, with elaborate precautions, the hole for the centre post. They then take a fowl, goat or buffalo, according to the ascertained or reputed malignity of the locally presiding earth-demon, kill it and let its blood run into the hole, into which they also put its head and feet. The Milanau Dayaks of Borneo, when building the largest house in the village, place a slave girl in the hole dug for the first post, and crush her to death with it. The Sea Dayaks, when removing a village, smear the blood of a slain fowl or pig on the feet of the posts to pacify the tutelary deity of the earth.

When a Maori house was built, slaves were killed and their bodies placed in the post-holes. In Tahiti every pillar supporting the roof of the sacred houses was planted on the body of a man.

1 Ibid.
2 FOT, i, 246.
3 ERE, loc. cit.
4 PC, i, 108.
5 ERE, vi, 114.
6 PC, loc. cit.
7 W. Skeat, Malay Magic, 143.
8 ERE, loc. cit.
9 W. Ellis, Polynesian Researches, ii, 212.
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In Malekula of the New Hebrides each main post of a new clubhouse is consecrated by the sacrifice of a boar.¹

Of the north-western tribes of Canada we are told that when a chief or great man built a house, captives and slaves were put to death and the house-posts reared upon their bodies. Others were buried under the totem pole in front of the house. Some Mexican Indians bury a chicken in the centre of the house. If the house has two rooms the shrine of the house spirit is placed over the spot, against the partition.² The palace of the Bogota, ruler of the Chibchas of Peru, was believed to rest on the bodies of maidens.³ They and some Guatemalan tribes buried a corpse in the foundation of each building that it might be protected by the spirit.⁴

Of Africa we are told that when Take-domu, the founder of the kingdom of Dahomey, conquered the Foys, he killed their king and built his palace on the body.⁵ When an Ashanti town was to be built, and before the building started, a princess, gorgeously attired, was sacrificed; her body, entirely covered with gold-dust, was buried in front of the future gate of the king’s palace.⁶

These last two are the only examples of the foundation sacrifice that I have found in Africa, and both are from an area which we have good reason to believe was strongly influenced by the Malays. On the other hand I have omitted many examples from Europe, Asia and the Americas. The fact then, if it is a fact, that the foundation sacrifice is not found over most of Negro Africa excludes such explanations as that it is instinctive, natural, ‘archetypal’ or that it ‘occurs at a certain stage’. Nor have we any reason to think that it necessarily commends itself to savages even when suggested to them. We are told that the Omaha Indians, who were tent-dwellers, settled near the Arikara, who lived in circular earth-lodges. ‘When the Omaha adopted the circular earth-lodge, they did so from a purely practical point of view. They took it from the Arikara, with whom it represented certain religious ideas. Rituals attended the cutting of trees for its structure and the planting of the four posts that enclosed the space round

² Inf. J. Pitt-Rivers.
³ ERE, loc. cit.
⁴ ERE, i, 436.
⁵ ERE, vi, 113.
the centre fire. The Omaha observed none of these ceremonies.¹ The Omaha had followed traditional procedures in pitching their tents, but they had either lost or never had a tradition of foundation rites, so saw no need for them. Nor does anyone else who has not the tradition. I doubt that anyone would maintain that the Australian Blacks, if they started house-building, would think it necessary to make foundation sacrifices.

What was the nature of the sacrifice? A glance through the examples given shows that though there are one or two exceptions, a human victim was required for sacred and royal buildings, while an animal or fowl would do for ordinary houses; that is to say that an animal sacrifice is a substitute for a human sacrifice. There is evidence apart from foundation sacrifices to support this view, an example being the story of Abraham and Isaac, which is probably a parable directed against human sacrifice. The original rite, it seems safe to conclude, was the burial of a human being under a temple or palace.

And what was its purpose? This is more difficult to answer. According to some it was a sacrifice to the earth spirit, but who this spirit is supposed to be and why he should want a human corpse is obscure. There is nowhere any suggestion that the earth spirit has any connection with Mother Earth, about whom we shall have a good deal to say later on. Another purpose is suggested by the statement quoted above that some American tribes buried a corpse under a building that it might be protected by the spirit. We are not told what the exact function of the spirit was to be, but we can perhaps get an idea from Burma, where, when about 1780 the gates of a new city were built, a criminal was put into each post-hole to become a protecting demon.² Formerly in Siam the palaces and towers were built on posts, and when these were replaced they were each planted on the body of a pregnant woman. These were believed to become terrible monsters, capable of guarding the buildings against all misfortunes. Quaritch Wales, who tells us this, says that it has been alleged that they were sacrifices to the spirits disturbed by the digging, but that it is clear that the victims themselves were more or less deified. They

¹ Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 75.  
² PC, i, 107.
were feasted before execution and propitiated afterwards. The view that they themselves were to be the guardian spirits receives some support from Ireland. We are told that when the sisterhood of Cill Eochaille was founded by St. Senan the sisters entreated Senan that the body of a lowly monk of his community might be given to them 'to be buried by us, so that his relics shall protect us'. Senan replied: 'Verily this shall be granted to you. Be in no distress as to one from whom your protection shall come.' It seems that the monk was already dead, but he was clearly to become their guardian spirit. It may well be that the spirits of the victims were the original earth spirits, and that the practice continued unchanged but with a change of theory. At any rate it seems excessively unlikely that this frightful custom should have had two separate origins.

Passing over rites performed and taboos observed during the progress of building, it remains to consider briefly what is done after a building is finished and before it is occupied. It is a custom among French peasants to sacrifice a cock when a family takes possession of a new house. In Lebanon when a man finishes a house he sacrifices an animal on the doorstep. In Oman when a new house is finished the prospective occupant kills a sheep on the doorstep and smears its blood on the door-posts. Among the Kammalans of Madras a goat is sacrificed at each corner of a new house, and the blood of fowls is rubbed on walls and ceiling. When the Oraons build a new house the ancestors are invited to enter it and a sacrifice is offered on the first day that it is occupied. The Tonapoo of Central Celebes, when they have finished building a temple, sacrifice a human being on the ridge of the roof and allow the blood to flow down on both sides. The Toradja substitute a dog or fowl. In the case of a house they kill a goat, pig or buffalo. The intention is to propitiate the forest spirits who may be still in the timber.

1 Siamese State Ceremonies, 306. 2 ERE, vi, 115. 3 FLR, 1878, 102. 4 POT, i, 426. 5 JRAI, 1932, 92. 6 FL, 1918, 134, 139. 7 GB, ii, 39.
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Among the Maya there is a ceremony before a new house is occupied. It includes the sacrifice of a hen and the offering of food to the poles of which the house is built.\(^1\)

In Uganda a ceremony preceded the entrance into every new house. The owner made a feast to which the priest came with his fetishes. Cooked plantains were placed near the main pillars as an offering to the god.\(^2\)

Here again we find that the only human sacrifice is for a temple, though its purpose is not clear. Are the forest spirits to stay comfortably in the timber, or go home replete? As for the other sacrifices, we are given no clue as to their purpose. Were the people in these various countries independently impelled to this apparently pointless rite? Their only survival among ourselves is the ‘house-warming’, at which we sacrifice, to some purpose, a bottle or two of wine.

III

The Sanctity of the Threshold

The rites described in the last chapter are clear evidence that cities, villages, temples, palaces and houses are, or are apt to be, islands of sanctity in a profane world. Temples, palaces and houses are inner sanctuaries within the outer sanctuaries, that is to say the towns and villages. The difference between temples and palaces, on the one hand, and houses on the other, is that what is done in the former affects the inhabitants of the cities or villages, both when inside and outside their houses, whereas what is done in the houses affects only their inmates. But what is done in all of them is in general the same, or at least done with the same object, which is to co-operate with friendly deities and spirits in order that the inhabitants may be able to dwell in peace, safe from the assaults of the hostile demons (or human enemies, who are hardly to be distinguished from them) who occupy the surrounding territory. A precaution usually taken is to place a wall, fence or magic circle (these again are hardly to be distinguished) round the sanctuary, and to ensure that a sufficient force of friendly spirits is at hand to guard it against the assaults of the enemy.

In order to live, however, the inhabitants of these sanctuaries must communicate with the outside world, but the gates and doors which are necessary to enable them to get out will also, unless great care is taken, enable the enemy to get in. Gateways and doorways lead into the dwellings of divine beings, and must be protected accordingly.
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‘In the Ancient East’, says Baldwin Smith, ‘the gateway was the symbol of heavenly authority because it was the entrance to the dwelling of godlike kings and kinglike gods. Hence in the Roman provinces of the East the Royal Gate was by tradition the place where the resplendent and godlike king was received by his subjects, where he sat in judgment and where, after his acceptance and reception, he withdrew like the sun at night into his impregnable and heavenlike stronghold.’

But the entrance is sacred not only because it leads to the dwelling of a divine being but is itself the abode of divine beings. Doorways, we are told, especially the doorways of temples, have deities who are believed to guard them. In Babylonia, Assyria, Greece, Central America and elsewhere there were figures of deities, some in the form of animals or monsters, at the doors of temples to protect them from evil spirits. Sacred symbols—crosses, horseshoes, hands with fingers extended, etc.—are affixed to the doors of temples, churches and houses to keep away witches, ghosts and all the powers of evil. Whenever an orthodox Jew passes through the main door of a house, a finger of his right hand touches the mezuzah, a casket attached to the door-post and containing a piece of paper or ribbon on which is written or embroidered the sacred name of God (Shaddai).

Gates and doors mark the division between the sacred and the profane world, and so do thresholds, but precautions taken at the latter are far more numerous and widespread than at gateways, and at doors and doorways as distinct from thresholds. It seems not to matter how you go through a gateway, but in most parts of the world you must not go through a doorway without observing the threshold ritual.

That the threshold must be stepped over right foot first is mentioned as a custom of the Teutons, Finns, Syrians, Egyptians and Persians. In Yorkshire you draw down evil on the inhabitants of a house if you enter it left foot first.

It is unlucky to stumble on the threshold, especially when

1 E. Baldwin Smith, Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages, 10.
2 ERE, iv, 848.
3 ERE, iv, 846.
4 W. Henderson, Folklore of the Northern Counties, 116.
going on a journey or on business. This belief is reported from the Highlands of Scotland, Germany, Syria, Malaya and elsewhere, and Pythagoras said that he who struck his foot against the threshold should turn back.¹

Mongolian tents have a wooden-framed doorway, 'and it is considered both unlucky and impolite to touch the sill with one's foot'.² On the Tartar steppes six hundred years ago it was an offence to tread on the threshold or touch the ropes on entering a tent, and it appears to be so still.³ Visitors to the temple of the Yezidis at Sheikh Adi near Mosul must be careful to step over the sacred stone at the entrance.⁴ Among the Bella Coola Indians of British Columbia novices to be initiated into a secret society had to leap over the threshold of the dancing-house.⁵

Among the Hindus the threshold, marking the division between the spirits without and the spirits within, is a holy place. It is the abode of Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and good luck, and anyone who sits there is likely to be afflicted with haemorrhoids.⁶ In Central Java, after a birth in the house, the placenta is buried at the threshold and there is a strict injunction not to step on it.⁷ Souls were supposed to dwell under the threshold in ancient India. Among the Slavs the house-spirit is propitiated by offerings buried beneath the threshold. In Irish and Scots belief the household fairies reside at the threshold. In Samoa the tutelary spirit is angry when water is spilt on the threshold.⁸

The Israelites were very particular about the threshold of the temple, and there was an important official⁹ called the warden of the threshold, whose duty no doubt was to see that nobody crossed it improperly. Cheyne says that the phrase 'How long halt ye between two opinions?'¹⁰ should be explained as 'How long will ye leap over both thresholds?', i.e. 'enter with the same scrupulous awe the sanctuaries of the two rival deities, Yahwe and Baal'. And he paraphrases Zephaniah, i, 9 by—'And on that

¹ ERE, loc. cit.
² G. Montell in JRAI, 1940, 83.
³ PC, i, 70.
⁵ ERE, loc. cit.
⁶ FL, 1918, 142.
⁷ Man, 1938, 18.
⁸ ERE, iv, 848.
⁹ Jer. xxxv, 4.
¹⁰ I Kings, xviii, 21.
day will I punish those who, though they leap with scrupulous awe over the sacred threshold, yet bring with them into Yahwe’s house hands stained with cruelty and injustice.’ In I Samuel v it is said that the priests of Dagon leapt over the threshold of his temple because when the ark of God was there the image of Dagon was found lying before it with its severed head on the threshold. This Cheyne describes as an uncritical guess.\(^1\)

But though in many parts of the world the threshold must be treated with respect by everybody, it is brides who have to be especially careful of it. The custom by which a bride is carried over the threshold into her new home is very widespread. The Romans, says Plutarch, ‘would not permit the newly wedded bride to pass of herself over the door-sill or threshold when she is brought home to her husband’s house, but they that accompany her must lift her up between them from the ground and so convey her in’. Jevons, discussing this passage, says that parallels to the Roman custom are to be found elsewhere. ‘Among the modern Greeks the bride is lifted over the threshold, as it would be most unlucky if she touched it in crossing. It is the most important wedding guest among the Servians, the bride’s nearest relative in Lorraine, who carries her in his arms from the waggon into her new home. Among the Frisians the “bride-lifter” is a regular wedding official. The Finnish Ugrians uniformly practise it, and the ceremony seems to have been known to the ancient Hindus. It is further noteworthy that the Finnish Ugrians agree with the Romans, the Hindus and the Russians in that the bride is not only carried over the threshold by some of the bridal party, but is then caused by them to “sit upon a fleece of wool”.’ Jevons goes on to say that the object of these strange proceedings was unknown to the Romans, as it is to those who still observe the custom.\(^2\)

The custom is observed in many more countries than those mentioned by Jevons. It was observed in Lincolnshire as late as 1890. In this instance, when the bride was brought by her husband to his home after the honeymoon, the pair got out of the carriage

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\(^1\) Encyclopaedia Biblica, s.v. ‘threshold’.

\(^2\) F. B. Jevons, Plutarch’s Roman Questions, xcvi.
a few yards from the house and he carried her up the steps and into the hall. The custom is found in Wales and Scotland, as well as in Germany, France and Switzerland; also in Morocco, Egypt, Abyssinia, Syria and China. In Morocco a reason given for the custom is that the threshold is haunted by jinn. Among the Yemeni Jews a bride is forbidden to step over her husband’s threshold for thirty days, lest demons get hold of her. A Manchu bride is carried into her husband’s house in a sedan-chair and alights on to a red carpet just inside the door. Among the Mixtecs of Mexico the bridegroom carried the bride to his house on his back.

The custom is common in Negro Africa. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria the bride is taken to her husband’s house at night; at the gate her feet are washed and she is carried over the threshold. Hence marriage is called ‘carrying the bride’. Among the Agni of the Ivory Coast a companion of the bride takes her on her back and places her in the bridegroom’s compound. Among the Bakitara of Uganda the bride is carried to the bridegroom’s house and there has to alight on to a grass carpet. In Northern Rhodesia a Bemba bride is carried to her husband’s hut on the back of her paternal aunt. The Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert leave the bridal hut open at one side, so that strictly speaking it has no threshold, yet the bride is carried into it.

Instead of being carried over the threshold, the bride may have to step over it right foot first, as in the ancient Vedic ceremonial; to step over the blood of an animal sacrificed at the threshold, a custom which exists among the Copts and Somalis, and in Syria.

1 E. Howlett in Curious Church Customs, A. Andrews, ed., 124.
2 E. Westermarck, The History of Human Marriage, ii, 513 f.
3 E. Westermarck, Ceremonies in Morocco, 220.
5 FL, 1890, 487.
6 J. B. Thompson, Mexico Before Cortez, 47.
8 Man, 1936, 176.
9 A. I. Richards in Seven Tribes, ed. Gluckman, 183.
and Armenia.¹ A Parsi bridegroom when he goes to the bride’s house for the wedding ceremony, and the bride when she first enters her husband’s house, must be careful to step over the threshold right foot first without touching it.² These last examples make it clear, if there was any doubt, that all these threshold customs form part of a single complex.

Jevons ignores all threshold customs other than the carrying of the bride, and that he regards as a survival of marriage by capture. When he wrote, about seventy years ago, the theory of original marriage by capture was very popular, and was believed to explain the custom of exogamy. It has since been realized that exogamy does not involve, as was then supposed, obtaining a wife from another tribe, but merely from another clan. This often means that a man has to marry his father’s sister’s daughter or his mother’s brother’s daughter. Marriage by capture, though it has occurred sporadically at various times and places, has nowhere been a custom, and can therefore not have given rise to a custom.

Crooke again³ considered only the carrying of the bride and regarded this as a fertility charm. But there is nothing to suggest that the custom had any purpose other than to ensure that the bride did not touch the threshold.

Westermarck attributed these rites to ‘the uncanny feeling which superstitious people are apt to experience when they first enter a dwelling, passing through the doorway from daylight to dimness. This feeling easily gives rise to the idea that the threshold is haunted by mysterious beings.’⁴ This is a shocking example of question begging. There is an old catch question—‘Why does a miller wear a white hat?’, to which the answer is ‘To keep his head warm.’ The question is really two questions rolled into one: ‘Why does a miller wear a hat?’ and ‘Why is his hat white?’ Any single answer must beg one of them, but the answer given would no doubt have seemed quite satisfactory to Westermarck, for he, unconsciously as it seems, begs at least half a dozen. Do superstitious people have an uncanny feeling when entering a dimly lit room? Does this cause them to imagine mysterious beings?

¹ ERE, iv, 846.
² ERE, vi, 456.
³ FL, 1902, 238.
⁴ The History of Human Marriage, ii, 538.
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Do they necessarily locate those beings in the brightly lit doorway and not in the dim interior? Do they necessarily suppose them to remain there permanently? And in the threshold and not, say, the lintel? And do all these spirits inevitably demand the same treatment? In one sentence he gives a dogmatically affirmative answer to all these questions. His attitude is regrettably common among so-called scientists.

The article in ERE which I have quoted is by MacCulloch, and his explanation is similar to that at the beginning of this chapter. He speaks of 'the conception of the door as separating between two worlds—the outside world, where are innumerable hostile influences and powers, and the region within the limits of the house, the influences and powers of which are friendly. The door is at once the barrier against those hostile influences, and that which gives entrance to those who have a right to pass to the sacred region within. Hence those who pass through the door—the limit of the sacred region and therefore itself sacred—must do so with care and also with certain ritual acts. . . . Being the dividing line between hostile and friendly spheres, the doorway was supposed to be a place where evil influences clustered, or sometimes even dwelt. But more usually the household spirits dwell at the door and protect it."

We start then with the divine king, living in his sanctuary of the temple-palace, and guarded by the spirits resulting from human sacrifice. Later this becomes an inner sanctuary surrounded by an outer sanctuary, the city with its walls, its similarly guarded gates, and its citizens or burgesses banded together against outsiders. The conception eventually fades out in such crude rites as that of the Akamba. The leading citizens, and later all the citizens, build their dwellings in imitation of that of the king, and employ a similar ritual to guard them. This ritual gradually dwindles, but people still mark their transition from the profane to the sacred sphere by removing their hats—or their boots.

There is another custom which may be associated with belief in the sacredness of the doorway. In West Friesland farmhouses had handsome front doors, but the tradition was that only brides

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1 ERE, iv, 846.
2 Above p. 17.
and corpses passed through them.\textsuperscript{1} This tradition seems to be unique, for in Denmark and elsewhere some houses still have ‘corpse-doors’. These are apertures made for the passage of a coffin and bricked up as soon as the procession has left for the church.\textsuperscript{2} In some parts of the world the body is taken out through a window, but the usual practice is to break a hole in the back of the house or the roof. This custom is reported from Northern, Central and Eastern Europe, from India, China, Siam, Indonesia and Fiji; among the Eskimo, the North American Indians and the Caribs of Central America, and in West and South Africa.\textsuperscript{3} It seems to be absent in the Mediterranean area, Polynesia, South and Central America (apart from the Caribs), and East Africa, and to be by no means universal in the regions in which it is observed. The reason sometimes given by those who observe it is that it is to prevent the ghost of the deceased from finding its way back. MacCulloch, however, points out that the spirits of the dead, when they return at the annual festivals of the dead, are invited to enter by the door; he thinks it more likely that the custom is based on the fear of polluting the doorway.\textsuperscript{4} The distribution of the custom suggests an origin in India.

Plutarch, in his \textit{Roman Questions}, asks: ‘Why are they who have been falsely reported dead in a strange country, although they return home alive, not received nor suffered to enter directly at the doors, but forced to climb up to the tiles of the house, and so to get down into the house from the roof?’\textsuperscript{5} A satisfactory explanation seems not to have been suggested.

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Man}, 1935, 182. \textsuperscript{4} \textit{ERE}, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{2} FL, 1907, 364. \textsuperscript{5} Question number 5.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ERE}, iv, 851; FL, 1907, 373.
IV

The Housemistress

It should by now have become clear that among many peoples the dwelling-house is, like the temple, consecrated by a foundation sacrifice; that it is regarded as sacred in itself, and that parts of it, particularly the threshold, are regarded as especially sacred. Among ourselves these beliefs and practices are either non-existent or exist merely as rare survivals. It might be supposed, then, that for the people of this country in general the dwelling-house is nothing more than a building in which to live. A great gulf is, of course, fixed between the house, in which men and women live, and the church, the House of God, in which the deity is served only by male priests. But we may find, when we study the house as an institution, that it has features which go back to ancient times, times in which the house and the temple had much more in common.

If we look round at the houses in our neighbourhood we shall find that a house is normally a building kept by a married woman whose occupation is officially recognized as that of a housewife. There are houses, of course, in which there is no married woman, but these are comparatively rare. Two or more unmarried women can live in the same house, as can a married woman and one or more unmarried women, but it is almost impossible for two married women to live in the same house. This is not in accordance with any law of nature, nor are married women more quarrelsome than single women, but it arises from our
traditional idea of propriety, which is that when a woman marries she should ‘set up house’, and thereafter remain mistress of it. It might be more convenient if two or more married women shared a house and took turns at the domestic chores, as single women often do, but they would not then be housewives, nor could they be ‘houseproud’, as so many wives are. For a housewife is also a housemistress, and either does or is responsible for everything which is done in the house. What then are her functions? We may list them as follows:

1. She sleeps with her husband in the marriage bed.
2. She looks after her young children.
3. She keeps the house clean and tidy.
4. She keeps the home fire burning.
5. She cooks for the household.
6. She takes a leading part in all household ceremonies.

We shall consider all these functions in due course, but would here point out that whereas the housemistress, if she has servants or unmarried daughters, can perform numbers 2 to 5 by deputy, this does not apply to number 6. Hocart, after remarking that we feel that there is something unsatisfactory about a queenless king or a wifeless governor, goes on to say: ‘Even the modest pageantry of the household seems incomplete without a mistress of the house. Once a mistress of the house has been duly consecrated she must take part in all functions, and her absence has to be explained and excused.’¹ He holds, that is to say, that in our traditional and largely subconscious opinion, what the marriage ceremony does is to consecrate a woman as a housemistress. Many peoples, ancient and modern, have felt the same.

A Babylonian queen, we are told, was described as ‘the lady of the palace and its mistress’.² The Egyptian wife was called ‘the ruler of the house’ (nebt-per); there is no corresponding term for the husband.³ In early Greece, according to Gilbert Murray, the mother ruled the household and property descended from mother to daughter.⁴ In the code of Gortyn in Crete, which probably dates from the 5th century B.C., it is laid down that ‘if

¹ A. M. Hocart, The Life-giving Myth, 122. ² Mothers, i, 381.
³ ERE, viii, 468. ⁴ The Rise of the Greek Epic, 78.
there is no personal estate, but only a house, it shall be inherited by the daughters. ¹ And in the island of Calymos it is, or was till recently, the rule that the house is always the wife’s.²

The wife of a Roman patrician had the title of domina as mistress of the household slaves.³ A Roman husband was not to visit his wife unexpectedly; if he had been away, he had to send on a messenger to say that he was coming home.⁴

Among the early Hindus the wife was mistress of the household as her husband was master, and in a marriage hymn in the Rigveda she is told to exercise authority over her husband’s relatives.⁵ According to the Hindu scriptures a woman after marriage is in charge of a kingdom, that of her household.⁶

The Muslim husband owns his house, but his wife or wives are by no means without rights. According to Muslim law ‘the wife is not merely entitled to maintenance in our sense of the word, but has the right to claim a habitation for her own exclusive use, to be provided consistently with the husband’s means’. According to a work which ‘shows the popular views of Persian women regarding their own and the opposite sex’, a wife must not be interrupted or interfered with by her husband when entertaining her guests, and if her female guests choose to remain all night they must be allowed to sleep in her room, while the husband sleeps apart and alone.⁷ Among the Hazaras of Afghanistan a woman does not go out into the world of men, but ‘the mother of the house has great prestige in the family. . . . As a wife the Hazara woman is entirely responsible for her house, and is the independent mistress of it.’⁸ Among the Sudanese Arabs the wedding is completed not by consummation but by the acquisition of a house by the newly married couple, and this

¹ H. J. Rose in FL, 1926, 222.
² FL, 1890, 564.
³ ERE, viii, 464.
⁴ Plutarch’s Roman Questions, number 9.
⁵ ERE, vii, 449.
⁷ T. P. Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, 672, 676.
⁸ E. E. Bacon, Obok, 11.
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house and all that is in it belong in theory to the bride. And before passing from the Muslims we may note that the Prophet Muhammad had no house of his own, and on one occasion when he had quarrelled with all his wives had nowhere to sleep.

Among the Mongols and Tartars a bride-price is paid, but the bride must provide the house. In China 'the peasant house was (and in fact remains) a feminine matter. The man scarcely entered it; the furniture was part of the woman's dowry.' Among the Ainu of Japan, however big a man's house, he must provide another for a second wife if he takes one.

I have found no mention of housemistresses in Polynesia or South America, but they are common in North America. Among the Blackfoot Indians the tipi was the wife's property, given to her by her family on marriage and always erected by her. Among the Gros Ventres of Montana the women selected the poles for the lodge and were responsible for erecting them and taking them down. Among the Pueblo Indians the women are the house-builders and house-owners. When a Pueblo woman dies, her house is inherited by her daughter. Among the Tewa Indians 'the women formed the permanent element in every clan. They transmitted clanship, owned the houses (in which their husbands seemed like valued lodgers), and much of the land.'

Among many African tribes, including the Hausa and other tribes of Northern Nigeria, a man has no house of his own but lives in those of his wives. Among the Masai of Kenya each wife has her own hut, which she builds and keeps in repair. In a Ndebele (of Southern Rhodesia) homestead the householder

1 J. W. Crowfoot in SNR, v, i, i.
2 Mothers, i, 374.
3 Mothers, i, 364.
4 M. Granet, Chinese Civilization, 153.
5 N. G. Munro, op. cit., 147.
6 C. D. Forde, Habitat, Economy and Society, 294.
7 R. Flannery, The Gros Ventres of Montana, 64.
8 R. Lowie, Primitive Society, 216.
9 B. Aitkin in FL, 1959, 556.
formerly had no house of his own, and the hut of his principal wife was known as ‘the great hut’. 1

Among the Southern Gallas of Abyssinia the hut for the bridal couple is built by the bride’s mother on the day of the wedding, and must be made of new materials. 2 In Uganda the house of the king’s chief wife was built with elaborate ceremonies, greater than those for the king’s own house. 3

In none of the examples I have cited is any reason given for whatever is the custom, but I can cite one case in which a reason is given, and that a religious one. Among the Khasis of Assam houses and land go from youngest daughter to youngest daughter, and the reason given is that she is bound to perform the family ceremonies and propitiate the family ancestors. Why the youngest daughter is chosen is unknown. It is not because she remains at home, for all the daughters live within the same enclosure and receive their husbands there. 4 The custom shows, however, that house-ownership may be associated with the cult of the ancestors.

There are probably more peoples among whom the men own the houses than those among whom the women do, but whatever law and custom may prescribe as to ownership, the wife is usually the de facto ruler of the household. Luther tells how he, being present at the wedding of Johann Luffte, escorted the bride to bed, as was the custom. He took off one of the bridegroom’s shoes, placed it over the bed as a sign that he would have dominion, and told him that according to the common usage he would be the master of the house—when his wife was not at home. 5

It may not be inappropriate to quote in this connection the speaker in Esdras who says: ‘By this ye may know that women have dominion over you: do ye not labour and toil and bring all to the woman? Yea, a man taketh his sword, and goeth his way

1 JRAI, 1938, 120; C. D. Forde, op. cit., 294; A. J. B. Hughes et. al., The Shona and the Ndebele, 76.
2 FL, 1907, 322.
3 J. Roscoe, The Baganda, 369.
4 J. G. Frazer, Folklore in the Old Testament, 1, 460–1.
5 P. Saintyves, Les Contes de Perrault, 157.
to rob and steal, to sail upon the sea and upon rivers; and looketh upon a lion and goeth in darkness: and when he hath stolen, spoiled and robbed, he bringeth it all to his love."1

Various attempts have been made to explain the customs by which, in many parts of the world, women are accorded, so far as houses are concerned, rights greater than those of men. Professor H. J. Rose, commending the general enlightenment of the laws of Gortyn, says of that which we have quoted: 'With similar enlightenment and strong common sense, they saw the necessity of leaving orphaned girls at least a roof over their heads; their brothers would be better able to fend for themselves.' There seems, however, to be no such provision in any more recent code of laws, so perhaps the law was based not on common sense but on the existence of some domestic cult comparable to that of the Khasis.

A theory which has found favour with many writers is that a state of affairs described as matriarchy or mother-right prevailed among all races in early times. 'The learned Swiss jurist Bachofen,' says Briiffault, 'who was the first to draw attention to some of the evidence showing the prevalence at one time of female dominance, suggests that women rebelled in disgust at the promiscuity imposed by male rule.' Briiffault goes on to show that 'nothing could be more fantastically impossible than such an occurrence'. He himself, however, believed in the 'primitive ascendancy of women', and says that 'it is founded on the functional constitution of the social group. The primitive human group is matriarchal in the same way and for the same reasons that the animal group is matriarchal; it is not so by virtue of established domination but of functional relations.' He goes on to say that 'the preservation of meat, all wealth from the soil, all industrial production which is susceptible of accumulation, appertains to the sphere of the sedentary woman. Hence it is that once private property develops all such property is in her hands, and even before that development economic control is collectively in the hands of the women and not of the men.'2 But so far as I know

1 Esdres, II, iv, 22.
2 Mothers, i, 330, 434-6.
no female animals except bees have charge of stored food, and there is not the slightest evidence that anything has ever been in the collective control of women. As for matriarchy among animals, it is not easy to imagine even what this could mean; did Briffaut envisage the lioness as telling the lion not to roar so much as it woke the cubs? Attempts to base human social behaviour on animal behaviour can be no more than just-so stories.

Mr. Robert Graves carries the theory of primitive matriarchy to greater lengths even than Bachofen and Briffaut. 'Ancient Europe', he says, 'had no gods. The Great Goddess was regarded as immortal, changeless and omnipotent. Men feared, adored and obeyed the matriarch; the hearth which she tended in cave or hut being their earliest social centre and motherhood their prime mystery.' He goes on to say that 'in this archaic religious system there were, as yet, neither gods nor priests, but only a universal goddess and her priestesses, woman being the dominant sex and man her frightened victim'.

There is not a scrap of evidence that such a state of affairs ever existed. There is no doubt that in early times, that is to say from some unknown period till the second millennium B.C., goddesses and priestesses were more prominent than they later became, but whether religious prominance was associated with secular power is unknown. In all hunting societies, from the Plains Indians to the Australian Blacks, the men are unquestionably dominant. It is in certain cultivating societies, such as the Khasis of Assam and the Pueblo Indians of the south-west United States, that we find women as the owners of the houses and land, and in these societies the men are far from being the 'frightened victims' of Mr. Graves's imagination.

The distribution of the social system in which the wife owns the house (not necessarily the land) and the husband is merely a visitor was studied by Father W. Schmidt who, like Mr. Graves but without taking his extreme views, associated it with the cult of a mother-goddess, especially Mother Earth. This system is found in parts of Southern India, South-East Asia and Indonesia, and occasionally in Melanesia. Absent in Polynesia and Australia, it is common in North America and occurs in parts of South

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America, particularly the north-west. It is rare in Africa. This irregular distribution should have made Father Schmidt hesitate to generalize, but he assures us that woman attained this position because 'she for the first time achieved the marvellous progressive step of taking in her own hands the germination and growth of food plants by sowing or inserting them in the soil and cultivating them. She thus became not only the legitimate mistress of the soil and its products, but also the sole competent inheritor of land and of the house erected upon it.\footnote{AA, 1935, 251 f.}

This theory lays itself open to several objections. Firstly, in the tribes in which husbands are mere visitors to their wives these wives are often more completely under the control of their brothers than wives elsewhere are of their husbands. One reason for this is clear: a woman can run away from a tyrannical husband but not from a tyrannical brother. Secondly, that women invented agriculture is a pure guess. The fact that in hoe cultures they are more closely associated with it than men are proves nothing; that women are more closely associated with sewing-machines does not prove that the sewing-machine was invented by a woman.

Finally, one must protest against the promiscuous use by theorists of what may be called the 'collective singular'. We are always being told what 'the savage' thinks, or what 'primitive man' does, the assumption apparently being that savages and primitive men are so much alike that what one thinks or does all the others do. What does Father Schmidt mean by 'she' in the passage quoted above? His language hardly suggests that he is thinking of a single individual woman; does he (or rather did he) regard all women as capable of inventing agriculture and all agriculture as having been invented by the local women? I doubt whether he could have given a satisfactory answer. Such evidence as we have, however, suggests that the concern of women with cultivation has been due not to superior inventive or technical ability but to the once wide-spread belief that there was a connection between the fertility of the soil and the fertility of women. This belief is exemplified in China where, as Granet says: 'To men fell the dangerous task of laying open the soil, at
the risk of irritating the mysterious powers of the Earth, but only women understood how to preserve in seeds the principle of life which makes them germinate.\textsuperscript{1} In China as elsewhere tasks are apportioned to the sexes and one sex cannot be asked to do the work of the other.

To revert to the house—advocates of the theory of primitive matriarchy have failed to notice the difference of status of married women inside and outside their houses. Indoors a married woman is mistress; it is not merely that she has the functions I have already indicated, but no stranger may enter it without her consent or receive food or drink except at her invitation. In her house she has, that is to say, a kind of sanctity which she loses as soon as she goes out of doors.

\textsuperscript{1} M. Granet, op. cit., 153.
V

No Cooking in the House

There was in the last chapter a list of the functions commonly performed by the housewife. Among them was to keep the house clean and tidy, but that is a modern version of a much older function, that of preserving the sanctity of the house by keeping it free from pollution. Pollution is not the same as dirtiness, though we sometimes use the word in that sense; to pollute a person or thing is to make him or it not dirty but ceremonially impure. To be polluted is not to be in a natural state of dirtiness but a supernatural state of unholiness. The two are apt to be confused, for dirt can be both unhealthy and unholy, but the idea that dirt causes disease is much more modern than the idea that pollution offends the powers that be and brings misfortune upon the offender. In many parts of the world precautions are taken to ensure that the house is not polluted, and should it accidentally become so elaborate measures are taken to remove the source of pollution. Some of these involve washing and sweeping, but others, such as sprinkling it with blood or cow’s urine, are far from promoting cleanliness according to our ideas, and the fact that such methods are used shows that though cleanliness may be next to godliness, the two have no necessary connection.

Nor do ideas of what is polluting necessarily coincide with our ideas of what is dirty, and this is particularly the case in India, where the avoidance of pollution is regarded as of paramount importance. By the Hindus the house is considered liable to be polluted in many ways, even by trifling accidents such as bees
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settling in it or a fungus of any kind growing inside. And if a dog should bring a bone into the house of a Jain or a crow drop a piece of meat in the courtyard, the house is polluted and must be purified.

One way of keeping the house free from pollution is to perform annually a general rite of purification. In this country the rite goes by the name of spring cleaning. There is no need for spring cleaning in houses which are kept clean, and it is a product of religious rather than sanitary notions. This becomes clear when we find it performed in other countries as a definitely religious rite. In many parts of Europe it is, or was, believed that witches and evil spirits are especially active in early spring. In Montenegro I found it had been customary to sweep out the whole house ceremonially and burn the rubbish out of doors to destroy the witches supposed to be hidden in it.

East European Jews used to perform an elaborate ritual of purifying the house before the Passover. All furniture was taken out of doors. Walls and ceilings were whitewashed; the floors were scraped and washed and fresh curtains were put in the windows. The furniture was washed and wiped before being taken back into the house. Cutlery and other metal ware was put into a kettle of boiling water and afterwards rinsed in cold water. New plates and glasses were put into a bucket and dipped in the well.

In China, before the New Year Festival, the great occasion of family reunion, there is a great house-cleaning in every family. Everything in the house is moved out, cleaned and rearranged. All living in the house who are not members of the family must leave before cleaning day. The god of the kitchen is also sent out of the house after a farewell sacrifice.

Among the WaYao of Nyasaland, at the beginning of the twelfth month, the whole village is thoroughly ‘spring cleaned’. All rubbish is swept up, the ground round the houses is hoed clean, and the interiors are remuddled.

1 W. Crooke in FL, 1918, 141.
2 ERE, x, 494.
3 M. E. Durham in FL, 1933, 163.
5 M. C. Yang, op. cit., 90.
6 M. Sanderson in Man, 1922, 55.
But besides these positive measures for the prevention or removal of pollution, there are various acts or occurrences which must be avoided or prevented by the inmates of the house in general and the housewife in particular if the house is not to be polluted. The rules or customs which we shall discuss in this and the next three chapters are that there must be in the house no cooking, no childbirth, no children and no death. I hope to show that these prohibitions exist because the house is a sacred place and that if cooking, childbirth or death occurred, or children were allowed in it, it would be polluted. There are, of course, no such prohibitions in our own houses, and it may be asked what then a house is for. The answer is that it is primarily for sleeping, and apart from that for eating, sheltering, keeping warm and such other purposes as are not regarded as polluting. Most of the houses to which these prohibitions apply, though by no means all, are in climates in which people are seldom indoors in the daytime, but this, though it may make their observance less irksome, does not explain them.

Let us start with cooking. It might be supposed that one of the principal objects of building a house was to have a place in which food could be cooked under cover and near the place where it was to be eaten; we like to have our kitchen near the dining-room, but many peoples, ancient and modern, have thought it necessary to cook in a separate building or out of doors. It has been suggested that the reason for this is to avoid smell, smoke or the danger of fire, but those who do or did cook outside the house, including our own ancestors, have usually been more tolerant of smells than we are, and their houses often are or were filled with the smoke of the hearth-fire, which was just as likely as a kitchen fire to cause a conflagration. People have no doubt often observed this inconvenient custom after forgetting the reason for it, which was, as I have suggested, that to cook in a house would pollute its sanctity. Let us take some examples.

In Ancient Egyptian houses the kitchen was separated from the dining-room by a courtyard. In Greek and Roman villas it seems that the dining-room adjoined the inner court and the

kitchen the outer, and that all food had to pass through both courts. In Roman houses generally it is probable that kitchens were in separate buildings.¹

According to Viollet-le-duc the Gauls and Germans cooked in the open air.² Excavations have shown that the ancient Finns lived in circular huts with a small hearth inside and a larger hearth, no doubt used for cooking, outside. Later they took to building rectangular log huts. They still build these and often build conical huts near them for use as kitchens.³

Gregory of Tours speaks of the great wooden buildings erected by the Frankish kings as temporary residences. Cooking was done outside on huge fireplaces built of brick and earth. It seems that the Anglo-Saxons always cooked in the open air, as did the Normans till the 12th century. In the early stone castles cooking was done in a separate building, or on the roof.⁴ Neckam says that it was usual to place kitchens near the outside of houses, beside the street or road. The food had to be carried across a yard. In French castles the kitchens were outside the keep and were usually circular. In towns they had to adjoin the houses, but were semi-detached.⁵

In the cities of mediaeval Italy cooking was done either in a separate room behind the house or in the top storey under the roof. This is said to have been done as a precaution against fire. But why this should be less likely in the top storey than the bottom one is not obvious.⁶ At Glastonbury Abbey the kitchen is a circular detached building. At Raglan Castle (c. 1450) it is in a circular angle tower. In Monmouthshire farmhouses of the 17th and early 18th centuries kitchens, in many cases at least, were separate buildings, and a number of these have survived. It is doubtful if then or earlier any cooking was done in the houses.⁷

The same applies to other parts of the country.

¹ Viollet-le-duc, Dict. de l'Architecture, iv, 461.
² Loc. cit.
⁴ E. S. Armitage, Early Norman Castles, 90.
⁵ Viollet-le-duc, loc. cit.
⁶ I. Origo, The Merchant of Prato, 226.
⁷ Fox and Raglan, Monmouthshire Houses, iii, 115 f.
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It seems then that in mediaeval Europe the custom was, at any rate among the well-to-do, to have no cooking done within the house proper. This, in my view, was the survival of ancient custom based ultimately on taboo. The change to interior kitchens, when it came, was due not to indifference to smoke, smells and the danger of fire, but largely to new styles of architecture. There were conservatives, and the kitchen at Uppark in Sussex, in use till about thirty years ago, is a hundred yards from the house and reached by an underground passage.

Information on the cooking practices of other peoples is not easy to come by. Even when we are told what they eat and how they cook it we are seldom told where.

Among Hindus in general it seems that cooking is never done in the house, and I have been told that modern housing schemes have always to provide outside kitchens. Among Brahmans, however, the taboo on cooking in the house, if taboo it is, has had to yield to a more stringent taboo, that on contact with persons of low caste. If the shadow of such a person fell upon the food or if he even looked at a food vessel, the food would be polluted. The kitchen is therefore placed in a secluded part of the house, but we are not told if it is secluded from the living-rooms as well as from the outside world.¹

In Japan there seem to be two traditions; one house type, general in certain areas, has a cooking place under a separate roof, often joined to the living area by a covered passage. In other types the cooking seems to be done in the house.²

In Fiji most houses have kitchens, and where these are large enough the food is eaten in them. The hearth-fire is used chiefly for drying tobacco and old people sit near it for warmth. Before there were mosquito nets smudges were made on the hearth to drive away mosquitoes.³ It is clear then that it is not dislike of smoke which causes the Fijians to cook outside the house.

The Maori keep fires burning in their houses, but not only do they not cook in them, they allow no food to be brought into

¹ ERE, vi, 64.
² F. H. Beardsley et al. The Architecture of Japan, 94.
³ B. Quain, Fijian Village, 84.
them.\textsuperscript{1} I have found nowhere else this prohibition on food in the house. It can only be religious, and suggests strongly that the prohibition on cooking is the same.

The Aztec kitchen was a little separate building in the courtyard.\textsuperscript{2} The Incas are said by Rowe to have cooked in the corners of their courtyards, which were sometimes roofed over.\textsuperscript{3} According to Karsten: 'The food was cooked either outside in the open air or, when the weather was bad, in special houses belonging to the building complex.'\textsuperscript{4} At any rate there was no cooking in the house. Among the Aymara of Peru each family lived in a compound containing one or two one-roomed houses and a kitchen.\textsuperscript{5} The Atacamo of Chile had no fireplaces in their houses and probably cooked under temporary shelters.\textsuperscript{6}

In Africa we are told that a fire for warmth is often lit outside a Touareg tent, but the fire for cooking is situated some steps away.\textsuperscript{7} 'Cooking in Nigeria is done in the courtyard, outside the living-rooms or huts. . . . Fires are made in the huts for warmth, so there is no objection to the fire itself.'\textsuperscript{8} In parts of the Southern Sudan a fire is kept in the sleeping hut. Three small logs meet and smoulder at the bottom of a trefoil-shaped hole. Cooking is done outside.\textsuperscript{9} Among the Tallensi of Ghana a women’s house consists of three adjacent huts. The largest, the sleeping hut, is not used for cooking. This is done in the dry season in a roofless enclosure, and in the wet season in the store hut.\textsuperscript{10} By the Ndebele of Rhodesia ‘the practice of cooking in the living huts is deplored, though this is frequently done’.\textsuperscript{11}

The hearth-fire, as we shall see later, is almost everywhere

\textsuperscript{1} P. Buck, \textit{The Coming of the Maori}, 113, 119.
\textsuperscript{2} J. Soustelle, \textit{The Daily Life of the Aztecs}, 121.
\textsuperscript{3} HSAI, ii, 223.
\textsuperscript{4} R. Karsten, \textit{A Totalitarian State of the Past}, 65.
\textsuperscript{5} HSAI, ii, 529.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. 608.
\textsuperscript{7} K. B. Smith, \textit{Primitive Man and His Ways}, 157.
\textsuperscript{8} A. J. N. Tremeurne, \textit{The Ban of the Bori}, 73, 438.
\textsuperscript{9} Personal observation.
\textsuperscript{10} M. Fortes, \textit{The Web of Kinship Among the Tallensi}, 60.
\textsuperscript{11} A. J. B. Hughes, \textit{The Shona and the Ndebele}, 76.
regarded as sacred, but it does not necessarily follow that it is not used for cooking. In Irish cabins it seems always to have been so used. ¹ By the Ao Nagas food is cooked on the hearth-fire, which is in the centre of the living-room. ² Of the Cagaba of Columbia we are told that the women cook in their houses and pass the food out to be eaten by their male relatives, eating inside themselves. ³ Of one people only have I found it said that they regard the hearth-fire as sacred and cook on it, and they are the Ainu. As nothing was allowed to contaminate the ritual purity of the hearth-fire it was the duty of the housewife to see that the pot did not boil over into it. ⁴ In ancient China, we are told, the kitchen and the hearth-fire were traditionally one, with the kitchen god as presiding deity. Nowadays the kitchen fire is separate from the hearth-fire; it seems that the kitchen god has gone with it and that it is still within the house. ⁵ If some people can cook on the hearth-fire the inability of others to do so can be due only to taboo, or custom based on taboo.

It is interesting to contrast the general attitude towards cooking with that towards eating. It seems that cooking is never a sacred activity, whereas eating often is. Christianity has, of course, its sacred meal, eaten in the House of God, and Judaism its Passover, eaten in the house. These meals are eaten by people who consecrate themselves in order to partake of them. This consecration is temporary, but it seems that for those permanently sacred, such as kings and priests, all meals were once eaten as sacraments in a sacred place, the temple or palace. The house, too, has its ritual meals, of which the Passover is only one example of many. We are told that in Greece every meal had its ritual aspect. At Rome a banquet at the triclinium always consisted of nine diners, had a strict etiquette, and was probably of religious origin. ⁶

In this country the ritual of dining has come down to us from

¹ C. O'Danachair in Ulster Folklife, 1958, 31.
² J. P. Mills, op. cit., 85.
³ HSAL, ii, 8, 74.
⁴ N. G. Munro, Ainu Creed and Cult, 60.
⁵ L. Hodous, Folkways In China, 216.
⁶ ERE, v, 804.
a time when dinner was the only regular meal of the day. We 'dress for dinner', not daily as we used to but on occasion. We sit in order of seniority, men and women alternately. We may touch nothing on the table till it has been offered to us by the host or hostess, or by their servants. On formal occasions we begin with 'grace' and end with the loyal toast. On holy days we eat special foods—plum pudding, pancakes, hot cross buns, Easter eggs—and whether or not these foods are ancient the principle certainly is.

The only feature probably not part of the original pattern is that with us the sexes eat together. Muslim and Hindu women eat separately from the men, as do many other peoples. We saw that among the Cagaba of Colombia the men eat outside and the women in; in Hawaii the sexes ate in separate houses which were taboo to the other sex.¹

Muslims have a ritual of eating; a man must wash his hands immediately before and after a meal; must eat with the right hand only; and must say: 'In the name of God' before and 'Praise be to God' after eating. When all have finished, in Syria at any rate, the principal guest exclaims: 'May God prosper the hosts.' It is improper to interrupt those eating.

To survey all customs connected with food would take us too far from our subject, but having mentioned foods which it is proper to eat on special occasions we may conclude with a few words on foods which must never be eaten. Food taboos have been attributed to such causes as unpleasant taste or disgusting appearance,² but there would be no need to taboo what nobody would wish to eat. As for disgusting appearance, the following foods have, among others, been tabooed—beef, pork, chicken, eggs, milk and beans. On the other hand many people, including in some cases ourselves, eat with relish dogs, octopuses, snakes, snails and funguses.

The fact is that all the customs we have been discussing are based on ideas of ceremonial purity and ritual efficacy, ideas as remote on the one hand from savagery as they are on the other from utilitarianism and sentimentality.

¹ H. Malo, Hawaiian Antiquities, 128 n.
² ERE, vi, 61.
VI

No Birth in the House

One of the principal objects of having a house might, on the analogy of squirrels' dreys, birds' nests and so on, be supposed to be to provide a place in which a woman could give birth to her children in warmth and comfort. Yet we find that among many peoples a woman must leave her house in order to give birth. How is this strange fact to be explained? The writers who have discussed the subject all put birth taboos back into the earliest times. Farnell ascribes them to 'primaeval feeling'. Hartland says that they are found in the lowest stages of civilization and are elaborated as it advances. Frazer says: 'These customs show that in the opinion of some primitive peoples a woman at and after childbirth is pervaded by a certain dangerous influence which can infect anything and anybody she touches.' He ignores the fact that this opinion is widely held in England, as we shall see. For Murphy they are 'almost universal in early ages as well as later'. For Briffault they are universal among 'primitives'. He says that the taboos during and after parturition and during menstruation are the most invariable and most strictly observed of all the taboos of primitive humanity, and that those which refer to women in childbed are practically identical with those which apply to menstruation.

1 In fact it is not the case that these taboos are universal or any-

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1 ERE, x, 486.  
2 ERE, ii, 635.  
3 GB, iii, 150.  
4 J. Murphy, The Origins and History of Religions, 255.  
5 Mothers, ii, 366.
thing like it, nor are they ‘practically identical’, and no explana-

tion is possible for their origin and distribution as long as they

are discussed in such vague and general terms. What I propose to

do is to examine their actual nature and distribution, ignoring

menstruation as having less direct concern with the house.

For this purpose I shall divide the peoples of the world, as far

as I have found out about them, into three classes:

(1) Those where the mother-to-be retires to a room not

forming part of the house proper, and from which men are ex-

cluded, and is confined there for a fixed period.

(2) Those where the mother-to-be has to give birth in a tem-

porary shelter at a distance from the house or in the open air.

(3) Those where there are either no taboos or none which

seriously affect the mother.

It is not always possible to draw a hard and fast line between

these three classes, but in general the distinction is pretty clear.

Let us start with the first class and the Levitical law. ‘When a

woman bears a male child she shall be unclean for seven days . . .

and for thirty-three days further she must stay at home, while

the blood flows, till she is purified. But if she bears a female child

she shall remain unclean for two weeks, and stay at home for

sixty-six days, while the blood flows, till she is purified.’

Though she stays ‘at home’, being unclean she presumably remains apart.

What happened in Babylon seems not to be known, but in

Ancient Egypt, we are told, ‘the birth-house or house of purifica-
tion attached to Ptolemaic temples of goddesses suggests that a

woman remained secluded in a special apartment during her

accouchement and subsequent purification’; this was completed

in fourteen days. In Ancient Persia women were confined in an

isolated portion of the house for forty days after delivery. In

Greece women were tabooed for a number of days, up to forty

after a miscarriage.

The general rule for Muslim women is to be purified on the

fortieth day. In India, among the Muslims, Hindus and Parsis,

1 Lev., xii, 2–5.

2 ERE, x, 477.

3 Mothers, ii, 376.

4 ERE, x, 486.

5 Hughes, Dict. Islam, 51.
birth generally takes place in an outhouse, annex or room from which men are excluded. A Hindu mother is purified after four days, if the child is a boy and five if it is a girl, but is not clear of taboo till after thirty days.\(^1\) In China customs vary, but women are often segregated in a ‘parturition house’.\(^2\) The mother goes to the temple on the fortieth day.\(^3\)

In England today there are survivals of this taboo on puerperal women. In various parts it is believed that it is dangerous for a woman to go out until she goes to be or has been churched. In Oxfordshire it is especially unlucky for her to cross a road or enter another woman’s house before being churched, and if the second woman is pregnant a miscarriage may result.\(^4\) According to a recent broadcast it is widely believed in Staffordshire that a woman who entered a house other than her own before being churched would cause some misfortune to befall its occupants. The necessity for churching is no doubt based on the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is celebrated on the fortieth day after Christmas, but the belief that before this the woman is a public danger is probably older.

There are some tribes in Africa which probably come into this class. In the Congo ‘as a rule a mother remains secluded in her hut for about ten days after her child is born’.\(^5\) A woman of the Tallensi of Ghana is secluded in her husband’s house for three days after the birth of a boy and four days after the birth of a girl, and there is a ceremony when she emerges.\(^6\) Among some East African tribes women are secluded after childbirth, and during their period of seclusion no fire may be taken into the house.\(^7\)

We now come to the second class, and start in Europe. In Serbia ‘birth invariably takes place out of doors, no matter what the weather. . . . When she feels the first indications of labour, a woman quietly and silently departs in order not to pollute the

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\(^1\) ERE, ii, 652.
\(^3\) ERE, ii, 646.
\(^4\) FL, 1914, 365; 1940, 21; 1955, 323.
\(^7\) Sumner and Keller, loc. cit.
house. She returns, after the separation of the afterbirth, with the baby in her apron. A peasant woman of the government of Smolensk in Russia is placed for delivery in a barn or hut at a distance from the house. Among the Chevsurs of the Caucasus a woman retires to a hut built for her by the other women at a distance from the village. There she is delivered on straw entirely unattended. Women leave food for her in front of the hut but must not speak to her. The hut is afterwards burnt.\footnote{Mothers, ii, 374.}

The customs of the Adivi of Mysore are similar. A woman gives birth in a small hut outside the village, and must remain in it for ninety days. Food is put outside and nobody may touch her.\footnote{GB, iii, 149.} Among the Tungus of Eastern Siberia a wife must bear her child alone in the forest. In Kamchatka women must leave their houses and be delivered in public in the village street. In Japan parturition formerly took place in a shed without a door.\footnote{Sumner and Keller, loc. cit.; Mothers, ii, 372; ERE, ii, 366.}

Among the Mishmis of Assam a shed is put up for a woman who is about to give birth, and she has to remain in it for ten days after the birth of a son and eight days after the birth of a daughter. Only her female relatives may visit her.\footnote{J. P. Mills in JRAI, 1952, 7.} The Orang Belenda and Orang Laut of Malaya build a separate hut for a woman’s confinement; in it she must remain strictly secluded for a fortnight.\footnote{Mothers, ii, 376.}

The Veddas are the forest-dwellers of Ceylon. Of their childbirth B. Joseph says: ‘This must not occur in the usual dwelling, lest the household gods be mortally incensed at the contamination of the hearth with the uncleanliness attending childbirth. A rude hut is therefore constructed outside and when the labour pains commence the woman enters it and remains till the fourth day after birth.’\footnote{FL, 1933, 392.} The Seligmans tell us, however, that among the unsettled Veddas, who live mostly in caves, birth takes place in the cave which is used as a dwelling.\footnote{C. G. and B. Z. Seligman, The Veddas, 102.} If this is correct it was
contact with a higher culture which introduced birth taboos to the Veddahs.

In Melanesia customs are very varied. In many tribes women give birth in isolated huts or in the bush, and may be secluded for long periods. In many others they give birth in the house and there are few or no taboos. These differences appear in surprising proximity; in Malekula of the New Hebrides a woman gives birth in her husband’s house, but on the small island of Vao, which lies off it, there are several huts in a fenced enclosure in which women give birth and which no man may enter.¹

In the Wik Monkan tribe of Queensland a woman is taken shortly before the birth of her child to a place of seclusion away from the camp. There she remains, attended only by women, for from two to four weeks.²

In most of Polynesia an expectant mother had to retire to a house specially built in the bush, so that the sleeping house might not be contaminated. In the Marquesas a house in which an accidental birth had taken place was burnt, as it was after a death.³

An Eskimo woman four weeks before her confinement retires to a separate hut which no man may approach, and remains there for a month after her child’s birth.⁴ A Tlinkit woman of British Columbia gives birth in a special hut in which she must remain for five days afterwards.⁵ Formerly, it seems, she had to give birth in the open air.⁶

Among many tribes of Central and South America a woman who is about to give birth retires to a temporary shelter in the forest, or to the forest without any shelter, and in either case is usually unattended.⁷ Among the Saracos Indians of Equador, for example, a woman gives birth in a hut three or four leagues from her house. These Indians, we are told, ‘are persuaded that the spirit of evil would attach itself to their house if the women were brought to bed in it’.⁸

² D. F. Thompson in JRAI, 1946, 160. ⁷ HSAI, passim.
NO BIRTH IN THE HOUSE

A child of the Ibo of Nigeria must be born outside the dwelling-hut. No reason is given except that it would cause pollution if brought into the dwelling-hut before it had cried. A child which does not cry soon after birth is (or was) thrown away into the 'bush of evil'.

To return to Britain, there is no recorded custom according to which women had to go out of doors to give birth, and it is therefore remarkable that at least two ballad heroes, Jellon Grame and Hind Horn, were born in the 'gude greenwud', and we hear of a ballad heroine who 'leaned her back against a thorn, and there she has her two babes born'. And Mrs. Ettlinger says that in Celtic legend 'islands and flat stones, either in the middle of a river or near a lake or well, are commonly cited as the birth-places of saints, heroes and kings. There are exceptions, but most of the references which we have to this subject lead us to think that Celtic women left their houses before giving birth.' But evidence from ballad and legend should be received with caution.

We now come to the third class, those peoples who have no birth taboos or at any rate none which seriously affect the mother. Here we are on much more difficult ground for, so far as I can learn, the fact that there are peoples with no birth taboos has never been mentioned in print. We find many tribes, however, in which such taboos as there are are trivial, and we are perhaps entitled to assume that there are no taboos where competent ethnographers make no mention of them.

Purification after childbirth is enjoined by all the higher religions except perhaps Buddhism, in accounts of which I have found no mention of the subject. We need then only look for absence of taboos in tribes which have not come strongly under their influence. Such tribes are to be found, among others which have strict taboos, in North-Eastern India and Indo-China. Among the Bondo of Orissa a woman gives birth in a corner of the living-room, and there are no taboos except that she must not

1 C. K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe, 290.
2 L. C. Wimberly, Folklore in English and Scottish Ballads, 377, 124.
3 E. Ettlinger in Ogam, xii, 104.
touch the cooking-pots until the child’s umbilical stump drops off. Among the Santals of Bengal a woman should give birth in her own house. The husband stays outside, but as soon as the floor has been cleaned comes in and beats the roof to drive away ghosts. He digs a hole in the floor with a ploughshare and buries the afterbirth in it. No fire is kept lit during birth, but one is lit immediately afterwards. An Ao Naga woman must give birth in the house built by her husband, and if the latter is not present delivery will be difficult. After five days in the case of a girl and six in the case of a boy both parents wash and the husband offers a fowl and an egg. A Kachin mother, of Burma, is under the protection of the house guardian but in danger from the evil spirits of the jungle. To be safe from them she must remain in her house for three days. On the fourth day they are ritually put to flight and she can come out. In Siam elaborate precautions are taken to protect the woman in childbirth from evil spirits, but it does not seem that anyone is in danger from her. When the queen is pregnant, a special house is built for her.

Among the Bataks and Minangkabau of Sumatra birth takes place in the house; the men must leave it. The Kayans of Sarawak live in long houses, in which each family lives in a large room subdivided by screens. To give birth a woman sits in her room which is taboo to all but her attendants and her husband; from the latter she is hidden by a screen. Both parents observe certain taboos, but the mother is apparently not regarded as unclean. Should she be in danger of dying in childbirth, however, the whole long house is thrown into consternation, and all the males flee into hiding until the danger is passed or the woman, if she dies, has been buried. Hose, who tells us this, goes on to say that the souls of women who die in childbirth are equated with those of men killed in battle and are believed to be lethal. This belief is widely held, and may be a reason, though obviously not here, for keeping expectant mothers at a distance from the village.

4 ERE, iii, 32.
5 H. Q. Wales in *JRAI*, 1933, 444.
6 E. M. Loeb in *AA*, 1933, 40.
7 C. Hose, *Natural Man*, 57.
NO BIRTH IN THE HOUSE

Among the Tuaran Dusuns of North Borneo it seems that there are no taboos except that for a fortnight after birth no stranger may enter the mother’s room.¹ A Visayan woman of the Philippines gives birth in her house, but everything must be removed from it as when someone is dying. If this were not done fishing nets would catch no more fish and fighting cocks would no longer be able to fight.² These people, that is to say, suffer much inconvenience rather than turn the woman out.

Birth taboos seem not to be important among the Plains Indians. Thus among the Gros Ventre of Montana a woman gives birth in her own house. If there were a sick person in it he would be moved, as the odour of blood would affect him adversely. If he could not be moved to another house the woman would be. No taboo on her is mentioned.³

In South America, as we have seen, birth taboos are general, and women can rarely give birth in the house. The women of the Aymara, of Bolivia and Peru, do so, however; after a week the house is fumigated and they can then mix with other people. The Quechua, the more or less Christianized descendants of the Incas, allow children to be born in the house and there seem to be no taboos.⁴

In West Africa there are no birth taboos among the Edo-speaking tribes,⁵ and seem to be none among the pagans of North and Central Cameroon.⁶ In the latter case Malcolm gives a full description, from which it appears that there are no taboos or magical practices of any kind.

The Seligmans, in their carefully compiled account of the pagan tribes of the Southern Sudan, make no mention of any taboos, and the only one I have come across is among the Anuak; when a woman gives birth a fence is set up round the house and

¹ O. Rutter, *The Pagans of North Borneo*, 310.
² *Mothers*, ii, 381.
⁴ HSAL, ii, 549, 457.
⁵ N. W. Thomas in JRAI, 1923, 250.
for thirty days no pregnant woman or her husband may go within it.\textsuperscript{1} This reminds us of Oxfordshire.

Among the Bantu Kavirondo tribes customs vary—inside or outside the house, outside or in another house: the husband should not be present, but may be called if labour is difficult. When the child is born the mother takes it into the house, if not already there, and is secluded for two days if it is a girl and three if it is a boy. After this there is a ceremony of coming out and a feast.\textsuperscript{2} Among the Umbundu of Angola a woman should give birth in the house and on the grinding-stone. Her husband should not attend. As soon as the child has been born the mother goes to a stream to wash. She should then lie in till the navel-cord drops off. There are no other taboos.\textsuperscript{3} A Chewa woman of Nyasaland gives birth in the dwelling-hut, and the husband is debarred only in that he may not sleep in it till the midwife has left.\textsuperscript{4} We may conclude then that in Negro Africa birth taboos are in general absent or mild.

The foregoing distribution study is of course incomplete, but for a complete study one would have to consult hundreds of books and periodicals, and in the result there might still be errors and omissions. The general picture would pretty certainly remain much the same, and continue to show that the view taken by Frazer, Briffault and the others is not in accordance with the facts.

These show that birth taboos are far more widespread, important and regular among the more civilized than the less civilized. For those whom I have placed in the first class, the Christians, Jews, Muslims, Parsis, Hindus and Chinese, there is a recognized period of impurity after childbirth, and this shows remarkably little variation. It is forty days for Christians, Muslims and Parsis. For Jews it is forty days for boys and sixty for girls, whereas in China it is in general forty days, but in some places thirty

\textsuperscript{1} C. G. and B. Z. Seligman, \textit{Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan}; C. K. Bacon in SNR, v, 122.
\textsuperscript{2} G. Wagner, \textit{The Bantu of Northern Kavirondo}, i, 304, 308.
\textsuperscript{3} G. M. Childs, \textit{Umbundu Kinship and Character}, 81 f.
\textsuperscript{4} A. G. O. Hodgson in JRAI, 1933, 139.
days for boys. For Hindus it is in general thirty days, but for some sects, such as the Jains, there is a strict taboo for forty days. The taboo is also strict among the Parsis, and among some Christians, such as the Bulgarians. The Buddhists, or some of them, seem to be the only literate people who do not have these taboos. Among the non-literate peoples, on the other hand, the period of impurity is varied, usually quite short and often non-existent.

All the evidence suggests that these taboos, whatever their origin, are not, as they have come down to us, based upon any physical fact but upon a theory, that of the necessity for ceremonial purity. It was mentioned in the last chapter how important it is generally considered to keep the house ceremonially pure, and this means not only keeping out puerperal and menstruating women, but returning warriors, persons suffering from various physical disabilities and those dangerously ill. And not only them, but persons who have been in contact with them, or with corpses. The last two are particularly insisted upon by the Jews, Parsis and Hindus. In addition, the Hindus exclude those of low caste. It is quite unscientific to pick out one group and discuss it in isolation, especially as the time limit imposed on its members, as on other persons temporarily tabooed, is purely arbitrary.

It seems incredible that birth taboos were known to early men, or arose before the idea of the holy. They probably arose in connection with a single system of temple ritual in accordance with which all persons in the holy place had to be in a holy state. We saw that 'birth-houses' were attached to Egyptian temples, and this may be one example of a system of having annexes to temples in which persons temporarily impure could stay till their impurity was purged and they could resume their sacred duties.

These ideas were extended, we must suppose, to houses, and spread over the world. When they reached the savages some accepted them with modifications, some exaggerated them and some ignored them. We cannot, of course, assert this as a fact, but it would explain the facts, whereas the theory that the idea of these taboos sprang naturally to the minds of primaeval savages makes nonsense of them.

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1 ERE, x, 458, 494.
VII

No Children in the House

Though the house is widely regarded as an improper place in which to be born, it might be expected that when a child has been born he would be brought into the house, there to be nursed by his mother when very young and afterwards to be at home. This happens in most parts of the world, but the custom of fosterage is observed in many countries, and the opinion of those who observe this custom is clearly that the proper place for a child is not the house of his parents but the house of persons employed by his parents to look after him.

Before studying the custom of fosterage it is necessary to distinguish it from adoption. In fosterage the initiative is taken by the child’s parents, who entrust him temporarily to others; in adoption the initiative comes from the adopter, who removes the child permanently from his parents. We are not here concerned with adoption, which could not, so far as I can see, have any connection with the sacredness of the house. Its purpose is to enable those who have no children of their own to fill the gap with the children of others. The purpose of fosterage on the other hand is, or seems to be, to remove children temporarily from an environment considered unsuitable, and I suggest that this is the sacred house.

As I have pointed out, all customs start at the top. Many of them spread through society, but the custom of fosterage started at the top and remained there. At least it is very rare to find it observed except by the upper classes. It could obviously not be observed
by everybody, for it depends on there being houses in which children are not kept and houses in which they are. If the custom had arisen because it was regarded as improper for royal and noble women to suckle their children, one might expect that wet nurses would be brought into the house, as in Victorian Britain they often were. There must have been another reason for fosterage, and it may have been the belief that the presence of children would pollute the house.

There is early evidence for the custom. Among the Babylonians and Assyrians some children were put out to nurse for a period which might extend to three years. It is not stated which children, but they were no doubt of the upper class, for the nurse was provided with food, oil and clothing, and there were ceremonies to avoid the risk of employing a woman with defective breasts. Elsewhere we learn that in Babylonia there was a kind of temple prostitute called *kadîshtu*, or 'holy woman'. There is no record of her marriage, and her speciality, outside her temple duties, was suckling the children of Babylonian ladies. For this service she received payment, together with a clay tablet recording the contract.

The practice of employing wet nurses seems not to be recorded in Greece, but must have come in early at Rome. Varro advises that the nurse should be young; Plutarch says, as if it were unusual, that the wife of Cato the Censor suckled her own children; Tacitus, contrasting the usage of his day with the olden time, writes of children being reared in the cottage of a slave nurse.

In mediaeval Florence it was the custom to send babies out to nurse, the foster-mothers being usually peasant women. The finding of foster-mothers with what were regarded as suitable physical and moral qualifications was a matter of difficulty.

It was not the custom for the better class of women among the Arabians to nurse their children, and consequently the infant (sc. the prophet Muhammad) was made over to Suwaiba, a

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1 ERE, iii, 527.
3 ERE, loc. cit.
slave-girl of his uncle Abu Lahab. She suckled him only for a few days, after which he was made over to Halima, a woman of the Beni Sa’d, with whom he remained for two years.¹

Among the Rajputs the children of chiefs are put out to foster with some particular family or caste. The Rajas of Bandelkhand have their children fostered by the Ahir caste of cowherds.² In the Ajmer district it is said that no Rajput becomes a hero unless suckled by a woman of the Gujar clan.³

There is no clear line to be drawn between wet-nursing and fosterage, and children were often put out to be suckled and to be brought up as well. Where the child is to be trained instead of or as well as to be suckled the emphasis is on the foster-father rather than on the foster-mother.

Our earliest evidence for this form of the custom seems to be that of Procopius, who says that Persian infants were often placed in other families for their training. According to the Shah-nama this was done in noble families.⁴

In Scandinavia it was the general custom among the leading men not to have their children reared at home. The child was put on the knees of him who was to be the foster-father, and to rear another man’s child indicated that the fosterer considered himself of lower status than the father. This is illustrated by the (probably fictitious) story of the rivalry between King Athelstan of England and King Harald Fairhair of Norway. Athelstan sent Harald a sword with a golden hilt, and his messenger induced Harald to take it by the hilt, thereby acknowledging himself Athelstan’s subject. In return he sent a messenger who approached Athelstan with a baby son of Harald’s under his cloak and suddenly placed the child on Athelstan’s knee. Athelstan was furious and threatened to kill the child, but thought better of it and fostered it. Harald, we are told, was well pleased, for it is said that the man who fosters the child of another is of lower rank.⁵

Fosterage was a custom in all the Celtic-speaking countries. In Brittany, in the 6th century, every young prince, when he left

¹ Hughes, Dict. Islam, 368.
² ERE, vi, 104.
³ Mothers, i, 599.
⁴ ERE, iii, 545.
the hands of the women, was handed over to a lord who was called his foster-father and was entrusted with his education.¹ In Wales noblemen often gave their sons to bondmen to be fostered, and Giraldus Cambrensis complains that the tie between foster-brothers was often closer than that between brothers.² The hero Culhwch, we are told, was put out to nurse soon after he was born and did not return to his father’s court till he was at least seven.³

References to fosterage are scattered throughout the Ancient Laws of Ireland, but it is mentioned particularly in the Law of Fosterage-fee. The amount of this varies according to rank, a higher rate being charged for girls than for boys. The foster-father is to teach the arts, especially riding.⁴ Children were often entrusted to members of the mother’s family, but cases are known where the foster-fathers were not relatives but druids or poets.⁵ These would hardly foster children other than those of kings or nobles.

But though among the historical Irish foster-parents seem to have been generally of lower rank than the parents, in Irish mythology children are fostered by kings and even gods. Thus Oilill, king of Munster, had Lugaid Mac Con to foster. Lugaid was suckled by Oilill’s queen with her own son, but she seems to have shared the task, for Lugaid was called Mac Con because he was suckled by a bitch in the house of Oilill. Manannan is the foster-son of the Dagda, who is called the Zeus of Irish mythology. Oengus holds a feast for the Tuatha De Danann, and for Manannan who, though their lord, is not one of them. At the end of the feast he invited all present to send him a child in fosterage, and all the girls born at that time are sent to him, including Manannan’s daughter Curcog.⁶ This can hardly have corresponded to anything that happened in real life, but indicates that the idea

¹ FL, 1926, 398.
² F. Seebohm, The Tribal System in Wales, 127.
³ G. and T. Jones, The Mabinogion, 95.
⁴ ERE, vi, 107.
⁵ J. Moreau, Die Welt der Celten, 58.
⁶ M. Dillon, Early Irish Literature, 67, 69, 78.
of fosterage was familiar to those who recorded the myths. Writing of the Hebrides, Dr. Johnson says: ‘There still remains in the Islands, though it is fast passing away, the custom of fosterage. A Laird, a man of wealth and eminence, sends his child, either male or female, to a tacksman or tenant, to be fostered. It is not always his own tenant, but some distant friend, that obtains this honour; for an honour such a trust is very reasonably thought. The terms of fosterage seem to vary in different islands. In Mull, the father sends with his child a certain number of cows, to which the same number is added by the fosterer... Children continue with the fosterer for perhaps six years.’1

The custom of fosterage prevailed in royal households in England and Scotland in the Middle Ages. Henry II gave his eldest son to Thomas Beckett to be fostered. It went on till the time of James I; he was himself fostered by the Earl and Countess of Mar and, in spite of his queen’s protests, had his children, Prince Henry, Prince Charles (afterwards Charles I) and Princess Elizabeth, fostered by different noblemen.2

In England in the Middle Ages children of knightly families were often fostered from the age of seven by being sent into the households of men of rank, in which they performed menial functions. They often became more attached to their fosterfathers than their own fathers.3 This may seem to tell against the theory that children were sent out to foster because their presence would pollute the house, but by this time the idea may have been forgotten or the fosterlings regarded as servants rather than as children. The practice of sending upper-class boys to boarding school may have developed out of it.

Children of the royal family and the upper classes were wet-nursed up to Victorian times, and though wet nurses seem usually to have come into the house, children were often boarded out with them.4

1 Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, s.v. ‘Col’.
2 J. Goody in Man, 1962, 288.
3 T. Wright, A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England during the Middle Ages, 270.
4 J. Goody, loc. cit.
NO CHILDREN IN THE HOUSE

Proceeding eastward, we learn that among the Slavs foster-children are regarded in the same light as natural offspring, and the foster-child bears the name of his foster-father so long as he remains in his house. The son of a Circassian chief is taken from home and consigned to the charge of a tutor or foster-father and, until his education is supposed to be complete, it is considered an unpardonable weakness in the real father to desire to see his son.1 Throughout the Hindu Kush ‘the custom of foster-relationship is maintained among all the ruling families, and its ties seem more stringent than those of blood kinship. On the occasion of a son or daughter being born, the child is assigned to a foster-mother in whose house it is brought up, so that frequently a father does not see his children till they are six or seven years old.’2

‘It is the custom in the Tonga Islands for women to be what they call mothers to children or grown young persons who are not their offspring. This is often done, although their own mothers be living, and residing near the spot. If the woman is a foster-mother to a person superior to herself, as is mostly the case, she acquires no additional respect from this source in society, though the adopted person be ever so great a noble.’3

Among the Incas ‘a man’s foster-mother became his secondary wife when he married and remained so until he had paid off his obligation to her for rearing him’.4 This is all that we are told, but it would seem that the man must have been of superior rank to his foster-mother.

The only example I have found in which fosterage seems to extend beyond the upper class is the following, although this is not quite clear. Among the Malays children born on the same day of the week as the parents of the same sex are given to be fostered, as if kept in the house one of the two will die. Children are also fostered if they are ailing, or if the parents have lost several of the same sex. . . . These children are often taken back when they reach the age of seven or eight.5

Briffault gives examples of what might be fosterage from

1 ERE, vi, 105. 4 J. H. Rowe in HSAI, ii, 252.
2 Cit. Mothers, i, 598. 5 J. Djamour in JRAI, 1952, 161.
3 Mariner’s Tonga Islands, ii, 96.
various parts of the world, but fails to distinguish between fosterage, adoption, ‘collective kinship’ and ‘communal motherhood’, to the last of which he attributes the origin of these customs. But the whole point of fosterage is that there is no communal motherhood. The mother who parts with her child in fosterage, almost always to a woman of lower rank, does not nurse any other.

Caesar tells us that the Gauls would not allow their sons to come into their presence openly until they had arrived at the age of military service; and that they thought it a shameful thing for a son, during the years of boyhood, to be present before his father’s eyes in public. It has been suggested that this statement has possibly some connection with the practice of fosterage. But fosterage among the Celts was not limited to boys, and it is possible that if a boy were seen in public with his father it showed that the father had neglected the duty of putting him out to foster.

All customs for which no practical reason can be given can be assumed to be of religious origin, and this custom may, as I have suggested, have originated in a belief that the domestic deities object to the presence of children in the house. Why should they do so? Because, as we must keep on reminding ourselves, house ritual is based upon temple ritual. Children are not admitted to the temple, or at least to the inner sanctuary, to which, as we have seen, the house corresponds. The Christian Church does not admit children to the sacrament until they have been ‘confirmed’, that is to say until they have passed through the puberty rite, and in this it no doubt follows ancient custom.

As the temple rites filter down through the classes they become gradually attenuated. A human sacrifice is necessary for the foundation of a temple or palace, but a sheep or a fowl will suffice for an ordinary house. The custom of excluding children below puberty from the house can be followed by seekers of prestige, but even for them it is inconvenient and apt to be modified or abandoned; for the poor it is impossible. I do not claim this as the final solution, but it seems to be the only one consistent with the evidence.

1 Mothers, i, 597 f. 2 ERE, iii, 529.
VIII

No Death in the House

We now come to the last and perhaps most serious form of pollution that a house can incur, that of death. But while the polluting effect of death upon the house must in most parts of the world be guarded against, the measures taken to guard against it vary greatly. As usual, we find not different measures in different parts of the world, but the same measures distributed more or less all over the world. These measures fall into the following types:

(1) To destroy or abandon the house.
(2) To carry the bodies out through a hole cut in the back of the house.
(3) To carry dying persons out of the house.
(4) To purify the house.
(5) To purify the body.

Let us take number 2 first, as we have already discussed it in Chapter III, where it was suggested that it might be due to fear of polluting the threshold. If the household gods dwell under the threshold it might be intended to conceal from them that a death has taken place in the house, and so permit its continued occupation without further difficulty.

Among many peoples it is only the house of the chief or head of the family that is burnt or abandoned after his death. We are told that each Inca emperor built a new palace in Cuzco, for the palace of the late emperor became a shrine to his memory.¹ When

¹ HSAI, ii, 259.
a chief of the Bemba of Rhodesia dies his house must be destroyed and a shrine built on the site.¹ Among the Jukun of Nigeria the late king’s palace is destroyed and two years after his installation the new king is inducted to a new palace.² The Ainu of Japan burn the house of a head of a family thirty days after his death. Three years later a new house is built on the site.³ When a chief of the Herero of South-West Africa dies the village is abandoned. After a lapse of years it is rebuilt on the same site.⁴ A Jivaro man of Equador is usually buried in his house. A quantity of food and drink is placed in it and it is then fastened up and abandoned. When women or children are buried in the house it continues to be occupied.⁵ If a house-owner is buried in his house it seems that the household spirits remain there in association with his body.

The houses of important men, then, are liable to be destroyed or abandoned at their death, but people are reluctant to destroy a house, and a wide-spread method of avoiding the necessity for so doing is prevent its pollution by removing a dying person from it.

Let us take some examples. To the Hindus the worst pollution of all is a death occurring inside the house. Hence a dying person is removed into the open air.⁶ The Sinhalese often take a person dangerously ill from a house and place him in an adjoining temporary building in order that if he dies the house may escape pollution.⁷ When the death of a Mongol appears imminent, the lama orders him to be carried into the open completely nude.⁸ The Kamschadels of North-Eastern Asia abandoned a house in which a death had taken place, as they believed that anyone who remained in it would die. To avoid this they carried the sick out of doors. Among the Serranos of Luzon in the Philippines, when a sick person has exhausted the sum allotted for his cure, he is laid on a hide outside the house and given only water till he dies.⁹

¹ A. I. Richards in JRAI, 1960, 188. ⁶ FL, 1918, 141.
² A. M. Hocart, Social Origins, 72. ⁷ ERE, iv, 414.
⁴ GB, ii, 217. ⁹ ERE, loc. cit.
⁵ Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., 624.
In the Marquesas nobody would live in a house in which somebody had died, and it would be burnt. To avoid this they carry the sick to a small primitive hut, and burn it down afterwards.\textsuperscript{1} A similar custom is observed by the Maori.\textsuperscript{2}

It is a common practice of the North American Indians to carry a dying person out of the house or camp.\textsuperscript{3} Among the Navaho, for example, a person who is seriously ill is sometimes borne from his own hogan to a nearby shelter, so that in case of death the house need not be pulled down or abandoned.\textsuperscript{4} In South America the Pacz of Colombia used to remove a dying person from his hut, but burnt the house if anyone died in it.\textsuperscript{5} The Basuto of South Africa remove a dying person from his house to the shelter of a screen outside, giving as a reason that there the ancestral spirits have easier access to him.\textsuperscript{6} The practice is not unknown in this country; in Wiltshire ‘the fear of the dead is particularly shown in the habit of removing a dying person from the house’.\textsuperscript{7} The idea seems to be that anyone who died in the house would haunt it.

We now come to the fourth of the measures taken to guard against the dangers of pollution by death, that of subjecting the building to a ritual of purification. A death in a Christian church desecrates it and necessitates reconsecration. This is usually avoided by carrying the dead or dying person out before life is pronounced extinct. Similarly, if a man dies in the inner shrine of a Hindu temple the god’s image loses its power; this must be restored by the appropriate rites.\textsuperscript{8}

The Ancient Greeks, after a death in the house, purified it with black hellebore. Among the Romans, when a death occurred in a house a cloud hung over it which could be dispersed only by elaborate purification. Without it the family would continue to be funesta, i.e. at variance with the world of spirits. The pontifices evolved elaborate rites to bring this condition to an end. Until this was accomplished a branch of cypress was hung at the door.

\textsuperscript{1} U. Schlenther, op. cit., 98.  \textsuperscript{2} K. B. Smith, op. cit., 218.  \textsuperscript{3} ERE, loc. cit.  \textsuperscript{4} Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., 704.  \textsuperscript{5} HSAI, ii, 949.  \textsuperscript{6} ERE, loc. cit.  \textsuperscript{7} FL, 1900, 346.  \textsuperscript{8} J. Abbott, The Keys of Power, 504.
to warn from entering those who were specially bound to purity, particularly priests and vestals.

In various parts of Europe, especially among the Slavs, the house is solemnly swept out after a funeral. In Yugoslavia the house in which a death occurs is considered unclean, and to remove the uncleanness a priest passes through the house, praying, sprinkling holy water and burning incense in every room.

After a Parsi's body has been taken from the house the stone slabs on which it was placed and the way along which it was carried out are sprinkled with cow's urine, which is used mixed with water to clean all furniture, clothes and utensils, except those which have been in contact with the body and are destroyed. The members of the family all take a bath, having first washed the naked parts of their bodies in cow's urine.

Among the Dayaks of Borneo, after the final feast of the dead, the priest moistens a besom with blood and rice water and asperses all who have taken part in the feast and everything in the house. In San Cristoval of the Solomons, after a man has died in his house, surrounded by all his relatives, all his property is destroyed and the pieces placed on the grave. The house continues to be occupied after steps have been taken to get rid of the ghosts which have assembled to eat the body. They are attacked with torches and sticks and caught with fishing-rods. By the Yauri of Nigeria an elaborate ritual of sweeping out the hut in which a person has died is observed.

The last in our list of measures taken to remove the pollution of death from a house is to purify the body itself. At least that is what it has come to, but it probably originated in a pretence that death had not really occurred. This was achieved, in Egypt and elsewhere, by mumification, that is to say by causing the dead

1 ERE, iv, 440.
2 Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., 484.
3 ERE, iv, 414.
4 Ibid.
5 C. E. Fox, The Threshold of the Pacific, 212.
6 JRAI, 1930, 304.
body to look as like as possible to a live body and then ritually reanimating it.

The origin of mummification has been much discussed, and the fashionable theory is that it arose when the Egyptians discovered that a body buried in the hot, dry sand did not decay. But, to quote H. S. Harrison: 'That under certain conditions the body did not entirely lose its human semblance was in itself no inducement to the conservation of the dried remains. A shrunken body was of no more value than a skeleton, and new views of man's place in nature, and in supernature, had to be evolved before the preservation of the body became a means to an end.' Mummification, wherever performed, is a religious rite, and a religious rite must have a religious origin. In early times, as Frazer has shown in his The Dying God, the divine king was sacrificed annually on a fixed date, and it may well be that if he happened to die before the proper date a pretence was made that he was still alive, and that this was achieved by mummifying his body. Evidence could be found for this theory, particularly in the fact that the king's death is often concealed.

Whatever the origin of the custom, however, it was generally confined to important persons, and when it, like all customs, spread outwards and downwards, actual mummification came to be replaced by symbolic mummification, which confers sufficient 'life' upon a dead body to enable it to be in a house without polluting it.

The symbolic mummification performed by the Ancient Greeks and Romans, the early and later Christians, the Muslims, Hindus and Chinese takes much the same form. Its principal features are that the body is washed, anointed and sprinkled with spices, dressed in new garments, and laid out as if asleep upon a bed. There it is visited and saluted by relatives. There are minor variations, and by some Hindus the body is partly embalmed, to be afterwards burnt. By the Greeks and Romans, and by the Hindus, the head of the corpse was or is garlanded.

The effect of these rites is to make the corpse approachable without its causing pollution. This change is especially noticeable in

2 ERE, iv, 452 f.
Christian ritual; what would before the rites have desecrated the church becomes after them the central object of an elaborate ceremony. The same seems to apply to the Muslims, Hindus and Chinese. The Parsis are an exception, for with them the corpse remains polluting till it reaches the Tower of Silence.¹

We now come to the question of the origin of all these customs, rites and ceremonies. According to Hartland they originated in 'the universal dread of death and horror of a corpse'.² And Professor Murphy says: 'The uncleanness created by contact with or nearness to a corpse arises fundamentally from two fears in the mind of early man, one of which is the simple animal terror of death and the other is the fear of the dead themselves.'³ But, as Hocart says, 'theorists ascribe to other peoples a dread which is peculiar to the decadent and over-sensitive. Aranda, Samoans, Solomon Islanders and countless others die in public, and children witness death without emotion unless it touches them directly. Their emotion is then caused not by death but by loss.'⁴ And if horror of a corpse were general such customs as cannibalism and head-hunting would not have been as prevalent as they were.

A more plausible theory was put forward by my old friend Miss Edith Durham, with whom many years ago I had a controversy on the subject in the columns of Man.⁵ Her theory, put briefly, was that prehistoric man noticed that persons who had been in contact with corpses often died; that he attributed their deaths to the malignity of the ghost; that in his efforts to get rid of the ghost he used what were in fact antiseptic measures such as washing, sweeping and burning; and that, after it had been 'learnt that one dead man may be dangerous, all dead bodies were treated as dangerous no matter how they died'.

If this theory were correct, prehistoric man would have to have noticed much that was not there to be noticed. He must have noticed that corpses are more infectious than sick persons;

¹ ERE, iv, 502.
² ERE, iv, 404.
³ J. Murphy, The Origin and History of Religions, 254.
⁴ Social Origins, 38.
⁵ FL, 1933, 151 f.; Man, 1934, 157 etc.
that the bodies of chiefs are more dangerous than those of commoners; that houses from which a person had been removed shortly before death were safer than those from which a corpse had been removed immediately after death, and that going round a house waving a fishing-rod was just as good as burning it down. At least this is what, assuming Miss Durham’s theory to be correct, many peoples think now.

But Miss Durham’s theory, as well as those of Hartland and Professor Murphy, is in fact disproved by the funeral rites of many peoples. Fijians die in their houses, and a dead chief lies in state in his house, which does not cease to be occupied. All his kinsfolk come bringing gifts, and kiss him on the face, hands and feet, according to their rank. In the old days the body of a nobleman would lie in the house it might be a whole month; the people would remain there in spite of the stench.¹

A Bantu of North Kavirondo should die in the house of his chief wife. His wives sleep by the body until the funeral, and mourners crowd into the house and talk to the deceased as if he were still alive.² The body of an Ao Naga who died in the house was smoke-dried in the house, which continued to be occupied. But if he met with death in the forest, his house was abandoned.³ This is the opposite of what should be done on Miss Durham’s theory.

It is to be noted that the rites of the Fijians and the Kavirondo are essentially the same as those of Europe and Asia. It does not seem that the bodies are washed, but until the funeral they lie in state, and are visited by their relatives.

The evidence which we have been considering drives us to the conclusion that burial rites are based on the theory of cosmic dualism. According to this remarkable theory, which has obtained a wide vogue, the universe consists of a large number of paired entities and attributes which are at the same time antagonistic and complementary. The pairs include sky and earth, summer and winter, water and land, right and left, male and female and finally, for our purpose, life and death. Life includes health and

fertility and death sickness and sterility. The forces of life are concentrated in the temple, in which are to be found the deities of life and their human representatives, and they must be kept from contact with death. But, strange as it may seem to us, death is not regarded as an enemy, for half the people belong to the death moiety and take the side of death in the ritual contests. The object of the life-giving ritual is not to keep death permanently at bay but as far as possible to ensure for the people a fair allowance of life and health. For this purpose members of the death moiety, as well as sick persons, puerperal women and other persons who may have been in contact with death, must be kept away from the holy place.¹ A form of social organization based on this philosophy is found in most parts of the world, but that the philosophy itself is a product of 'the primitive mind' is incredible.

¹ A. M. Hocart, Social Origins, 93; K&C, 273 f.
The Hearth-Fire

In the last four chapters we have been concerned with what must not be done in the house because it would pollute its sanctity or affront the supernatural powers which make it their dwelling. We now come to one of the most important things which must be done, nearly always by the housemistress, and that is to keep the hearth-fire burning. Nowadays, in most homes, the only fire that is always kept burning is the kitchen fire, where that has not been replaced by the gas or electric cooker, but, as we have seen, in many and perhaps most times and places cooking has been done not in the house itself, but in an outbuilding or in the open air. The hearth-fire in such cases is not the kitchen fire but the fire in the hall or living-room. The function of this fire is to provide warmth and light, but from very early times it has been regarded as sacred and has been the focus of rites and ceremonies. Hocart says: 'It has been suggested that the house began as a shelter for fire. Certainly it is fire that makes the house sacred.' In my view, as will appear presently, the house is primarily sacred because it is the setting for the sacred marriage, but the hearth-fire is undoubtedly a very important adjunct to that institution.

In most parts of the world there are ceremonies associated with the hearth-fire. Let us start with these islands and take our first example from the Hebrides. There the fire was never allowed to

1 A. M. Hocart, The Progress of Man, 69.
go out and every night the following ceremony was performed. 'The embers are evenly spread on the hearth and formed into a circle. The circle is then divided into three equal sections, a small boss being left in the middle. A peat is laid in each section, each peat touching the boss, which forms a common centre. The first peat is laid down in the name of the God of Life, the second in the name of the God of Peace, the third in the name of the God of Grace. The circle is then covered over with ashes sufficient to subdue but not extinguish the fire, in the name of the Three of Light. The heap slightly raised in the centre is called the Hearth of the Three. When the smooring operation is complete the woman closes her eyes, stretches out her hand, and softly intones one of the many formulae current for these occasions.\(^1\)

In Wales 'whether the fire were of wood or of turf, the hearth was swept out every night. The next thing was to single out one particular glowing ember—"the seed of the fire"—which was carefully restored to the hearth and covered up with the remaining ashes for the night. This was the nightly covering of the fire. The morning process was to uncover the "seed of fire", to sweep out the ashes under which it was hid, and then deftly to place back the live ember on the hearth, piling over it the fuel for the new day's fire, which thus from year end to year end might never go out.'\(^2\)

Similarly we learn that 'in the peat-burning districts the fire was covered each night, and for the fire to be allowed to go out was a great misfortune which might have serious consequences for the family. On many hearths the fire was said to have been kept burning for many generations. This custom is mentioned in the Welsh laws.'\(^3\)

Sir James Frazer dealt at length with perpetual fires, which he mentioned as occurring in many parts of the world.\(^4\) He explains them as being due to the difficulty which savages found in re-kindling a fire which had gone out,\(^5\) but, as he remarks a few

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1 W. Kisling in JRAI, 1943, 85.
2 F. Seebohm, op. cit., 82.
3 T. Gwynne Jones, Welsh Folklore and Folk Custom, 179.
4 GB, ii, 253 f.; Garnered Sheaves, 72 f.; Aftermath, 177 f.
5 GB, ii, 253.
pages before in a different connection, 'customs which begin in reason seldom end in superstition',¹ and the alarm and horror felt if the hearth-fire is allowed to go out are out of all proportion to the inconvenience caused.

There is ample evidence that the reason the hearth-fire was kept perpetually burning was that it was regarded as the abode of the hearth spirit or domestic deity. Among the Brahmans, for example, the fire-god Agni was visibly present in every household. He was man's domestic friend, the father of the sacrifice, the mediator between men and gods, the bearer of hymns and prayers from every family altar upwards towards heaven. Each morning the family assembled round the fire, saying: 'We approach thee, O fire, daily with reverential adoration in our thoughts.' The smouldering embers of the sacred element were not allowed to be extinguished. If this occurred the whole household fell into confusion, and everything went wrong till, after an expiatory ceremony, the fire was rekindled.²

Among the Buryats of Siberia the fire spirit lives in the hearth of each tent. No rubbish must be thrown into the fire, as this would insult him. He receives sacrifices before all other gods. The fire is part of the family, and no stranger may take away a light from it. If a visitor has lit his pipe from the hearth, he must knock it out before he leaves.³

Dr. N. G. Munro says that among the Ainu of Japan the supreme ancestress, Kamui Fuchi, is manifested in the sacred fire of the hearth. Nothing must be allowed to contaminate the hearth and no evil deed must be contemplated in Kamui Fuchi's presence. Every night the fire is carefully covered with ashes; when it is thus covered Kamui Fuchi is said to be asleep and no prayers are offered to her. Woe betide the woman who fails to keep the fire alive; such neglect ranks with adultery as a reason for divorce. Furthermore people must not spit into the hearth or turn the soles of their feet towards it, and the pot must not be allowed to boil over into it.⁴

Among the Aztecs 'in the middle of every house there was the

hearth, the image and incarnation of the "Old God", the god of fire. The three stones between which the logs were burnt or upon which the pots rested had therefore a sacred character; the mysterious power of the god was within them, and anyone who offended the fire by walking on the hearth-stones was sure to die very soon.'

In Ashanti 'to ensure the "immortality" of the state, a fire, symbolizing the soul of the state, was maintained and guarded by the senior wife of the king, and was never permitted to go out. If she died, her successor would kindle a new fire. In the home of every commoner the fire on the hearth is sacred—"for the soul of the inhabitants is in the fire"—and it is considered a crime to move the fire without good cause. Should this be necessary an egg, symbol of life and creation, is put in its place. If a death has occurred in a family the hearth-fires are extinguished, and no one in the deceased's household is permitted to kindle a new fire till the corpse is removed; and the expression used to convey the news of the bereavement is gya adum, "the fire has died".'

Not only is the hearth-fire maintained from religious, and not as Frazer supposed from utilitarian, motives, but it is from religious motives that fire is brought to a new house. In Ancient Greece the hearth or hestia was the centre of domestic life. At a wedding, fire was carried to the hestia in the new home by the bride's mother, thus ensuring the continuity of domestic worship. In India the newly wedded pair formerly brought to their own house a portion of the sacred fire which had witnessed their union and which, when kindled on their own family hearth, had to be maintained ever afterwards for use in all domestic ceremonies, including the last ceremony of all, the final burning of their bodies after death.' In Russia the peasant carries his fire to the new house, where he deposits it, saying: 'Welcome, Grandfather, to the new house.' In Wales 'even now cases are known,

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1 J. Soustelle, _The Daily Life of the Aztecs_, 123.
2 E. Meyerowitz, _The Sacred State of the Akan_, 75.
3 ERE, i, 343.
4 Monier-Williams, cit. Sumner and Keller, op. cit., i, 196.
5 ERE, vi, 27.
THE HEARTH-FIRE

when a new household is being started, of carrying fire from the parent hearth'.

Frazer also postulates a utilitarian cause for the custom by which when a household fire happens to go out it is rekindled from a sacred fire kept burning in the house of a king or chief. He tells us that 'it is obviously desirable that there should be some one place in the village where every housewife could be sure of obtaining fire without having to kindle it by friction, if her own should chance to go out. The most natural spot to look for it would be the hearth of the head man of the village, who would come in time to be regarded as responsible for its maintenance.'

We have here another example of the dichotomy of his thought. On the one hand he never tires of assuring his readers that savages are completely dominated by their magical beliefs, while on the other he explains their customs as being based on sound common sense. At least in this case it sounds like common sense, but is not really so: we cannot seriously suppose that it was ever one of the functions of a chief to guard careless housewives against the consequences of being late with their husbands' breakfast.

The sacred hearth had in fact a different function and no doubt a very different origin. Lethaby says that 'in the rites of Greece and Rome it was the hearth that was specially identified with the omphalos, and so in Latin we have “focus” and in French “foyer”, both hearth and centre’. He continues (quoting the Dictionnaire des Antiquités): ‘In the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi (formerly dedicated to Hestia), near the stone omphalos, was the altar of the sacred fire of Hestia, the goddess who symbolized the stability of the earth. Each Greek city had its prytaneum in the form of a rotunda (tholos), an edifice consecrated to Hestia; and the hearth sacred to the city was placed under the centre of the vault, in the same way that the foyer of Delphi—foyer common to all the Greeks—was under the summit of the heavenly vault.’ The omphalos at Delphi, it should be mentioned, was a sacred conical stone which was held to be the centre of the earth. Lethaby goes on to say that ‘the prytaneum was the civic hall, the pole of the city life, and here, on the focus of the town, was

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1 T. Gwynn Jones, loc. cit.  
2 GB, ii, 260.
kept alight the undying fire of Hestia; for just as family life centred round the hearth, so political life surrounded the city hearth'.

At Rome also the temple of Vesta, who corresponded to Hestia, was circular, and there the fire was tended by Vestal Virgins who, like all holy virgins, were regarded as the brides of the god. In this case it was the fire-god; he was believed to be capable of impregnating women, and according to legend two of the kings of Rome were his sons. But though he was present in the temple it was Vesta, as in Greece it was Hestia, to whom the temple was dedicated—who was, that is to say, its owner. 'As Vesta, who herself typifies the earth, is to be regarded as the centre of the universe, so fire, which is sacred to her, is placed in the centre of the city.'

Vestal Virgins are, or were, found elsewhere than at Rome. The nuns of St. Brigit, who tended a perpetual fire at Kildare until the suppression of the monasteries under Henry VIII, no doubt kept up, under Christian auspices, the worship of Brigit, a Celtic fire-goddess. Nineteen nuns served the sacred fire in turn, and on the twentieth night it was committed to the charge of St. Brigit herself, who never failed to keep it burning. In Timor the moon-deity is served by aged vestal priestesses who tend an undying fire. In Peru a sacred fire is said to have been kept in a great convent of holy virgins: it was an evil augury if they allowed it to go out. Among the Bauchi of Northern Rhodesia a special hut is built in the chief's village for Makumba, the tribal god, who is represented by an aniconic stone. Makumba has as his wife a woman who has passed the menopause; her duty is to sleep in his hut and keep his fire constantly burning.

The Herero of South-West Africa maintain sacred fires in

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1 AMM, 81.
2 GB, ii, 196.
4 GB, ii, 240.
5 Mothers, ii, 710.
6 GB, ii, 243.
7 R. Philpot in JRAI, 1936, 193.
their villages, and their customs and beliefs with regard to them bear marked resemblances to the cult of Vesta at Rome. The hut of the great or principal wife of the chief is more elaborate than the rest. Between it and the calves' pen is a large heap of ashes which is the sacred hearth and contains the holy fire of the village. At night and in rainy weather the fire is transferred to the hut of the great wife, where it is kept carefully alight. The sacred hearth is regarded as the centre of the village, and from it at evening the people fetch a light to kindle the fire on their own hearths. The duty of maintaining the sacred fire is entrusted to the chief's eldest unmarried daughter by his great wife, or failing her to the unmarried girl who is next of kin. She has other priestly functions to perform, and when the site of the village is changed she carries a firebrand from the old sacred hearth to light the new. If by accident the sacred fire should go out large offerings of cattle are made in expiation, and the fire is then relit by means of the two sacred firesticks. Of these the pointed one is regarded as male and the holed one as female, and the process of making fire by friction of the two is compared to the intercourse of the sexes. So great is the veneration felt by the natives for the sacred hearth that they dare not approach it without testifying the deepest respect.¹

Comparing these customs with those at Rome and in Peru, Frazer says: 'There seems to be every reason to think that all three sets of customs originated independently in the simple needs and superstitious fancies of the savage.'² But has anyone ever felt a simple need for a Vestal Virgin, and was the cult of Vesta at Rome no more than a superstitious fancy?

There is another set of customs which Frazer mentions, but of which he offers no rationalizing explanation, that by which people extinguish their hearth-fires on special occasions and relight them ritually. Among certain tribes of Angola, when the king dies, all fires in the kingdom are extinguished. Afterwards the new king makes new fire by friction.³ In Uganda, on the death of the king, all fires are put out and may not be relit

¹ GB, ii, 273 f.
² Ibid., 245 n.
³ Ibid., 262.
THE HEARTH-FIRE

until his successor has been appointed. Similar customs are reported from Mechonacan in the West Indies and among the Mishmis of Bengal. It is still the custom in parts of the Scottish Highlands to put out all fires in the house when anyone dies.\(^1\) In Armagh, after a birth, the fireplace would be cleaned out and a new fire made of old ivy and briars; at this the infant would receive its first warming.\(^2\)

It is clear that such customs, which in one form or another are reported from many parts of the world, cannot have had a utilitarian origin, and the same applies to the custom of introducing the bride to the hearth-fire which is observed in many countries. Nor is there any suggested utilitarian origin for the fire-festivals which Frazer devotes most of Volume X of the *Golden Bough* to discussing. Yet whenever a utilitarian explanation of a custom connected with fire, however far-fetched, suggests itself to him, he adopts it with the utmost confidence.

In the *Fasti* of Ovid\(^3\) we read: ‘They say that Rome had forty times celebrated the Parilia when the goddess, Guardian of Fire, was received in her temple; it was the work of that peaceful king, than whom no man of more god-fearing temper was ever born in Sabine land. The building which you now see roofed with bronze you might then have seen roofed with thatch, and the walls were woven of tough osiers. This little spot, which now supports the Hall of Vesta, was then the great palace of unshorn Numa. Yet the shape of the temple, as it now exists, is said to have been its shape of old, and it is based on a sound reason. Vesta is the same as the Earth; under both of them is a perpetual fire; the earth and the hearth are symbols of her abode. The earth is like a ball. The form of the temple is similar; there is no projecting angle.’

Commenting on this passage Frazer says: ‘The king’s house which sheltered the fire was originally in Italy what the chief’s hut still is in Hereroland, a circular hut of osiers, not, as ancient dreamers thought, because the earth is round, nor yet because a

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\(^1\) *Mothers*, iii, 6.
\(^2\) *Ulster Folklife*, 1959, 43.
\(^3\) *vi*, 265 f.
circle is a symbol of rest, but simply because it is easier and cheaper to build a round hut than a square.¹ But he must have known that the temple of Vesta remained round after the other temples had become rectangular, and that therefore the 'ancient dreamers' may have been justified in regarding its shape as symbolic. And if he had glanced up at King's College chapel, not many yards from where he was writing, he might have realized that builders of temples, as of churches, may be actuated by considerations other than ease and cheapness of construction.

And when it was necessary to rekindle Vesta's sacred fire, how was this done? It was done with the sacred fire-sticks, in historical times by the Pontifex Maximus and the Vestal Virgins, or more probably one of them, but in earlier times it seems to have been done by the Flamen Dialis, the chief priest of Jupiter, and his wife the Flaminica, whose title was derived from this function.² Some communities use other methods; it is a Christian practice to kindle the Easter fire with a flint,³ and the Parsis obtain it if possible from a tree that has been struck by lightning.⁴ But the Herero, as we have seen, also made fire with sacred fire-sticks, and that is the usual practice. Frazer gives many examples, and it seems that wherever it is so made it is equated with sexual intercourse. It is thus a symbolic form of the sacred marriage, about which we shall have much to say in the next chapter. It might be supposed that this method of fire-making, being so widespread, was the earliest and most general method, but this is not so. Harrison tells us that an earlier, simpler, and perhaps more general method was by knocking together two pieces of iron pyrites, or striking a piece of this metal with a piece of siliceous stone.⁵ This method might well have been discovered accidentally but it is difficult to imagine how the two-stick method could have been discovered; would anyone have gone on long enough rubbing one stick against another to see if anything would

¹ GB, ii, 227.
² GB, ii, 235; Seyffert's Dict.
³ Mothers, ii, 8.
⁴ D. F. Karaka, History of the Parsis, ii, 213.
⁵ In History of Technology, ed. Singer, i, 219.
happen? There may have been an earlier form of symbolic intercourse, intended to promote the growth of vegetation.

The number and complexity of the rites associated with the cult of the sacred fire shows that it arose neither from the 'simple needs' nor the 'superstitious fancies' of the savage, but resulted from a long process of ritual development. It seems probable that in the early days of houses all cooking was done outside, and that the only indoor fire was the sacred fire in the sacred building, kept there as a microcosm of the sun, and that only after the sky-god had come to be identified with the sun. Earlier, as we shall see in the next chapter, he seems to have been identified with the rain. It is interesting to note, by the way, that in this country it is still believed that if the sun's rays fall upon the hearth-fire they will put it out. The microcosm, it seems, cannot exist in the presence of the macrocosm, and to the Parsis it is a sin to allow the sun to shine on the sacred fire.¹

The sacred fire was, then, probably not a very early institution, but when it was introduced it was put in charge of the woman who as representative of the Earth-mother took part in the sacred marriage and who later became, if she was not already, the divine queen. She had to keep it always alight, not, as Frazer supposed, as a convenience for the negligent but because if it went out the sun might go out too. She no doubt had to smoor it so that, like the sun, it should give no light by night, but be ready to blaze at dawn. It was put out when the king died and relit by his successor.

After a time the custom of keeping a sacred hearth-fire spread as usual gradually downward in the social scale, and with it, as far as could be managed, the ritual. The myth and ritual pattern gradually became what in many parts it still is:

1. The hearth-fire is the abode or manifestation of the god or spirit who protects the house and its occupants.
2. This god or spirit is regarded as male (except by the Ainu).
3. The fire is in the charge of the house-mistress.
4. It must be treated with respect and no rubbish must be burnt in it.
5. It should not be used for cooking.

¹ ERE, vi, 30.
(6) It must be put out on the death of the owner.
(7) But otherwise must never be allowed to go out.
(8) If it is put out it must be rekindled either from a sacred fire or with fire-sticks (symbolizing a sacred marriage).
(9) If any of the occupants set up a new hearth, they must light it with embers from the old hearth.
(10) If the fire is especially sacred, it is maintained by holy women who are usually regarded as the brides of the god.

There can, it seems to me, be no doubt that all these features form part of a religious complex, originating in a desire to control the activities of the sun, and associated with the sacred marriage of Earth and Sky to which we shall come in the next chapter. When the sacred fire was taken over by ordinary householders it lost something of its sanctity, but it had still to be kept from profanation, still to be prevented from ever going out, and still to be in charge of the house-mistress. Did all these developments originate independently in the simple needs and superstitious fancies of the savage? Surely not.
The main thesis of this book is that the sacredness of the house, of which it is to be hoped that there is now sufficient evidence, is due to its having originally been the scene of the most important rite in early religion, the marriage of Earth and Sky, which was in general performed annually, and which was believed to ensure fertility and prosperity. Our study of it may be fitly introduced by a translation of the words which Aeschylus puts into the mouth of Aphrodite:

Lo, there is hunger in the Holy Sky
To pierce the body of Earth, and in Earth too
Hunger to meet his arms. So falls the rain
From Heaven that is her lover, making moist
The bosom of Earth; and she brings forth to man
The flocks he feeds, the corn that is his life.¹

'The myth of Heaven and Earth as a divine pair', says MacCulloch, 'is the result of the analogy which man saw between the processes of conception and birth and those by which the earth brings forth. Hence in many languages the words for begetting, sowing and ploughing, for *semen* and the seed sown in the earth, for woman and the female organ of generation and the field or furrow, for the male organ and the ploughshare, are the same, or are used metaphorically one for the other. Hence Earth was

¹ J. Harrison, *Themis*, 176.
regarded as fertilized by Heaven.¹ And Tylor says that 'if we have learnt the secret of man's thought in the childhood of his race, we may still realize with the savage the personal being of the ancestral Heaven and Earth'.

'The idea of the Earth as a mother', he goes on, 'is more simple and obvious, and no doubt for that reason more common in the world, than the idea of the Heaven as a father.'² But the idea of Earth as a mother is very far from being simple and obvious. The Earth to savages, as to ourselves, is primarily the surface on which we move and travel, and in that capacity lacks any suggestion of maternity. It is very unlikely that anyone, savage or civilized, after falling to the ground has ever said: 'I bumped my head on Mother', or when he got bogged said: 'My feet got stuck in Mother'. And so far as I can learn nobody has ever made mud bricks out of Mother. The idea of the earth as mother results from an imagined analogy between the germination and growth of the seed corn induced by rain and the process of mammalian reproduction. These two processes have nothing in common, either in appearance or reality. It is inconceivable that anyone, looking up at the sky, thought that it looked like a man, or saw the rain splashing down on the earth as a human couple engaged in a conjugal embrace. The analogy of the seed corn was extended to the rite of burial, to be followed by rebirth, an idea even further removed from anything observed.

These ideas make their first appearance in the ancient civilizations in connection with a ritual complex so remarkable that we cannot imagine how it could have originated. By the performance of rites a selected man was charged with the power of the sky and became identified with it, and a selected woman was charged with the power of the earth and became identified with it. The pair had intercourse in a sacred building, and by so doing were believed to bring about a release of power which induced rainfall, good crops and general prosperity. We cannot, as I have said, imagine how this ritual came to be performed, but it certainly did come to be performed, and its results, presumably on the cohesion and morale of the community, were such that it led

¹ ERE, v, 130.
² PC, i, 326.
to the gradual promotion of the selected man and woman to the status of king and queen, and to a development of the cult of royalty which spread over most of the world.

It is outside the scope of this book to attempt to trace the development of the divine kingship, a large subject to which the late A. M. Hocart’s *Kingship* is probably the best introduction, but I hope to show that just as the man and woman who took part in the sacred marriage represented the Sky and Earth, so the building in which this union took place represented the Cosmos, in which sky and earth are enclosed. And the sacred building which housed the divine pair, the god-king and goddess-queen, came to be the prototype of the house, which was sacred because it was the dwelling of the pair who had been consecrated by the sacramental marriage.

The examples which follow are some of them accounts of what was or is actually done, while others are stories of the gods, that is to say myths. But these myths are, like all myths, mythicized accounts of ritual, describing not merely what was done actually by those who represented the gods, but what was done symbolically by them, or what was believed to be done by the gods themselves. It will be seen that there is a close resemblance between what is done in the rite and what is described in the myth.

‘The early civilizations’, says Childe, ‘periodically celebrated with great pomp a “sacred marriage”, the nuptial union of a “king” and a “queen”, who on this occasion represented divinities. Their union not only symbolized, but also magically ensured and compelled, the fertilization of the earth, that she might bring forth her fruits in due season.’

Let us begin with Mesopotamia, for which we have many references to the sacred marriage. There ‘Mother Earth was the incarnation of the reproductive forces. As the goddess Inanna her marriage to the shepherd god Dumuzi, who incarnated the creative powers of spring, was held to symbolize and effect the increase of life at the turn of the year. Her nuptials were celebrated at Isin annually at the spring festival.’

THE MARRIAGE OF EARTH AND SKY

At Babylon, according to Gadd, on the top of the great pyramidal sanctuary of Bel, stood a temple in which was a large bed, richly adorned. A woman who was supposed to have been chosen by the god, and who took the part of a goddess, spent the night there and was believed to be visited by the god. 'We know something of the arrival of the goddess bride, the giving of wedding presents, and the beneficial effect which the divine union was thought to produce, particularly the rise of the water which irrigated the land and brought forth its fruits.' Gadd goes on to say that a similar rite was performed in every one of the old cities, with the local god and goddess, and also the local ruler, as chief participants, and that the connecting link is the Tammuz and Ishtar conception, the course of nature dramatized and enacted for magical purposes.

According to some authorities the bride was a priestess of royal birth, and the marriage may have taken place in a gigumu (that is a booth made of or decorated with greenery) erected on one of the stages of the ziggurat. 'In it the connubium was accomplished for the purpose of restoring the fertility of the fields, the flocks and of mankind, through the intercourse of the human embodiments of the god and goddess upon whom fertility depended. But in this union although the king in the capacity of Tammuz personified the generative forces in nature as the husband-son of Ishtar, the goddess was the active partner who summoned him to her couch and thereby gave him a divine but subservient status in the generative process. The Isin texts leave no doubt that the initiative was ascribed to the goddess.' Elsewhere Dr. James says that the Babylonian kings were invited to share the couch of the goddess, and it was she who was the active partner in the sacred marriage, bringing him into the bower decorated with grass and plants, to promote the growth of the fruits of the earth, to ensure prosperity in the coming year, and to raise the sovereign to her divine status. He also says that in a recently published tablet the

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3 E. O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, 53.
4 *The Ancient Gods*, 121.
life of the king and queen is apparently equated with the life of heaven and earth.\footnote{Ibid., 94.}

At Lagash 'the cylinder inscription of Gudea contains an account of the sacred marriage of the god Ningirsu to the goddess Bau, the daughter of Heaven. The text describes how the warrior Ningirsu enters like a whirlwind into his temple, how Bau like the rising sun comes in to him to his couch, and how their union, like the Tigris in flood, brings prosperity to Lagash.'\footnote{S. H. Hooke in \textit{Myth and Ritual}, 10.} This is exceptional in that the goddess comes in to the god.

In the sanctuary of Boghaz-keui, the ancient capital of the Hittites, is carved a scene which Frazer explains as follows: 'We may conjecture that it is the rite of the Sacred Marriage, and that the scene is copied from a ceremony which was periodically performed by the human representatives of the deities. . . . If this was so, we may suppose that the chief pontiff and his family annually celebrated the marriage of the divine powers of fertility, the Father God and Mother Goddess, for the purpose of ensuring the fruitfulness of the earth and the multiplication of men and beasts.'\footnote{GB, v, 140.}

It is now recognized that the religion of Israel was considerably influenced by that of Babylon, and that this influence appears particularly in the Feast of Tabernacles. Professor T. H. Robinson reconstructed the early form of this festival as follows: 'It necessarily began with the removal of Jahweh and Anath (his consort) from their home in the temple, and their occupation of a sacred hut, probably in a vineyard. Then began the Story of Creation . . . the divine marriage followed, and this was succeeded by the death of Jahweh. After a period of lamentation he was restored to life and, with his consort, was led to his home in the temple, there to reign until the changes of the year brought back again the festal season.'\footnote{In \textit{Myth and Ritual}, 188.}

In later times, according to Professor Hooke, 'the ritual of this part of the festival consisted in the building of booths made of the
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leafy boughs of various trees, palms and willows being specially mentioned. The participants in the festival were to live in these booths for the seven days of the feast. The significance of the ritual of the booths of greenery calls for special note. In the prelude to his code Hammurabi states that among his other kingly and priestly duties it was his place to decorate the gigunu of Ai, the consort of Shamash, with greenery, and Gudca built a gigunu of cedar in the temple complex at Lagash. In his discussion of the meaning of gigunu Mr. Sidney Smith has shown good grounds for supposing that the gigunu was a chamber used for the ritual of the sacred marriage. Hence it is permissible for us to suppose that the original significance of the booths of greenery was connected with the ritual of the sacred marriage, which was one of the most important and frequently occurring features of both Mesopotamian and Canaanite ritual.\(^1\)

Dr. Raphael Patai says that in the days of the second temple the main feature of the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (sukkoth) was a festivity called 'the Joy of the House of Water Drawing'. The ritual at this festivity included a symbolic union of the upper male waters with the lower female waters or Mother Earth, thus producing abundant rainfall and fertility. During this ceremony the women stood inside and the men outside the Court of Women, but they used to intermingle and commit what is referred to as 'levity', so the women were eventually relegated to the galleries. Dr. Patai goes on to say that 'the general union of the sexes at the seasonal fertility feasts may be regarded as a democratization of the originally aristocratic representation of the sacred marriage'. He also says that that the canopies or bridal chambers used in Talmudic times show a remarkable similarity in their structure and decoration to the sukkoth.\(^2\)

These passages are important for our theory, not only because they indicate that ritual acts once confined to kings may spread to the whole population, but also because they make it clear that the sukkoth are to be equated with the gigunu of Mesopotamia. They were not, as has so often been stated, the crude shelters of

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2 In *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Low*, 10.
harvesters, but copies of a sacred building of simple form, a building constructed for ritual purposes, which may have been the prototype of the palace.

The idea of Father Sky and Mother Earth seems to have been unknown to the Ancient Egyptians. The Pharaoh was an incarnation of the sun-god Re, and his queen of Hathor. Hathor was the World-mother, but the world included heaven, earth and the underworld, and she was more particularly associated with the sky.¹ The sacred marriage was, however, of great importance and, though it seems not to have been associated with the fertility of the soil, has features of interest. 'The high priestess of the god was the queen, who bore the title "Wife of the God", and was accordingly equated with Hathor, the consort of the Sun-god, with whom at the beginning of the New Kingdom Amun was identified and henceforth known as Amun-re. The queen was therefore regarded as the earthly consort of Amun, and through her he became the physical father of the Pharaoh.'

'It is highly significant that a series of reliefs depicting the divine conception and birth of the Egyptian king should appear, as it does, on the walls of the temple of Luxor. The priestly theory was that the Sun-god, having incarnated himself in the reigning Pharaoh, had intercourse with the queen and so begat the heir to the throne. The account of this wondrous event is set forth in the temple at Deir-el-Bahri. . . . They (the combination of god and king) found her as she slept in the beauty of her palace. She awoke because of the savour of the god, and she laughed in the presence of his majesty. . . . Then the majesty of this god did all that he desired with her.'² Here again the queen appears as house-owner and hostess to the god. Her palace may have been within the temple precincts.³ Though, therefore, the rite was not directly associated with fertility, it resulted in the birth of one who was himself to be 'the centre and source of all productiveness and fertility'.⁴

¹ E. A. W. Budge, From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt, 229.
² A. M. Blackman in Myth and Ritual, 35–6.
³ E. O. James, Priesthood, 114.
⁴ A. M. Blackman, op. cit., 39.
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Passing to Europe, we learn that in Transylvania there were found idols of the Neolithic Age which exactly fit each other in copula, and were probably used in a sacred marriage ritual.\(^1\) Figurines from the same area, we are also told: 'sometimes have their arms raised towards the sky and sometimes pointing towards the ground, and as these gestures are in accordance with the sex of the figurine, it is clear that they are ritual.'\(^2\) We may note that the neolithic inhabitants of this area were immigrants from South-West Asia.

'The patriarchal organization of the Indo-Germanic peoples', says Professor Goldammer, 'gave the upper heaven of the gods a predominantly masculine character. This arose from a rather obvious symbolism; of a pair of cosmic gods of the sky and earth the sky played the creative and fertilizing part, the earth the part which received and brought forth.'\(^3\) We may note the fact though that this symbolism, which as we saw is by no means obvious, is not confined to patriarchal peoples.

In Greece the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera was enacted at annual festivals in various parts of Greece. Hera was usually regarded as the lawful wife of the Sky-god, but he was also paired with Gaia, the Earth and Demeter, the Earth-mother. Homer thus describes the union of Zeus and Hera: 'Therewith the son of Cronos clasped his wife in his arms, and beneath them the divine earth made fresh-sprung grass to grow, and dewy lotus and hyacinth thick and soft, that upbore them from the ground. Therein lay the twain, and were clothed about with a cloud, fair and golden, wherefrom fell drops of glistening dew.'\(^4\) The divine union, that is to say, waters the earth and causes the vegetation to grow.

At Athens the old Palace was known as the Cattle-shed. There the queen archon, wife of the archon who was called the king and who performed the ritual functions once performed by the king, was annually married to the god Dionysus, who may have been

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\(^3\) K. Goldammer, *Die Formerwelt des Religiösen*, 84.
\(^4\) *Iliad*, xiv, 346–51.
represented by a bull. This was no doubt a fertility rite. The marriage of Earth and Sky appears more clearly in the mysteries of Eleusis, in which a symbolic marriage of Zeus and Demeter produced an ear of corn.

Plutarch tells a story of how the sexton of the temple of Hercules at Rome challenged the god to a game of dice and, having lost, had to pay his stake. This involved procuring a beautiful courtesan called Acca Larentia, feasting her, putting her to bed in the temple, and locking the door. The god appeared to her and gave her certain instructions, as a result of following which she attained high honour among the Romans. Plutarch’s editor, Jevons, regards this story as an explanation of a sacred marriage when its purpose, to confer fertility on flock and field, had been forgotten. According to Seyffert’s Dictionary Acca Larentia was originally a goddess of the earth, to whose care men entrusted their seed-corn and their dead.

The Irish festival of Lugnasad was, according to Sir John Rhys, Lug’s marriage, the wedding of the Sun-god and the Earth from which the life-giving produce of the earth was to spring.

Branston quotes an English fertility charm of the late 10th or early 11th century:

Erce, Erce, Erce, Mother of Earth,
Hail to the Earth,
Mother of man grow and bring forth in God’s embrace.

In Sweden every year a life-sized image of Frey, the god of fertility, was drawn about the country attended by a beautiful girl who was called the god’s wife. She also acted as priestess in his great temple at Upsala.

‘We gather from a Lapp legend’, says Bosi, ‘that Ihmel (the Supreme Being), after creating the earth, sent down to it Maddar-

1 GB, ii, 137.
2 Ibid., 138.
3 F. B. Jevons, Plutarch’s Roman Questions, lxxxiii.
4 K. Meyer, The Voyage of Bran, ii, 186.
6 GB, ii, 143.
akko—“Woman and Mother”—to bring life. Is there an implication of some mystic union of the sky and the earth? The myth of such a celestial marriage is notably absent among the Uralo-Altaic peoples, so the idea may spring from indigenous Lappish beliefs. The idea is more likely to have been acquired from the Scandinavians, but it is interesting to learn that this ‘obvious’ symbolism is unknown to a large segment of the human race.

Now to India. ‘In the Rigveda’, says Griswold, ‘the picture which the hymns conjure up before us is that of Father Dyaus bending down in love over Mother Earth and bestowing his seed in the form of rain, by which the earth is fertilized and made fruitful.’ This is of course a myth, and those who doubt the connection between myth and ritual should look at Plate XV in Dr. Quaritch Wales’s Siamese State Ceremonies. This depicts the installation of the Queen, and shows her kneeling before the King, who, seated on his lofty throne and attired in his celestial regalia, leans forward and from a shell pours consecrated water on to her head.

In Bengal formerly a girl used to be selected as the Bride of Juggernaut (properly Jagannath, a form of Vishnu). She spent the night in his temple, and was instructed to inquire of the god what ceremonies would be necessary to make the year a fruitful one. In the night she was visited by a Brahman in the character of the god. He told her the god’s wishes, which she proclaimed to the people next morning.

The Oraons of Bengal annually celebrate the marriage of the Sun-god to the Earth-goddess. All bathe, and after various ceremonies the priest is carried to his house, which has been decorated with leaves and flowers. There the rites of marriage are performed between himself and his wife, symbolizing the supposed union between Sun and Earth. After this all feast and then indulge in sexual licence. The object is to move the mother earth to become fruitful.

1 H. Bosi, The Lapps, 129.
3 J. G. Frazer, Aftermath, 161.
4 GB, ii, 148.
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In China Heaven and Earth are called in the Shu-king 'Father and Mother of all things'. Heaven, said the philosophers of the Sung dynasty, made man and Earth woman, and therefore woman is to be subject to man as Earth to Heaven.\(^1\) In the I-Ching we are told that 'from the marriage of Sky and Earth transformation in all its forms abundantly proceeds. . . . Because of their union Heaven and Earth, though separate, have their common work, just as man and woman, though separate, have a common will.'\(^2\) In China, too, 'the empress represented the divinity of the Earth as the emperor the divinity of the Heavens, and she was supposed to exert an influence over nature and to possess a transforming power'.\(^3\) Her palace was 'the Palace of Earthly Peace' and his 'the Palace of the Cloudless Heaven'. Between them was a small building called 'Heaven Vigorous and Productive', and this probably represents the building where the sacred marriage once took place.\(^4\)

'In virtually all of Indonesia the dualistic element is met with in the form of creation myths involving the marriage between heaven (sun) and earth, out of which all life has come forth. . . . An example is the Fialarang myth of Timor. Men, animals and plants are directly or indirectly descendants of a heaven father and an earth mother.'\(^5\) In Lati and other islands there is an annual festival in honour of the Sun-god, who is believed to descend into the sacred fig-tree to fertilize Grandmother Earth. The mystic union of sun and earth is dramatically represented in public, amid song and dance, by the real union of the sexes under the tree.\(^6\)

I have found no mention in Melanesia or Australia of a sky father and earth mother, or of fertility resulting from a sacred marriage. In Polynesia the myth takes an unusual form. The Sky (Rangi) saw the Earth (Papa) lying naked. He came down and

\(^1\) PC, i, 328.
\(^2\) A. K. Coomaraswamy, op. cit., 51.
\(^3\) Mothers, i, 367.
\(^4\) K&C, 79.
lay upon her and six children were born. Being covered by their father’s body they were in the dark, so by a combined effort they raised him up again.¹

In Peru the Inca king represented the Sun-god. The queen was called coya, and may have represented Pachamama, the Earth-mother, who is still offered various plants, especially one called uira-coya, and besought for increase of crops and flocks.²

Rites and myths connected with the marriage of earth and sky seem not to occur elsewhere in South America, but are numerous in North America. To the White Mountain Apache: ‘The earth is female; her head to the east, her feet to the west. Her bones are the mountains and rocks, her hair the trees and plants. Four great beings support her. The sky is male; like the earth he has life, a body and a head. Indicative of his sex he lies above the female in the same direction, but does not touch her.’³ Perhaps, like the Polynesian Rangi, he has been separated from her.

‘The Man ceremony of the Tewa (Pueblo Indian) drama is the enactment of a divine marriage for the purpose of promoting fertility.’ A man representing a god called the ‘Silent One’ has a virgin presented to him and has intercourse symbolically (and formerly perhaps physically) with her. This is ‘necessary to secure the blessing, the Great Goodness, from the sky and the earth, from the north, the west, the south and the east.’⁴

According to the Zuni (Pueblo Indians) terrestrial life sprang from the embraces of ‘Fourfold containing Mother-earth’ and ‘All-covering Father-sky’, after which the twain separated.⁵ By the Omaha ‘the Above was regarded as masculine and the Below feminine. . . . Myths relate that human beings were born of a union between the Sky people and the Earth people.’⁶

At one point in the Arapaho Sun Dance the Lodge-maker’s wife, who represented the mother of the tribe, had intercourse

² R. Karsten, A Totalitarian State of the Past, 107, 198.
⁴ V. Laski, Seeking Life, 67.
⁵ ERE, iv, 128.
with a priest representing the All-powerful, otherwise Man-above. 'The issue of this connection was believed to be the birth of the people hereafter or an increase in population.' The Cheyennes performed a similar rite 'so that all lives may be born'. In the Offerings-lodge of the Arapaho were two circular pieces of sod, which were said to stand for Father and Mother, the Sky and the Earth.¹

Every year the Blackfoot Indians held a festival in honour of the Sun. A round temple was built of wood covered with leaves, and in this slept a woman who was chosen to be the wife of the Sun. She had to maintain a sacred fire of herbs and present a lighted pipe to her husband the Sun.²

Similar myths and rites occur in parts of Negro Africa. By the Hoer of Togoland it is believed that the sky is male and the earth female, and that they have marital relations.³ And by the Ibo of Nigeria the sky, Igwe, is regarded as the husband of Ala, the Earth deity. Just as a husband fertilizes his wife, so Igwe, in the form of rain, fertilizes Ala.⁴

In the Yoruba pantheon Obatala is called creator, father and king of mankind. Odudua as the wife of Obatala is the earth, and the pair are represented by the two halves of a whitened calabash, carefully joined together as the sky touches the earth. Another earth deity of the Yoruba is Orishako, a fertility god worshipped particularly at the yam harvest. At Ife and other Yoruba towns intercourse in public was celebrated by the priestess of Orishako with a young priest. Licence was general the same night. It was held that if this was not done the rain would not fall and the crops would not grow. There were similar rites at Nupe and in Ashanti.⁵

According to the Masai of Kenya the sky lies on the earth like a husband on his wife in coitus. When the sun shines and the rain

² GB, ii, 147.
³ H. A. Wieschhof in Ethnos, 1939, 37.
⁵ G. Parrinder, West African Religion, 34, 50.
THE MARRIAGE OF EARTH AND SKY

falls the earth receives warmth and moisture; so the woman enjoys the seed of the man.¹

By the rightful use of his sex powers in ritual intercourse with his head wife the Citimukulu, or divine king of the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia, brings fertility to crops and women. He should not sleep with his head wife except in connection with the rites, and she must not bear a child.²

'The African Earth-Mother', says the Reverend E. W. Smith, 'is widely known as the spouse of the Sky, whose seminal showers fructify her, so that she gives birth to gods and men and all things.'³ He cites H. Baumann for the African distribution of this myth. Baumann's map shows two centres. One extends from Ghana into Southern and up into Central Nigeria, the other consists of Western Kenya and North Central Tanganyika. There are outliers at the mouth of the Congo and on the Upper Zam-besi.⁴

Finally, in some of the Berber villages of Morocco each spring a youth and a girl are selected to be the Bridegroom and Bride of the Good. They are dressed as for a wedding and after certain ceremonies are shut up in the mosque. There the Bridegroom kills a white cock and hen and then has intercourse with the Bride. The ceremony, which is believed to bring prosperity to the community, apparently ends with a simulated killing and bringing to life of the couple. It is said that all the young people of the village follow the example of the Bride and Bridegroom of the Good.⁵ This is interesting in bringing the idea of human sacrifice into connection with the sacred marriage, and leads us to note what Dr. Elwin has to say of Mother Earth: 'Those who so charitably talk of "the good earth" and think of this fertile mother feeding and delighting mankind with her bounty must not forget the sinister aspect she has so often assumed in the minds of primitive people. It is the earth which, among the Konds, cries out for

² A. I. Richards in JRAI, 1960, 181, 185.
³ JRAI, 1952, 30.
⁴ Schöpfung u. Urzeit im Mythen der Afrikanisher Volker, 175.
⁵ J. G. Frazer, Aftermath, 159.
the blood of human sacrifice; she is generally the most terrible of primitive goddesses. She feeds, but she also starves, mankind. She creates, but in time she receives again the dead.\textsuperscript{1}

We can be in no doubt that this is true of the jungle tribes of India, of whom no one knows more than Dr. Elwin, and appears to be true of some African tribes, but it does not seem to be general among savages. Dr. Elwin seems to hold that ‘primitive people’, unlike the more civilized, formulate their own religious doctrines for themselves, but the belief that the earth cries out for the blood of human sacrifices, and receives the dead as well as creating the living, calls to mind features of the religion of Ancient Egypt. Isis was a corn goddess, and her husband Osiris was, among other things, a sacrificial victim and god of the dead. He also caused the corn to grow. The Egyptians in laying their dead in the grave committed them to his keeping who could raise them from the dust to life eternal, even as he caused the seed to spring from the ground. Of that faith the corn-stuffed effigies of Osiris found in Egyptian tombs furnish an eloquent and unequivocal testimony. They were at once an emblem and an instrument of resurrection. Thus from the sprouting of the grain the ancient Egyptians drew an augury of human immortality.\textsuperscript{2}

This idea must be very far from being primitive. The idea of the earth as mother can, as we have seen, have arisen only through a very far-fetched symbolism by which the ritual intercourse of a man and a woman was believed to imitate and so produce the effect of rain upon ground in which the seed corn had been sown. By a still more far-fetched symbolism based upon this, it seems that the blood of a human victim poured on the ground, which in that connection was also Mother Earth, caused the rebirth or resurrection of a human body buried or ‘sown’ in it. Sacrifice, however, is outside the scope of this book, and I have mentioned it merely to emphasize the far-fetched, one might even say mystic, character of the myths and rites associated with Father Sky and Mother Earth.

The myths are all very similar. They tell how Father Sky

\textsuperscript{1} V. Elwin, \textit{Bondo Highlander}, 152. \textsuperscript{2} GB, vi, 114.
embraced Mother Earth, with the result that all forms of life were produced, in most instances particularly corn. The rites take three forms, all involving a sacred marriage celebrated annually:

(1) A sky (or sun) god is symbolically married to an earth goddess.

(2) A sky (or sun) god is symbolically married to a sacred, or at least a specially selected, woman.

(3) A sacred man and woman, representing Father Sky and Mother Earth, have intercourse in a cosmic building after being ritually united.

As I have already suggested, the last is pretty certainly the original form of the rite. It must be admitted that in the examples which I have given those taking part, whether gods or human beings, are not always said to represent Father Sky and Mother Earth, or a sky god and earth goddess, but most of them are, and where they are not the ritual is similar and so are the purposes of the ritual, that is to obtain fertility and prosperity.

At the beginning of this chapter I quoted Tylor’s view that the idea of the Sky Father and Earth Mother is characteristic of man’s thought in the childhood of his race. It is to be noted, however, that this myth and its accompanying ritual figure most prominently not among savages but in the centres of early civilization—Babylon, Jerusalem, Greece, India and China. Is it to be supposed that these peoples went to savages for their myths and rites, or is it not more likely that the minority of savages who have them were the borrowers?
The Sacramental Marriage

In the accounts of the marriage of Earth and Sky which we reviewed in the last chapter we saw a number of instances in which a chosen woman was installed in a temple or other sacred building to be the bride of the god, and it is probable that to prepare her for the part she was to play in this sacred marriage she went through a ritual of consecration. This sacred marriage was merely a temporary union entered into annually for the sole purpose of the fertility rites, but later, when the temporary representative of the Earth-goddess developed into the divine queen, the ritual which she went through in order to be permanently united to the divine king was no doubt based on that which had been performed for the bride of the god or of his temporary representative, and this, gradually no doubt, developed into the full ritual of the sacramental marriage.

We saw in Chapter III that among many peoples, including ourselves, a married woman owes her social importance to the fact that she is the mistress of a house. The house, as I hope I have made clear enough, was, and to some extent still is, a sacred building; its mistress should therefore be a sacred person, and that is what in fact she usually is. She becomes sacred by going through a ceremony which we know as holy matrimony, but which, as it exists in many non-Christian societies, is more suitably described as sacramental marriage. It is the purpose of this chapter to show that this form of marriage, wherever found, is based on
the ritual devised for the purpose of converting a woman into a
divine queen.

How marriage began is a question with which we are not here
concerned. What we have to note is that while marriage in some
form is universal, among many peoples it takes place without any
religious ceremony, or even without any ceremony at all. Such
marriage we shall call secular, as distinct from sacramental,
maintenance.

Ancient Greece provides us with a fairly full account of a
sacramental marriage. There the most important religious cere-
mony was performed by the father of the bride. The main item
was an animal sacrifice to certain deities who were believed to
rule over marital affairs: Zeus and Hera, and Apollo and Artemis.
The families of both bride and bridegroom took part in the cere-
mony and had a wedding banquet after it, this being one of the
few occasions on which men and women dined together. In the
evening a procession was formed to lead the bride to the bride-
groom’s house. The place of honour in the procession belonged
to the bride’s mother, whose privilege it was to carry the bridal
torches, kindled at the hearth of the bride’s family, with which
the fire in the new household was to be lit. The bride-
groom’s mother, who was waiting at the door of the bridegroom’s
house with torches in her hand, received the procession. There
followed a wedding feast at which sesame cakes were a speciality.
The bride and bridegroom together ate some food. The bride-
groom’s mother thereafter led the couple to the bridal chamber
where lay a richly decorated marriage bed.1

This ritual seems to have been performed only for members of
the upper classes, though for whom exactly does not appear.
For Ancient Rome we are better informed. There was a religious
ceremony of marriage, thought to be of royal origin, which
was performed only for patricians and, at any rate in later times,
not for all of them. It was called confraratio because one of its
principal rites was the offering of a cake to Jupiter in the presence
of his priest, the Flamen Dialis, and of the Pontifex Maximus.
Such a marriage was indissoluble, as sacramental marriage as a

1 G. S. Ghurye, Family and Kin, 100.
rule has been, and only men who had been married with this ceremony were eligible for the principal priesthoods. The ceremony included the eating by the bride and bridegroom of the cake which had been offered to Jupiter, while they sat side by side on the skin of a sacrificed animal.

There were other forms of marriage for plebeians, and for such patricians as did not go through the *confarreatio*, but these, 'not being of the same mystical or sacramental character', could be dissolved by divorce.¹ The Romans, that is to say, had sacramental marriage for patricians and secular marriage for plebeians. We shall find similar distinctions elsewhere.

By the early Christians, as in the Graeco-Roman world generally, marriage was usually viewed in the light of a civil contract. Although it was recommended by some that marriage should be solemnized with a priestly benediction, most Christians dispensed with a religious ceremony at their marriages. In A.D. 537 it was laid down that marriage among the noble classes should be celebrated in a church, but that 'the common people may continue to contract valid marriages without any external solemnity'. The religious ceremony was for the first time pronounced to be an indispensable condition for the validity of a marriage at the Council of Trent in the year 1563. In England a religious ceremony was not made a condition of the validity of a marriage until the passing of Lord Hardwicke's Act in 1753.² The right to secular marriage was restored by the Registration Act of 1836. In Scotland it has never been disallowed, and 'according to the law of Scotland marriage is a contract which is completed by the consent of the parties'.³

The Christian marriage ceremony, according to Dr. E. O. James, is royal in origin, and re-enacts that part of the ancient coronation ceremony which consisted in the coronation of the queen, and which followed and closely resembled that of the king. 'The veiling of the bride is in accordance with the coronation pattern, since the royal marriage is in effect the unction of the queen... This notion survives in the Christian rite, inasmuch

¹ *ERE*, viii, 463.  
² *Mothers*, iii, 249.  
³ *Whitaker's Almanack.*
as the nuptial blessing is bestowed only upon the bride, and if she has previously been married is withheld altogether. . . . The institution is represented as being of divine origin interpreted in terms of the creation story, signifying the mystical union of Christ and his Church; a conception which reflects an earlier notion of the alliance of heaven and earth in a sacred marriage.¹ In Christian, as in all sacramental, marriage the bride is or should be a virgin.

In Roman Catholic sacraments the priest is the minister except in the sacrament of matrimony. In this the ministers of the sacrament are the man and woman who receive it: the priest merely blesses and sanctifies their union.² For the moment the bride and bridegroom are, it would seem, holier than the priest.

In former times the coronation of the queen coincided with her marriage. In France in 856 Judith was married to Ethelwulf, an English king, and was crowned at the time of her marriage; the coronation prayers were inserted in the marriage rite. Ten years later the coronation of Queen Hermintrud at Soissons was 'still more an adaptation of the nuptial ceremony'. As late as the time of Charles V the prayer at the crowning of the queen is worded as if she were for the first time united to the king: 'Grant that thy handmaid enter with mercy into a worthy and sublime union with our King.'³

In our own coronation ceremony married members of the Royal Family enter the Abbey singly, but join their spouses to form part of the procession going out. It seems that they are symbolically married.

We have seen that for real queens the marriage and coronation ceremonies have been at times combined and it is probable that in earlier times they always were. The custom, as usual, spread downwards, sometimes only to the upper classes and sometimes to all classes, and we find many instances in which bridegroom and bride, on their wedding day, are treated as king and queen, and in which the bride, in particular, wears royal robes and crown.

¹ Christian Myth and Ritual, 169, 178.
² Priess and Schneider, Religion in Various Cultures, 369.
³ A. M. Hocart, Kingship, 103–4.
THE SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE

In many parts of Central and Northern Europe brides wear crowns and in Norway the elaborate bridal crown is handed down as an heirloom in well-to-do families. In the Greek Church ritual of marriage the pair crown each other while the priest blesses them and says: ‘O lord, crown them with glory and honour.’¹ It seems that the idea of the bride as queen in the Slav countries is older than Christianity. We are told that their marriage ceremony included cutting the bride’s plaits, crowning her, veiling her and leading her in procession to the house of the bridegroom. There she went to bed with him in the presence of witnesses. Up to the 16th or even 17th century these ceremonies were considered not only by the common people but by the more cultured classes as more important than the rites of the Church.²

The custom was known to the Jews. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of the bride as wearing a ‘lovely crown’³ and Cheyne adduces evidence that in post-exilic times Jewish brides and bridegrooms were treated as royalty and probably wore crowns.⁴

Islam is not, as is commonly supposed, the religion of the desert, but arose in the cosmopolitan cities of the Hejaz, which had recently freed themselves from domination by the king of Ethiopia. Whether from this or other causes the idea of sacramental marriage is absent from Islam, the law of which appoints no specific religious ceremony of marriage.⁵ Rites associated with the sacramental marriage have nevertheless survived or been adopted in many Muslim countries. Thus in Egypt the bride, if a virgin, is taken in procession to the bath. She walks under a canopy wearing a pasteboard crown and followed by musicians.⁶ Crowfoot says that among the Sudanese Arab rites performed at weddings are reminiscent of royal ritual, and that there is a proverbial saying that ‘the son of the Arabs is a king on the day of his circumcision and his wedding’.⁷

¹ ERE, iv, 338.
² ERE, viii, 471.
³ xvi, 12.
⁴ Encyclopaedia Biblica, i, 691.
⁵ Hughes, Dict. Islam, 318.
⁶ W. Lane, Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, 150.
⁷ SNR, v, i, 23, 27.
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In Morocco marriage ritual goes back to an earlier stage, that in which the sacred marriage was a rain-making rite. Among some tribes, when the bride reaches the bridegroom’s tent his mother sprinkles water on her; this ‘is supposed to produce a rainy season and make the year good’. Elsewhere in Morocco, we are told, a bride on her wedding day is possessed of great power. If she can be induced to soak her veil with her tears, it will ensure a plentiful rainfall for the year. Grain which has been placed on her lap is mixed with the combings of her hair and sown to ensure abundant crops.

Now to India. ‘In the Vedas Dyaushpitar the Heaven-father and Prithivimatar the Earth-mother are called the two great parents, and their relation is still kept in mind in the ordinance of Brahman marriage according to the Yajur-veda, where the bridegroom says to the bride: ‘I am the Sky, thou art the Earth, come let us marry.’ Coomaraswamy quotes similar words from the Atharva-veda, and goes on to speak of Sky and Earth as ‘the universal parents upon whose harmony depends the prosperity and fertility of the entire universe, which is chiefly to be taken as the norm and archetype of all marriage.’ Among the modern Brahmans, at any rate in Gujerat, the bridegroom represents the god Shiva and the bride the goddess Parvati, and the bridegroom is worshipped like a god. After three days the couple bathe, so washing away their divinity, but even then they do not become ordinary mortals, for they are looked on as king and queen till the end of the festivities, and as a king the bridegroom wields a sword. As part of the ceremonies the pair must circumambulate the sacred fire.

By the Hindus in general ‘the coming of the bride is considered to be the coming of the goddess Lakshmi, but this goddess of fortune is proverbially fickle, so to tie the goddess down and

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1 E. Westermarck, Marriage Customs in Morocco, 209.
3 PC, i, 327.
5 A. M. Hocart, Kingship, 100.
6 D. D. Kosambi, Myth and Reality, 73.

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enforce her prolonged stay in the house silver chains are tied to
the feet of the bride'.

The Parsi bridegroom and bride are not said to be divine or
royal, but they take a sacred bath in the temple and wear on their
foreheads what are said to be respectively solar and lunar symbols.
The wedding prayers ask for them, among other gifts, exalted
position, pure justice, victory and strong power—gifts more
suitable for royalties than for ordinary mortals. As part of the
ceremonies the garments of the pair are tied together and they
eat out of the same dish.

In Malaya 'the wedding ceremony, even as carried out by the
poorer classes, shows that the contracting parties are treated as
royalty, that is as sacred human beings... The bridegroom and
bride are actually called Raja Sari (the sovereigns of a day),
and it is a polite fiction that no command of theirs during their
one day of sovereignty may be disobeyed.'

'In Java and Sumatra bride and groom in their marriage cere-
mony re-enact the ancient and mysterious marriage of heaven
(the groom as "king") and earth (the bride as "queen") from which
all living things took their beginning.'

In Fiji bride and bridegroom are treated with chiefly honours,
sit in the seat of honour and hold a kind of levee. Barkcloth is
spread from the bride's house to the bridegroom's for them
to walk on. A tray of food is set before each; they exchange
morsels and eat them. The bride cuts off a long lock or shaves
her head.

In Rotuma, an island north of Fiji, bride and bridegroom sit in
state against the east wall, the chiefly side of the house, and eat off
tables, a privilege which is otherwise reserved for chiefs. Hocart,
who tells us this, says that in Wallis Island, between Fiji and
Tonga, he could find no marriage ceremony, the reason appar-

\[^{1}\text{J. Abbott, op. cit., 210.}\]
\[^{2}\text{ERE, viii, 455; D. F. Karaka, op. cit., i, 185.}\]
\[^{3}\text{W. W. Skeat, Malay Magic, 388.}\]
\[^{4}\text{J. M. van der Kroef in AA, 1954, 852.}\]
\[^{5}\text{A. M. Hocart, Social Origins, 41.}\]
\[^{6}\text{ERE, x, 459.}\]
ently being that Wallis is a plebeian colony from Tonga, with no aristocracy.¹

In Samoa there is a class of words used only with reference to chiefs. The word used for a marriage feast is used otherwise only for the meal of a chief of high rank.² In New Zealand 'The clearest proof that human marriage was consciously associated with the marriage of Sky and Earth is presented by the fact that the Maori employed as the basis of all divorce ritual the same incantation as was used by the gods when they thrust apart their parents the Sky and the Earth. The priest calls upon the sky to stay apart on high and be separated from the earth; also the earth to lie separately from the sky.'³

We also find sacramental marriage in America. The Incas recognized only one principal wife, though nobles and other privileged persons might take secondary wives. The latter were taken without special ceremony, but there was a regular form of marriage for the principal wife, and the Emperor's blessing was given. Divorce of the first wife was theoretically impossible, but secondary wives could be divorced easily.⁴

An Aztec marriage, as described by Sahagun, was clearly sacramental, and shows many features similar to those we have seen in Europe and Asia. On the wedding day a feast was held at the home of the bride, after which she was bathed and adorned with red feathers, etc. She then had to stand in an alcove and was greeted by all the guests. At sunset she was escorted to the bridegroom's house with torches. On arrival there she and the bridegroom were placed on each side of the hearth. Gifts were made to them, after which they exchanged clothes and each ate four mouthfuls of a special food. They were conducted to the bridal chamber by the matchmakers, who were the priestesses of marriage. These then shut the door and guarded it for four days, while the relatives of the pair feasted in the house. At the end of this period the proceedings were concluded by a ceremony in

² JRAI, 1961, 305.
⁴ HSAI, ii, 285.
which the mat on which the couple had slept was carried to the centre of the court, shaken in a certain way, and taken back to the nuptial chamber.¹

Soustelle gives the particulars somewhat differently. He says that the bride was carried to the bridegroom's house, where the pair were seated on mats in front of the hearth. They handed to each other, and ate, white maize cakes. The flap of the bride's blouse was tied to the bridegroom's cotton cloak. The marriage was not consummated till the fourth night. These rites applied only to principal wives; secondary wives were married without ceremony.²

Among the Mandans, a Plains Indian tribe, there were three forms of marriage. That used by 'the most distinguished families' involved elaborate ceremonies and the singing of sacred songs, and it is said that marriages so celebrated were likely to be permanent. In the other forms there was little or no ceremony, and divorce was common.³

Some African kings go through a sacred marriage. The King and Queen of Uganda were married and crowned in the same series of ceremonies, which included human sacrifices and other features differing from those we have hitherto seen.⁴ There is evidence, however, that in Africa, as elsewhere, marriage ceremonies are of royal origin. This, as Hocart points out, may explain why the Zulu chief grants the head-ring which shows that a man may marry, and why at a Jukun wedding a pot of beer is sent to the king and he is informed that the bride is being escorted to her husband's home.⁵

Here and there, however, we find features of the marriage ritual which we have seen elsewhere. Thus it is fairly common for a bride to be bathed, veiled, and taken in procession to her new home and, as we saw earlier, to be lifted over the threshold. Among the Baila and Lozi of Rhodesia, as part of the marriage

⁵ A. M. Hocart, *The Progress of Man*, 172.
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ceremony, bride and bridegroom sit side by side, hand each other
morsels of food and eat together.¹

The Anuak of the Southern Sudan are divided into nobles and
commoners. The latter pay a bride-price but there is no ceremony.
A noble bride is carried to the bridegroom's house with drum-
ming; she is placed on a bundle of straw outside it and before
entering it has her feet washed and is anointed with oil.² The
nobles, then, perform part at least of the ritual of the sacramental
marriage.

The sacramental marriage has, as we have seen, a wide dis-
tribution. Among some peoples the ceremony is performed for
all classes; among others it is or has been confined to the nobility;
to many others it is unknown. But wherever it is performed it
exhibits, with very few exceptions, similar features, and these
may be tabulated as follows:

(1) The bride's hair is cut.
(2) She is ritually bathed, and
(3) Anointed with oil.
(4) She is dressed in royal garments,
(5) Is veiled, and
(6) Is crowned.
(7) A feast is held at her father's house at which she is dis-
played.
(8) She is conducted in procession to her new home,
(9) With music.
(10) She is lifted over the threshold.
(11) She is introduced to or led round the hearth-fire.
(12) The bridegroom, if not already there, is brought in pro-
cession.
(13) The pair are enthroned.
(14) They eat from a special dish and exchange morsels.
(15) Some of their garments are tied together or exchanged.
(16) They are conducted to a bridal chamber decorated with
greenery,
(17) In which is a specially prepared and decorated bed.

¹JRAI, 1952, 19.
(18) The bride is put to bed by the bridesmaids, after which they retire.

(19) The bridegroom enters and the groomsmen put him to bed.

(20) The guests then enter the bridal chamber, where

(21) They wish the couple prosperity and make broad jokes.

(22) The guests then feast.

(23) After consummation the pair are escorted to where the guests are and

(24) Are acclaimed.

Wedding songs and dances may be part of the pattern, and in the earlier forms we hear of animal sacrifice.

Evidence for the numbers from 15 on will be given in the next two chapters. There is far more evidence for the others than can be given here, but some of it may be mentioned briefly. The countries or peoples in or among which the bride had or has a ritual bath include Ancient Greece, Sweden, Russia, the Mordvins of Russia, Ancient Persia, Siam, Fiji, Ancient Peru, Ashanti and the Bemba of Rhodesia. Roman Catholic nuns, when they become Brides of Christ, have their hair cut, as do orthodox Jewish brides, and as did Spartan brides. The last mentioned exchanged garments with their grooms. The Basque custom according to which the bridegroom kneels on a fold of the bride’s dress may be a survival of the joining of garments. It would, in fact, be difficult to find any account of wedding ceremonial which does not include a number of features of our pattern.

There are, however, in many parts of the world secular weddings in which no such features appear. It is not merely a question of our registry office weddings or of the strictly Buddhist or Muslim weddings for which no ceremony is prescribed, but of the many peoples whose marriages are validated simply by the payment of the bride-price. Thus among the Dayaks of Borneo there is no wedding ceremony, but the bridegroom must make the customary payments to the bride and her father. Of the Omaha we are told that marriage was by elopement. There was

1 C. C. Miller, Black Borneo, III.
a ceremony when the presents which ratified the marriage were handed over to the bride’s parents, but the bride and bridegroom were not there.¹ And of the Duruma of Kenya we are told that there is no marriage ceremony, but that a bride-price is paid after the bride has eloped with her husband.²

It is, of course, possible to combine features of the sacramental marriage with payment of bride-price. I once saw £100 in gold counted out for an Arab bride, after which, wearing a long white veil, she headed a triumphal procession to her husband’s village. But it can hardly be doubted that secular marriage validated by the payment of bride-price is an older institution than the sacramental marriage.

We have too few details of the ancient ritual of the sacred marriage to be able to say how many of the features of the sacramental marriage which I have listed are derived from the sacred marriage. One could speculate on the prehistoric stages of both, but it should suffice to say that, as Hocart and Dr. James have made clear, their connection is evident. Yet no other writer seems to have noticed it. Briffault has much to say about ‘holy matrimony’, and seems to regard it as a natural development. He does not explain why, if so, it is not universal, and clearly detects no pattern in its rites.³

Westermarck’s History of Human Marriage fills three stout volumes, but apart from a passing reference to Christian marriage he makes no mention of sacred or sacramental marriage. And though he notes that in some countries the bridegroom and bride are regarded as king and queen, he makes no attempt to explain this but merely asks scornfully: ‘Who would regard this as a survival from a time when marriage was only contracted by royal persons?⁴ He obviously expects the answer ‘nobody’, but he begs the question. To the right question the answer is that it is a survival from a time when sacramental marriage was contracted only by royal persons.

¹ Fletcher and La Flesche in Rept. Bureau of American Ethnology, 1905–6, 324.
² JRAI, 1935, 271.
³ Mothers, iii, 210.
⁴ ii, 261.
Rivers says: 'The rites accompanying marriage vary greatly in duration and complexity among different peoples. Sometimes they are so fragmentary that they can hardly be said to exist, while in other cases the ceremonial may consist of rites of the most diverse and elaborate kinds.'\(^1\) He perceives no pattern.

The writer of the article on marriage in the Encyclopaedia Britannica assures us that 'Once we come to recognize that marriage is fundamentally one, and that its varieties correspond not to stages of evolution, but are determined by the type of the community, its economic and political organization and the character of its material culture, the problem becomes one of observation and sociological analysis and ceases to move on the shifting plain of hypothesis.' There is not the slightest reason to suppose that politics, economics or material culture have any connection with varieties of marriage.

The contributor to the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences was Lowie, and all that he has to say on our subject is: 'Primitive weddings are largely secular, although occasionally a magico-religious element enters. In more sophisticated societies religious features may assume prominence.' The custom of lifting the bride over the threshold is less common in 'primitive' than in 'more sophisticated' societies; is it then magico-religious in the former and religious in the latter?

Professor Raymond Firth says that it is convenient to draw a distinction between rituals which are sacramental and those which are not, and that in the traditional Catholic view matrimony is a sacrament. 'In most primitive societies,' he goes on, 'and in many Western churches, matrimony is not a sacrament. By sacrament in the strict sense is meant a ritual which by its outward forms serves as a visible sign of an inward and spiritual state—a state of grace.'\(^2\) By his use of the word 'most' he implies that some 'primitive' societies have sacraments, if not in the strict sense; if so, we are surely entitled to use the word in a sense wider than the Christian, and so make the distinction between secular and sacramental marriage which has eluded Professor Firth. Where he, as well as Lowie and others, have gone astray is in

\(^1\) ERE, viii, 430.  
\(^2\) Elements of Social Organization, 223.
perpetuating Tylor's division of mankind into the 'primitive' and
the more advanced. According to the theory inherent in this
division 'primitive' beliefs may survive among the more ad-
vanced, but all beliefs and customs held or observed by 'primitives'
are of 'primitive' origin.

This theory inhibits all rational inquiry into the history of
culture. When, as we have done, we study sacramental marriage,
we find that it forms part of the religion of Christians, Jews,
Parsi and Hindus, but not of Buddhists and Muslims. Many
Buddhists and Muslims nevertheless perform its ritual. Its
absence from Buddhism may be due to ascetic ideals and from
Islam to Muhammad's adherence to Arab custom. We find
sacramental marriage also among the more advanced peoples of
Middle America. As for 'primitives', we find it sporadically
distributed among them, in a more or less incomplete form, in
most parts of the world. But on Tylor's theory it should be either
universal among them or non-existent.
XII

The Bridal Chamber

In the last two chapters there has been incidental reference to the buildings in which sacred and sacramental marriage took place. We must now consider the nature of these buildings and of the part which they play in the ritual.

It is possible that sacred marriages once took place in the open, but there is little evidence of this. The ‘sexual orgies’ which in various regions form part of these rituals may take place in public, but we are not further concerned with them, but with the union of two temporarily or permanently sacred persons. In Nigeria the priest and priestess of Orishako are said to have intercourse in public, but we are not told exactly where. In the two examples from the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians which I have mentioned intercourse takes place in the open, but in one case the pair leave the company in the sacred lodge and go off by themselves, and in the other they are hidden by a buffalo robe. The sacred marriage of the Tewa takes place in the temple, but the god-man merely makes some gestures towards his bride. In all the other cases which I have come across the actual union takes place in private, and in a temple or bridal chamber. In the case of human marriages it might be thought that this procedure is obvious and natural, but in fact human marriages, if sacramental, imitate the sacred marriages of divine beings not only in this respect but in the performance of ceremonies inside the bridal chamber before and sometimes after the consummation of the marriage. The
sacred marriages of gods and kings take place in temples and palaces. For sacramental marriages special buildings are sometimes erected, but ordinary houses are usually considered sacred enough. That sacramental marriages are performed in houses is another reason for regarding houses as sacred buildings.

Where special buildings were constructed for the sacred marriage, as at Babylon and Jerusalem, they were made of or decorated with green branches. They were probably the survival of a traditional type simpler than the temples of the day. To them, or to the temples, to sleep with their human brides many Sky- and Sun-gods are believed to descend—Bel at Babylon, Amun-re in Egypt, Apollo at Patara, Hercules at Rome, Frey at Upsala, Juggernaut in Bengal, the Sun-god in Peru, the Sun among the Blackfoot Indians, not to mention the gods represented only by an image. Elsewhere the part of the Divine Bridegroom is played by the king or a priest. In several instances we are told that a bed is placed in the temple, which is otherwise furnished to meet the needs of the deity.

As Dr. James has pointed out, the Christian marriage service represents the installation of the queen, and that is why the bride, royally attired and veiled, is led in procession to the chancel steps. There she is joined by the bridegroom who, having in theory been previously installed, has hitherto taken no part in the proceedings. He is following the example not only of the king but of the god, who cannot be supposed to appear until his bride has been properly prepared and installed in his temple. This procedure is, as we have seen, followed in all cases in the sacramental marriage; the bride, unlike the bridegroom, goes through a series of ceremonies before entering her new home. And even if she is not first in the house or the bridal chamber, she is always put to bed first.

In England in former times the bride was undressed and put to bed by the bridesmaids and the bridegroom was then undressed by the groomsmen and put to bed on her right side. The male guests retired while the bride was being undressed but then returned. In Tudor times, in the case of a royal wedding, the bishop and his chaplains then came in and blessed the bed, after
which all withdrew. The bride had been conducted to her chamber with lights.\textsuperscript{1} This may be part of the full pattern. In parts of the Highlands of Scotland similar customs were still observed in the 18th century. ‘The company continue dancing and drinking till the time of the young people’s going to bed, when the whole company accompany them to the barn (for they are not allowed to sleep in the house the first night). All the men remain on the outside till the bride is undressed, then (the bridegroom being undressed) they kiss the bride.’\textsuperscript{2}

As late as 1816, at the marriage of the Duc de Berri, heir to the French throne, to the Princess of Naples, the rest of the royal family and the entire court, men and women, conducted the pair to the bridal chamber and, when they were in bed, wished them good night. Mme Oudinot, who was present as a lady in waiting, and who describes the scene, was shocked.\textsuperscript{3}

Such ceremonies descended, in France as in Britain, from the royal family to the peasantry, who performed them in a cruder and probably earlier form. Among the peasantry of Languedoc the bridal couple remained, after the marriage ceremony, under the supervision of the ‘young men’. These broke into the nuptial chamber in the middle of the night and offered what looked like a horrible mixture, especially as it was often served in a chamber-pot, but was really a refreshing soup. That brought their frolics to an end, but in Roussillon they went further. There the ‘young men’ not only brought soup or wine to refresh the bridegroom, but made jokes about his exhaustion and his bride’s virginity.\textsuperscript{4} The ‘young men’ were recognized fraternities, and that they were allowed these liberties shows that a marriage was more than a mere matter of local interest.

Westermarck gives other examples. In South Sweden as late as the early 19th century the bridal couple were undressed in front of all the guests. In Brandenburg it was the custom for the guests to enter the bridal chamber. Among all the Slavonic

\textsuperscript{1} W. C. Hazlitt, Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore, ii, 453.
\textsuperscript{2} Cit. I. P. Grant, Highland Folk Ways, 364.
\textsuperscript{3} Memoirs of Marshal Oudinot, 331.
\textsuperscript{4} R. Nelli, Le Languedoc: Le Roussillon, 193, 275.
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peoples the bride and bridegroom are solemnly conducted into the bridal chamber and in most of them the bride has to go to bed with her husband in the presence of witnesses. Guests at a Southern Serb wedding make an uproar, breaking pots and glasses, to signalize the consummation of the marriage.\(^1\) Rationalizing as he usually does, Westermarck says that 'the most general object of marriage rites is to give publicity to the union',\(^2\) but such rites are neither necessary nor suitable for this purpose. We are told, moreover, that in some Slav nations these domestic rites are still considered necessary to validate the marriage.\(^3\)

Among the Erza Mordvins of East Russia the bride is carried resisting into the bridal chamber, where the bridegroom awaits her, and is locked in. After a few minutes a bridesmaid brings in some spirits and an omelette and makes the couple eat and drink. Half an hour later they are raised from the nuptial bed and brought with rejoicing into the common room, where the guests await them.\(^4\)

Among the Jews of the Yemen a girl is usually married when she is about nine years old and her bridegroom not much older. The rites and festivities, however, last a week. On the final day the bride, who has had her hair trimmed and wears a crown and a veil, is taken in procession to the bridegroom's house. There, after various rites, she is installed in the 'room of union'. The bridegroom is then brought in by the rabbi, who blesses them and leaves the room, shutting the door behind him. The marriage is usually not consummated as the couple are too young, but after an hour and a half the door is opened and the guests enter in groups. They pay their respects to the young couple, who entertain them with food and drink. The festivities continue for another week.\(^5\)

At a wedding of the Yezidis of Northern Iraq, after dances, processions and other ceremonies, the couple are locked in a room

\(^1\) The History of Human Marriage, ii, 437, 463.
\(^2\) Ibid., 433.
\(^3\) ERE, viii, 472.
\(^4\) FL, 1890, 443.
by the priest. After consummating the marriage the bridegroom knocks three times on the door. The priest on hearing this fires a gun, and the men present follow his example.¹

Let us now turn to a marriage hut which is set up by the Ababda and Bisharin of Southern Egypt. By them a marriage is always held in connection with the circumcision of boys. The hut, which is built at or after sunset, is first occupied by the boys; after the rite the boys move out and the bridegroom moves in. The bride is brought to the hut by her female relatives and made to walk seven times round it widdershins. They then all go in and the bride’s arms are tied to her sides with a strong cord, which the bridegroom must try to break. If he fails he must try again the next night. If he succeeds the women try to snatch it from him and if they succeed he must pay them a sheep. The next day the circumcized boys return to the hut for some days. When they leave, the bride, who returned to her mother when the cord had been broken, may visit the bridegroom, but only by night. He has to stay in the hut for forty days or more, and meanwhile must not milk or kill an animal, activities which are taboo to women.² This is clearly a sacramental marriage, but has features which form no part of my pattern. That there are such makes it the more surprising that my pattern is so widely diffused. One feature, however, occurs elsewhere. At a Sephardi Jewish wedding which I attended at Tiberias the bride was led seven times round the bridegroom, and in the strange Rajput poem, the ‘Lay of Brahma’s Marriage’, we are told that bride and bridegroom were led seven times round the wedding arbour, which was thatched with betel-leaves. Rice was sown ceremonially within the arbour, but the ceremonial meal of rice and milk eaten together by the pair took place elsewhere and the consummation was postponed to a date ‘within the year’.³ Among the Rajputs of Madras bride and bridegroom still walk seven times round the marriage booth.⁴

² G. W. Murray in JRAI, 1947, 44.
³ Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, 1923, 575 f.
⁴ E. Thurston, Ethnographic Notes in Southern India, 95.
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Every Nayar girl of Malabar, while still a child, goes through a mock marriage. A boy bridegroom is selected for her by astrology and is escorted to her house in a procession led by armed men shouting a kind of war-cry. There he is placed on a seat of honour in a specially erected booth, round which the girl is carried three times. After a series of rites 'the boy and girl are carried to a decorated apartment where they remain under a sort of pollution for three days'. They then bathe in a tank or river, holding each other's hands, and return in a procession which includes drummers. In the house, after other rites, they share a meal from the same leaf. They then return to the booth, where they are formally divorced by the cutting in two of a cloth.¹

Among the Wadders, a low caste of Southern India, weddings take place at the beehive-shaped hut of the bride, in front of which a ceremonial shed, roofed with mango and other leaves, is erected. There is a procession, not of either of the parties but of married women who, with music and walking under a canopy held by four men, fetch water for the marriage rites. The pair, after being oiled all over, are seated side by side on wooden mortars, and 'the caste-folk chaff them in terms neither remarkably delicate nor subtly allusive'. Their clothes are changed and the corners tied together and, after further ceremonies which occupy most of the night and the next day, and include the bathing of the couple and their being marked on the forehead with the blood of a sacrificed fowl, the marriage is complete. The bridegroom takes his bride to his house, where he feasts his kinsmen, and then returns with her to hers, where the marriage is consummated.²

It is curious that these Hindu marriage booths, though they are made with special kinds of greenery and form an essential part of the ceremonies, are not bridal chambers. The actual bridal chambers, it seems, are entered only by the bridal pair. It may be that consummation was once more public or that the booths have become more or less vestigial.

Now to Assam. When a young Ao Naga marries for the first time he must build a new house. On the evening of the wedding

day his friends light a new fire in the house and he prepares for brewing. He then goes with men of his clan to the bride’s house, where they are feasted. After a cock has been sacrificed and omens taken, the bride in her best clothes, and accompanied by three old women, goes to her new home. There they brew beer, while the old women subject her to ‘much broad jesting’. Then the bridegroom comes in with some male friends, one of whom carries the bride’s bed. Three girls also come in, and they sleep in the house for three nights. The other guests depart after drinking together and sacrificing another cock. The couple must not have connection for nine nights.¹ The custom is that a man sleeps with his girl at her home for some time before he marries her, so the ‘broad jesting’ and the sleeping apart can only be formal. That these and the other proceedings, including the building of a new house, form part of a sacramental marriage is clear when we are told that they take place only when neither of the couple has been married before.

As soon as a Manchu bridegroom has consummated the marriage, he leaves his bride in bed and goes to welcome the bride’s relatives, whom he has invited to a nocturnal feast. When this has been eaten all go to the bridal chamber to congratulate the bride. She unveils herself, descends from the bed, cuts the hair from her temples as a sign that she is now a married woman, and offers tea and tobacco to her guests to show that she is the hostess. The bride and bridegroom have worshipped heaven and earth before entering the bridal chamber, and on the first night the bridegroom has not consummated the marriage, but has left the chamber after a ritual meal.²

At a Chinese wedding all the relatives crowd into the bridal chamber and make jokes at the expense of the couple and especially of the bridegroom; it is late before they depart.³

It is interesting to find a bridal chamber in the Kalahari Desert, among people, the Bushmen, who are often said to be among the most primitive of mankind. The ordinary dwelling of the Bush-

² J. H. S. Lockhart in FL, 1890, 488–9.
³ M. C. Yang, A Chinese Village, 112.
men, called by Europeans a 'scherm', is a hemisphere of branches and grass built by the women, and about six feet in diameter. A space three to four feet wide is left open to serve as an entrance. 'On the morning of the wedding,' says Mrs. Marshall, 'the two mothers together built the wedding scherm. It was slightly larger, more nearly round, and much more carefully built than the ordinary skimpy structure.'

The bride was carried into the scherm, care being taken that her feet did not touch the ground. The marriage fire was lit at the entrance and the bridegroom was brought to it, showing reluctance, by other young men and boys. The ceremony took place at dusk because a wedding is 'a night thing'. The Bushmen and women were seated on opposite sides of the fire, as if a man sat on the women's side he would lose his ability to hunt and if a woman sat on the men's side she would have a magical disease in her sex organs. The lads sang and chattered till at midnight the observer went away. She returned at dawn to find the bridegroom gone, and could not ascertain whether he had entered the scherm. He probably did not consummate the marriage as the bride was, as usual, some years below puberty. At dawn the bride's mother rubbed her all over with antelope grease.¹

There is nothing suggestive of nature in the proceedings of these alleged children of nature. All are ceremonial—the building of the special hut, the carrying of the bride into it, the lighting of the marriage fire, the escorting of the bridegroom by his age-mates, his feigned reluctance, the seating according to rule, the vigil with singing, the anointing of the bride, her immaturity and the probable non-consummation of the marriage—all find parallels in other marriage rituals and several are regular features of the pattern.

We see, then, that in the sacramental marriage consummation is not a mere physical act but one feature of a ritual which contains many features, a ritual of such importance to the community that all its members take part. It seems, moreover, from the example of the Yemeni Jews, the Nayars and the Bushmen, that the ritual remains valid for its purpose even if, owing to the youth of the parties, consummation does not take place. The shutting

¹ Laura Marshall in Africa, 1959, 346 f.
up of the bridal pair together in the bridal chamber can, that is to say, be an effectively symbolic act of union, like their eating together and having their clothes tied together.

And that brings us to the custom by which consummation of the marriage is delayed for one or more nights. It has been mentioned that the period during which consummation is forbidden is one night among the Waddlers of Southern India and the Manchus, and nine nights among the Ao Nagas. And this although an Ao Naga bride has usually been sleeping with her bridegroom at her own home for months. Among the Basala of Rhodesia the couple do not sleep together on the first night, but only if neither of them has been married before.\(^1\) Crawley gives a number of examples from the East Indies, Australia, North America and elsewhere in which the period of restraint may vary from one, three, four, five, seven and fifteen nights up to two months. He regards these periods of restraint as necessitated by physiological causes,\(^2\) but this hardly explains the great variety in the length of the periods. Still less does it explain how it is that peoples such as the South Serbians, Mordvins and Yezidis expect immediate consummation.

Briffault instances the Bretons, who must abstain for three nights, the first belonging to the Good God, the second to St. Joseph and the third to the bridegroom’s patron saint. And in the Vedic marriage service it is declared that the Moon-god, Soma, has first claim on the bride.\(^3\) He says that ‘the union of a woman to a Divine Bridegroom is in primitive archaic societies regarded as a necessary antecedent to human marriage’.\(^4\) Yet he has said a few pages before that marriage ‘is not regarded by peoples in lower stages of culture as in any way partaking of the character of a religious institution’.\(^5\) He seems to regard both views as equally natural and primitive.

He is correct in saying that many societies regard union with a Divine Bridegroom as a necessary antecedent to marriage, and that this in many cases explains the period of restraint, but he

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\(^1\) V. Brelsford in JRAI, 1935, 213.
\(^2\) Ibid., 250.
\(^3\) ERE, iii, 489.
\(^4\) 244.
\(^5\) Mothers, iii, 239.
has failed to note that many of the more primitive peoples who observe this custom do so without any mention or suggestion of a Divine Bridegroom. He has also failed to mention the many peoples who have sacramental marriage but with whom consummation on the first night is the rule.

It may be suggested that the latter custom was the earlier, and that the night of continence is derived from such marriages as that at Babylon, where a woman spent a night in a temple as the bride of the god. This indeed seems likely, but the distribution of the two customs is puzzling. The idea of marriage to a Divine Bridegroom is, however, one which in my view would be unlikely to occur to ‘primitives’. Briffault’s approach is very different from that of Crawley, and he covers far more of the facts, but neither of them realizes that explaining why the A’s do something involves explaining why the B’s do not, nor that the incidence of customs can be affected by culture contacts.

To return to the bridal chamber, we can, I think, trace a development from the one-roomed to the two-roomed sacred building. The appearance of the latter, which corresponds to the nave and chancel of a church or the hall and solar of a mediaeval house, involves the division of the ritual into two parts, the outer and the inner, and in India this seems to have been adapted to the one-roomed house by erecting a special pavilion for the outer ritual. The pattern of the division is, however, not always maintained, for the acclamation of the Yemeni Jews and Manchus takes place in the bridal chamber. In our own upper-class weddings today the last of the public rites is the cutting of the wedding cake, which is done by the pair together. After this the bride retires to a bedroom with her bridesmaids, who undress her but instead of putting her to bed dress her in the clothes she is to wear on the honeymoon. On her emerging from the bedroom she is joined by the bridegroom and they are acclaimed by all the guests. As usually happens, these customs are spreading downwards to all classes.

Little seems to be recorded about the honeymoon, but it is a modern custom, replacing that by which the newly married couple went for a time into retirement. It may have been adopted by the more prudish, shall we say, to avoid the ritual of the bridal chamber.
XIII

The Marriage Bed

In Chapter IV I gave as the first of a wife's functions that of sleeping with her husband in the marriage bed. Strictly speaking, I should have worded it rather differently, and said that her first duty is to allow her husband to sleep with her in the marriage bed, for, as we shall see presently, that is what it comes to. I propose to begin with some remarks on beds in general.

It might be supposed that a bedstead on four legs was an obvious invention designed so that people could sleep more comfortably than on the floor. Millions of people, however, sleep without bedsteads, and to sleep on the floor is in fact just as comfortable and a good deal warmer. If we slept on the floor we should of course require a good thick mattress, but we should not like to sleep on a bedstead without one. Those who are accustomed to do so sleep quite comfortably on the floor without a mattress. Throughout Negro Africa and in many other parts of the uncivilized world people sleep with nothing more than a skin beneath them and do not suffer from insomnia. In South America many tribes sleep in hammocks, and in one of them, the Cagaba of Brazil, the men sleep in hammocks and the women on the floor; one cannot help wondering whether earth and sky are not involved in this. The native bed of Tepoztlan in Mexico is a bundle of bamboos on a wooden frame, but many villagers sleep on the floor, the older people because they regard it as safer and more comfortable.

1 HSAI, ii, 677. 
2 O. Lewis, Tepoztlan, Village in Mexico, 9.

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The Arab peasants of Syria sleep on mattresses on the floor. I slept in the guest room of many village sheikhs in the area between Damascus and the Dead Sea, and once only, in the Jebel ed Druz, was I given a (European) bed. Egyptians and Sudanese Arabs, on the other hand, of all classes, sleep on bedsteads similar to the 'charpoys' of India. In this they probably follow an ancient upper-class tradition, for Erman describes the house of an Ancient Egyptian nobleman as containing a huge four-poster bed.¹

In France, up to the 15th century, even courtiers slept on the floor, but at an earlier period kings had elaborate beds, and the bed, even more than the throne, was regarded as the seat, par excellence, of the king. It was even made into a semi-divine throne, for in it were placed effigies of the most venerated saints. Kings gave audience either in bed or reclining on the bed, and from it, till the time of Francis I, they administered justice. He administered justice from his throne, but the expression lit de justice was retained.

Until the end of the monarchy the king maintained in all his residences a bed symbolic of his royal privileges. This was called the Grand Bed or Bed of Parade. In the memoirs of St. Simon the king, Louis XIV, appears in bed surrounded by his courtiers, and in those times those passing through the king's or queen's apartments bowed to the bed as priests do to the altar.²

To sleep off the ground seems often to have been a matter of prestige rather than comfort. In Saxon England people of the upper class had beds which consisted of sacks filled with straw laid upon benches in the chamber or bower. These can hardly have been more comfortable than sleeping on the floor. Nor can the beds of the Normans, which consisted of wooden planks laid on trestles in the chamber. On these slept the householder, his family and his guests of both sexes. All slept naked, though curtains had not yet been introduced. Those of lower degree slept unceremoniously on the floor of the hall.³

Such habits persisted into modern times. In Southern France, says Nelli, 'the bed remained for centuries a luxury to which the

¹ A. Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, 151.
² T. Wright, op. cit., 111.
³ A. Havard, Dict. d'Ameublement, s.v. 'lit'.
farm servants had no claim. Up to the beginning of the 19th century, although they were well fed and sometimes ate at the master's table, they slept on the straw.¹ And in Ireland, says Professor Estyn Evans, 'around the fire was originally the sleeping place; indeed the custom of sleeping on the floor lasted in some places into the second half of the 19th century, and is not to be attributed solely to poverty'. He goes on to say that it was partly to avoid the smoke and partly to conform to ancient custom.²

Mentions of beds in other parts of the world are difficult to find. Granet says that in the old Chinese house everything was sacred, but the holiest spot was the north-west corner, where the marriage bed lay.³ In Madagascar the sacred portion of Hova houses is the north-east corner. In this corner is the fixed bedstead, always with its head to the north.⁴

In Tahiti the chief and his wife, who were regarded as gods, slept on beds, whereas everyone else slept on the floor.⁵

The King of Siam, as the final act of his coronation ceremony, lay down formally on the royal couch, and received blessings from the two Queen Aunts.⁶

At Rome the bed of the Flamen Dialis, the priest of Jupiter, was so sacred that none but he might sleep on it.⁷ Its feet had always to be smeared with fine mud. Frazer interprets this custom as a mitigation of an older custom by which he had to sleep on the ground,⁸ but the whole point of a bed is that it keeps one off the ground. And if it was merely a 'mitigation' it would hardly have been so sacred. But we hear of one chief priest, he of Zinda Kaliana in the Panjab, who had to sleep on a bed of grass made on the earth between four posts. Crooke, who tells us this, attributes the custom to primitive asceticism.⁹ Whether there was

² Ulster Folk Life, 1955, 30.
³ M. Granet, Chinese Civilization, 147.
⁴ FLR, 1879, 37.
⁵ W. Ellis, Polynesian Researches, ii, 67.
⁶ H. Q. Wales, op. cit., 119.
⁸ GB, ii, 248.
⁹ FL, 1908, 68.
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such a thing may be doubted, and anyhow it would not explain the posts. Crooke does not say whether he had to be married, but the Flamen Dialis had to be, and had to resign if his wife died. The fact that it was always a marriage bed may have contributed to its sacredness.

But while the marriage bed is sacred, the bridal bed is especially sacred, and this sacredness goes back to ancient times. In Egypt the union of the god with the queen at Thebes is depicted at Deir el Bahri, where the king, who represents the god, and the queen are shown seated opposite each other on a bed of state.¹ And on a stele at Tell Asmar ‘we see in the centre a couch with bull’s feet, like the royal couches of the early dynastic period, covered with a fleece on which two people are lying. An officiating priest stands at the foot of the bed.’² It may be noted that the bed of Henry II of France was supported by carved lions.³

We have mentioned the ‘great bed, richly adorned’ at Babylon in which the god’s bride awaited him. Among the Greeks the bridal chamber contained a richly decorated marriage couch.⁴

Of the Roman bridal bed we have two different accounts. According to both it seems that what I have called the outer ritual took place at the bride’s home, after which she went in procession to the bridegroom’s. There she was lifted over the threshold into the atrium, where her husband welcomed her into the partnership of fire and water. In the atrium, according to one account, ‘there stood against the back wall the nuptial couch, lectus genialis. This is the bed to which the newly married couple was led. It was prepared again only when a fresh marriage took place. Till then it remained unoccupied.’⁵ Professor H. J. Rose, on the other hand, says that ‘within the house, in the atrium, the lectus genialis was ready—a small couch intended not for the use of the bridal pair but for their spirit doubles, the man’s genius and the woman’s juno.’⁶ Whichever the lectus genialis was, it was certainly sacred.

In England before the Reformation the bridal bed was adorned

¹ GB, ii, 131.
² K&C, 69.
³ A. Havard, op. cit.
⁴ G. Ghurye, op. cit.
⁵ Cit. G. S. Ghurye, op. cit., 160.
⁶ Plutarch’s Roman Questions, 202.
with ribbons by the bridesmaids and was blessed by the clergy before the newly married couple entered it.¹ And a French poet of the 16th century speaks of the bridal bed as ‘lict beneist de la main du presre’.²

Among the Cypriot Greeks the preparation of the bridal bed is an elaborate affair. First a sewing party of women makes the mattress. Then seven women who have been married once only take the material for the silk coverlets down to the spring, escorted by fiddlers. The material is washed and dried, and on return to the house it is taken from the baskets to the accompaniment of a special dance. The coverlets are then sewn, crosses being put at each corner. Then the bed is made and a chubby boy is rolled up and down it, while the onlookers pray that the pair may be granted such children. On the wedding day the bride, dressed in white and veiled, is taken in procession with music to the church, and then to the new house. The bridegroom feasts the guests, after which there are dances and other ceremonies. We are not told whether any but the pair enter the bridal chamber, but the next morning, if the marriage has been consummated and the bride was a virgin, there are three bursts of gunfire.³

When there is a wedding among the Yemeni Jews nobody sleeps on the night before. All are busy preparing the wedding feast. The task of the groomsmen is to decorate the bridal chamber and in particular to bring new couches, pillows and covers. And this although the couple are so young that the marriage will not be consummated till much later.⁴

In India Hindus and Muslims alike preserve bridal couples as far as possible from all contact with the ground, and Sindi Muslims preserve carefully the pillows and beds used by the bridal pair on their first night of married life, and significantly secure these from touching the ground.⁵

In Manchuria the marriage couch is carefully placed by two

¹ W. Hazlitt, op. cit., i, 73; ii, 345.
² A. Havard, op. cit.
⁴ S. Spector in Studies in Biblical and Jewish Folklore, ed. R. Patai, 255 f.
⁵ J. Abbott, op. cit., 83, 85.
women who must have husbands, children and fathers- and mothers-in-law living. On the four corners of the bed are placed four kinds of fruit, 'which are intended to indicate that the pair will produce an early, numerous and intelligent offspring'. Before they retire to rest the mother of the bridegroom feeds them with 'longevity dough'.

Chinese beds are made of sun-dried bricks, but when a bride arrives at her bridegroom's house she is first seated on a wooden bed. The probable significance of this will appear later.

The Aztecs had no bedsteads. Even in palaces, it seems, they slept on single mats. The bridal bed, however, consisted of a pile of mats and on it were placed feathers and a piece of jade.

Further research would probably produce more information on this subject, but perhaps enough has been said to show that the bridal bed is sacred, like the newly married pair who occupy it, and sacred because it has been specially consecrated to receive them.

At the beginning of this chapter I said that a wife's first duty was not strictly speaking to sleep with her husband, but rather to allow her husband to sleep with her, and in all the accounts which give sufficient details we are told that the bride is placed first in the bridal bed, and is later joined by the bridegroom. She thus appears as the owner or occupier of the bed in which she receives her husband. This seems to be universal, not only in marriage ceremonies, but at all times. It does not seem, that is to say, that any wife ever joins her husband in his bed. As she is the house-mistress, so she is, so to speak, the bed-mistress. In all the sacred marriage rituals, with the sole exception of that at Lagash, the god comes in to his bride. In the Old Testament kings never sent for their wives; they always 'went in unto' them. In France up to the time of Louis XVI, who made other arrangements, the king was always escorted to and from the queen's apartment. It is still the custom, in upper-class English houses, for the husband to have a smaller room, with a single bed in it, next door to his wife's. This no doubt represents a tradition going back to royalty, and beyond that to the sacred marriage.

1 FL, 1890, 486, 488.  
2 F. C. Yang, op. cit., 111.  
3 J. Soustelle, op. cit., 121.
THE MARRIAGE BED

My survey of customs connected with beds is admittedly incomplete, but as far as it goes it indicates that bridal couples, royal, sacred and noble persons and heads of households usually sleep on bedsteads while commoners sleep on the floor. The bedstead has, however, been a status symbol for so long in so many countries that there are many exceptions. I have, however, found only one sacred person sleeping on the ground, the high priest of Kaliana, and he sleeps between four posts. And this brings us to the point, which is that the sacred bed always has four posts. This, I suggest, is why a Chinese bride is put on to a wooden bedstead; to be consecrated, a bed must have four legs. To explain this I shall have to anticipate a little of what will appear in later chapters. The bed with four legs is the scene of the sacred marriage. The sacred marriage is a cosmic rite, so it must take place in a cosmic setting, and the bridal bed is a microcosm of the cosmos. It has been believed by many people at one time or another that the world is square, and has at its corners four pillars which support the sky, and the bridal bed is a microcosm of the world as so conceived. It may be thought that this is merely a guess, but there is evidence to support it. My friend Mrs. Ettlinger tells me that in Germany a four-poster bed is called a Himmelbett, that is a sky bed; that sometimes in Austria stars are painted on the canopy to represent the sky, and that in old Bavarian farmhouses a dove of painted wood, symbolizing the Holy Ghost as Giver of Life, was suspended inside the four-poster to promote conception. She also tells me¹ that Jews actually regard the four-poster as a representation of the world. The French call a bed with a canopy an angel-bed, which may represent the same idea.

If then the canopy represents the sky, we should expect that the original sacred bed, at Babylon or wherever it was, was canopied, but as to this there is, so far as I know, no evidence. Nor is it clear what the actual frame of the bed represents or represented. It could not in any case be the sky, for the Sky-god has to descend to it. It might be the earth, but then sacred persons, including bridal couples, are in India and many other places

¹ Citing S. Krause, Talmudische Archaeologie.
kept from contact with the earth. But we cannot hope to solve all these problems.

We have still to deal with one more aspect of the bed. We saw in Chapter VIII that dying persons are often put out of the house. This is done, generally at any rate, by those who have no beds. Among those who have beds there is what is most probably a later custom of taking dying persons out of bed and laying them on the floor of the room. Both these customs are repugnant to our ideas of what is natural and proper, but the latter is very common even in Europe, in fact the area in which it is observed extends from Ireland to the Caspian Sea. In giving examples I shall, wherever possible, give the reason alleged for observing the custom.

'Some Yorkshire people declare that no one can die easy on any bed and will lay a dying man on the floor.' In Germany, Sweden and elsewhere the dying person is placed upon straw, which is afterwards burnt. If dying is difficult for a Pole, he may be laid on the ground so as to be free from knots that might entangle his soul with his body. A dying Hungarian is taken from his bed and laid on a mat beneath the main beam of the house. The belief is prevalent that those born out of Mother Earth can find rest in no other place. Among the Galician Ukrainians the belief prevails in some localities that a person should die not in bed but on the floor, preferably on a fur coat. In other parts of Europe the reason alleged for removing a dying person from his bed is that a man cannot die on feathers, and that consequently to lie on them adds to his agonies and makes his death 'hard' or 'unlucky'.

The Cheremiss of Kosmodenjanak declare that if a dying man were allowed to die on a feather-bed or a felt coverlet he would be forced in the other world to count the feathers or the hairs of the coverlet.

A Brahman on the point of death is removed from his bed and laid on the floor or, if there is any fear of the day's being inauspicious, he is taken out to the courtyard or veranda. In Cochin

1 W. Henderson, op. cit., 45.
2 ERE, iv, 14.
3 Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., 445.
4 Ibid., 456.
5 FL, 1947, 83.
6 ERE, loc. cit.
7 Ibid.
8 E. Thurston, op. cit., 133.
a dying Nayar is removed to the bare ground floor, as it is considered sacrilegious to allow the last breath to escape while the dying person is lying on a bed and in a room with a ceiling: this last is supposed to obstruct the free passage of the breath.\(^1\) In the Malay Peninsula a dying man’s mosquito curtains are opened and, ‘in some cases at all events’, he is taken out of his bed and laid upon the floor.\(^2\) In China dying persons were removed to a plank bed called the ‘water bed’\(^3\). When a peasant of Tepoztlan in Mexico is at the point of death, he is taken from his bed and placed on a straw mat on the floor.\(^4\)

The custom is not universal, even among those who have framed bedsteads. Thus when an Ao Naga is *in extremis* his friends and relatives make loud noises in the hope of driving off the spirits which are taking him away. But he dies in his four-legged bed, and though a cock or dog is sacrificed near the bed, this is not to purify the house, but that it may accompany him to the next world.\(^5\)

Wherever we find different reasons for observing the same custom, we may be sure that the original reason has been forgotten. The nearest to the real reason may be that of the Wends, who say that no one would sleep in a bed in which someone had died. That might well be because by dying in it he had changed it from a place of life to a place of death. The distribution of the two customs, that of removing a dying person from the house and that of removing him from his bed, suggests that the former is the original, and that when the complex which included the cosmic bed was introduced, this bed became, as the focus of life, more sacred than the room in which it stood. As bedsteads spread, the custom continued to be observed but, as often happens, its origin was forgotten and other explanations were substituted. And, again as often happens, some peoples adopted neither custom, and others while adopting the newer custom did not forget the older.

\(^{1}\) ERE, loc. cit.
\(^{2}\) Ibid.
\(^{4}\) O. Lewis, op. cit., 84.
\(^{5}\) J. P. Mills, op. cit., 278.
XIV

The Cosmic Temple

It may seem a big jump from the cosmic bed to the cosmic temple, but all cosmic structures are intended for cosmic ritual, and cosmic ritual is based upon the belief that you can affect the macrocosm by acting upon a microcosm. In other words, if you want a nice new world you start by destroying, with appropriate rites, a representation of the nasty old world, and then, with appropriate rites, make a representation of a new one. These rites have been described by many writers, particularly by Hocart in his Kingship and Professor S. H. Hooke in Myth and Ritual, and I am concerned only with the sacred marriage, which was perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most important. In this, as we have seen, a man and woman became symbols of the Sky and Earth, and their union within a sacred building symbolized and so brought about the union of Sky and Earth within the cosmos. That this sacred building was cosmic will become clear when we see that all sacred buildings are or were cosmic.

‘Ideas concerning the structure of the world’, says Dr. T. H. Gaster, ‘were embodied in the Ancient Near East in the architecture of temples, each of which was built on a microcosmic basis.’¹ In Egypt temples were built in the semblance of the world. The pavement represented the earth and the roof the sky. Each part received a decoration according to its meaning, and the idea

¹ FL, 1938, 341.
was carried out with minute consistency. The Egyptians believed that the flanking towers at the entrance of their palace temples represented the ‘Horizon of Heaven’, an all-inclusive cosmic house. And at Babylon ‘the resplendent and sacred gate of the temple of Ishtar was decorated with gold rosettes on a sky-blue ground because the inhabitants of Babylon had for centuries looked upon an arched and towered portal as a celestial form, a replica of the arch of heaven’. In Assyrian temples the canopy over the deity’s throne was called “heaven”, and there was a large tank in the forecourt symbolizing the cosmic ocean. Similarly in the temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem there was a “brazen sea” in the courtyard, and as in many a Phoenician sanctuary there were two pillars at the entrance representing the pillars of heaven.

According to the Israelites the sky was a dome-shaped structure (the firmament) resting on the circle of the earth, with its pillars and the bases on which it rested deeply laid in the watery abyss below the earth. . . . Yahweh was represented as sitting enthroned above the circle of the earth, which gave him the key position over all creation. And ‘the whole temple of Jerusalem was symbolic of the world. It was dressed and covered with green palm-leaves, which represented the vegetation growing on the surface of the earth. The walls were compared to, and probably regarded as symbolic of, the waves of the sea which surrounds the earth.’ It may be remarked that this is not inconsistent with what we are told of the ‘brazen sea’: symbols are never exclusive.

‘Even altars lent themselves to this symbolism. Thus the plan of the altar sketched by the prophet Ezekiel (xliii, 14–17) presumes that it is to consist of three stages, and it is significant that the lowest of these is called “the bosom of the earth”, and the

1 K&c, 224.
2 E. B. Smith, op. cit., 12.
3 Ibid.
4 FL, loc. cit.
5 E. O. James, Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East, 163.
6 R. Patai in Studies in Memory of I. Low, 6.
highest "the divine mountain", terms which clearly indicate a cosmic pattern and the former of which is likewise used by Nebuchadnezzar to denote the foundation platform of the temple tower (E-temen-an-ki, House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth) of Marduk in Babylon.¹

On Babylonian seals the sun is shown passing through the double-valved gate of the east. The door of Greek temples was made large, so that the sun could go in and out. 'The great portico of the Parthenon is the very gate of the sun. Out of it the sun rises and the night withdraws; above it stand the gods on Olympus.'²

For the Etruscans the fundamental doctrine of orientation remits to this earth, where men live, the image of the sky, where the gods live. The word templum was originally a term in the Etruscan vocabulary of divination for an area of the sky defined by a priest in which he noted and interpreted the omens, looking always towards the south. Later a templum came to be a place on earth devoted to the gods, a sanctuary which usually faced south, and represented as it were the projection on to the ground of a sacred zone in the sky. From the depths of their sacred chambers, as from the heavens, the gods cast their protective or threatening glances towards the south. Thus Etruscan thought accorded an important place to symbolic and cosmic concepts.³

This cosmic symbolism was carried over into Christianity. 'It is not commonly understood', says Baldwin Smith, 'how much the Christian desire to make the church an apparent "gate of Heaven", an impregnable stronghold, a "city of God", and a replica of God's cosmic dwelling was inspired by the ideas and ceremonies which had long been associated with the towered triumphal arches and sacred palaces of the Roman Emperors.'⁴

In Byzantine churches the dome represents the heavens and the rest of the church stands for the rest of the sensible world. In Gothic churches the nave represents this present life and the chancel heaven.⁵ 'The temple, as the house of God,' said Symeon

of Thessalonica (15th century), 'is the image of the whole world.'

In Hinduism there are various forms of cosmic symbolism. The hemispherical mound represents the universe in Vedic ritual; the bottom of it is the earth, the top the sky, the intervening part the atmosphere. In the *Satapatha Brahmana* we are told that the tomb of a man who has set up a fire-altar will be built like a fire-altar. The altar is the world and the stones round it are the waters which flow round the world.

According to a hymn in the *Rigveda* the building of the world was done very much as the building of a house, by architects and artificers. The space was laid out with the measuring-rod of Varuna, which was the sun. Hence the measurers of the earth are the solar deities.

In the great temple of Cuzco there were representations of the sun and moon and perhaps other cosmic symbols. We have no details, but can find enough among the Plains Indians. 'In the rituals of the Pawnees the earth lodge is made typical of man's abode on earth; the floor is the plain, the wall the distant horizon, the dome the arching sky, the central opening the zenith, dwelling place of Tirawa, the invisible power which gives life to all created beings.' And the Cheyennes, in the course of the Sun Dance festival, make a ceremonial lodge. It forms a large circle of upright posts round the centre pole. This post is cut and transported by chiefs only, because it represents the world and 'the sunshine of all the world'. In raising the pole songs are sung which relate to the growth of the earth. Next day the priests build an altar with elaborate ritual. It is built round the sacred buffalo skull, symbolizing the completed earth which is the object of the whole ceremony, and includes objects symbolizing the morning star, rainbows, vegetation, scalped enemies and the Cheyennes themselves.

And we find a similar cosmic temple in Central Africa. The

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2 K&C, 222.
3 Kp., 176.
4 AMM, 16.
6 ERE, i, 685.
hut which is the centre of the Buyeye society, a fraternity of snake-charmers in Sukumaland, ‘is a symbol of the earth, and upon its roof and walls the sun, moon and stars are depicted’. Various objects stand for time, the maternal ancestors, the prosperity of the society etc.¹

Now to the palace. ‘In every theocratic society’, says Baldwin Smith, ‘where the royal building was revered as a sacred edifice, temples were customarily built like palaces or palaces like temples. Throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages there appear to have been recurrent parallels between kingly and divine dwellings.’² The Persians called the royal court ‘heavens’, and, following the example of the Persian kings and of Alexander the Great, the Roman emperors, and in particular Nero, Domitian and Severus, had their cosmic halls. The circus at Byzantium was an image of the cosmos, and was dominated by the imperial box. When the emperor appeared in this he was greeted with acclamations comparing him to the rising sun.³

Tales of revolving castles are common in European romance, and are probably based on accounts of actual cosmic buildings in the East. The earliest seems to be in the Voyage of Maelduin (perhaps 8th century), which tells of a small island surrounded by a revolving fiery rampart.⁴ CuRoi, King of Munster, every night chanted a spell over his fort till it revolved as swiftly as a millstone. The entrance was never to be found after sunset.⁵ In the grail legend King Arthur’s Round Table turns like the world. Prester John’s palace can revolve like a wheel; it bears a roof which is vaulted like the heavens, and in which there are many precious stones shining like the brightness of day. This account may be based on Khusrav’s palace, which is said to have contained a building in which his image was erected with the sun, moon and stars round it as if enthroned in heaven. This building seemed

¹ Cit. JRAI, 1952, 26.
³ H. P. L’Orange, Studies in the Iconography of the Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World, 22, 28, 112.
⁴ H. P. L’Orange, op. cit., 16.
to revolve on its axis with the help of horses pulling with a circular motion in a subterranean room.\(^1\)

The Emperor of China had a remarkable cosmic palace. ‘One chapter of the Li-Chi, listing the activities proper to each month of the royal year, makes it (the Ming T‘ang) a palace laid out like a chequer board, through which the Son of Heaven must move his seat from one square to another, month after month, around a slow, sunwise turn.’ And from the palace of the first Emperor of China a two-storeyed gallery ran over the Wei River to the city, modelled on the covered gallery in High Heaven that leads across the Milky Way.\(^2\)

Of the King of Tahiti we are told that ‘his houses were called aorai, the clouds of heaven; anuanaa, the rainbow, was the name of the canoe in which he voyaged; his voice was called thunder; the glare of the torches in his dwelling was denominated lightning; and when the people saw them in the evening, as they passed near his abode, instead of saying the torches were burning in the palace, they would observe that the lightning was flashing in the clouds of heaven’.\(^3\)

Among the Dogon of French West Africa the house of the Hogon or paramount chief is so built as to present a model of the universe. On the wall behind the dais on which the Hogon sits are painted on the right the northern stars and on the left the southern stars. Sections and bosses on the lower wall represent twelve of the lunar months, and the boss on the ceiling represents the thirteenth month and the head of the Hogon. The sun, the solstices and the twenty-two chieftainships of the Dogon world are also represented. The Hogon’s staff is called ‘the axis of the world’, and the place where it is hung varies with the seasons’.\(^4\)

And just as the king was often identified with a heavenly deity and his palace with the god’s abode in the sky, so his capital city was identified with a holy city believed to exist in the sky. ‘The

\(^1\) H. P. L’Orange, op. cit., 16–20.


\(^3\) W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, ii, 360.

intrinsic identity, says Dr. T. H. Gaster, 'of real with transcen-
dental cities (or temples) tends to be conveyed in terms of an
artificial identification of an earthly with a heavenly structure. The
transcendental "holy city", says the Book of Revelation (xxi, 2),
came down out of heaven from God, and elsewhere it is actually
recognized in the stars. In Mesopotamian belief, for example,
the terrestrial city of Sippar had its duplicate in the constellation
of Cancer, and that of Babylon in a combination of Aries and
Cetus, while the ideal Tigris was seen near Pisces and the ideal
Euphrates in the vicinity of Cygnus. Similarly under the Han
dynasty of China (206 B.C.–A.D. 221) the capital was laid out to
 correspond with the configuration of the Great Bear joined
together, with the palace in the position of the Pole Star; and
this pattern persisted, with but slight modifications, throughout
later ages.1

'All Indian royal towns,' says Eliade, 'even modern ones, are
constructed on the mythical model of the celestial city in which
the Universal Sovereign lived in the Golden Age. Plato's ideal
city has also a celestial archetype.' He speaks also of 'towns,
temples and houses whose reality is tributary to the symbolism
of the supra-terrestrial centre which assimilates them to itself
and transforms them into "centres of the world".'2

According to Mrs. Meyerowitz these concepts are found in
Ashanti: 'The eternal spirit of the sun, personified as the Sun-god,
is regarded as the dynamic centre of the Universe, from which
lines of force radiate to all quarters of the heaven. The king, who
represents the Sun-god and impersonates him on earth, is there-
fore made the dynamic centre of the state, which in olden days was
constructed after the likeness of the world as it was known to the
early Akan. The capital of the state, where the king resided, mirrored the heavens.' The king said to Mrs. Meyerowitz: 'I am
the centre of the world round which everything revolves.'3

As Lethaby says, 'ancient and sacred architecture in all lands was
the tradition of building world temples. . . . As the world was

1 In Numen, September 1954, 195.
2 M. Eliade, Le Mythe de l'Eternal Retour, 25.
thought to be built in the likeness of a great structure, so conversely sacred and ceremonial buildings were planned in conformity with the heavenly prototype so that they might share its qualities of perfection and permanence.'

And Eliade says that: 'Just as the town is always an imago mundi, the house also is a microcosm. The threshold divides the two sorts of space; the home is equivalent to the centre of the world.' He cites tribes of North America and Northern Asia, such as the Algonquins and the Samoyeds, who liken the central pillar of their dwellings to the cosmic axis, and others of Central Asia who, when they sacrifice, thrust through the smoke hole of their tents a tree representing the cosmic tree. He concludes that all houses, like all temples, palaces and cities, on the one hand correspond to the universe and on the other stand at its centre. 'It is, we must remember, a transcendent space, quite different in nature from profane space, and allows for the existence of a multiplicity and even an infinity of centres.' I have found a good deal to disagree with in Eliade's writings, but the view which he here expresses that the house is essentially a cosmic building, and that its threshold represents the division between the sacred and the profane world, seems to me an inevitable deduction from the evidence.

1 ANM, 75, 26.  
2 Patterns in Comparative Religion, 379.
XV

The Round Temple
and the Round World

We have seen that all temples and palaces are cosmic buildings, and that a cosmic building is a microcosm of the universe constructed for the purpose of performing cosmic rites, rites designed to ensure that the activities of the cosmic powers will produce favourable results. Our next question is how did people come to construct these cosmic buildings. Very little attention has been paid to this subject and most writers seem to regard temples and palaces as natural phenomena. I have found only two who suggest an origin for them.

MacCulloch says: 'Even savages are not devoid of temples of a kind, for it was natural to suppose that, as the worshipper had a house, the god or spirit also should have one, either as a permanent shelter for his image, or as a place whither he might resort and be approached by man in worship.'

It was natural, it seems, for men to make houses for themselves before they made houses for their gods, and then again natural for them to suppose that their gods needed houses. But why should there be images or, alternatively, why should the gods not wish to keep their houses private? And though he says that it was natural to suppose that the god or spirit should have a house, he has said earlier in his article that the Romans worshipped in the open, in a sacred

ERE, xii, 239.
THE ROUND TEMPLE AND THE ROUND WORLD

enclosure, and that the Chinese, Persians, Celts and Teutons had in early times no temples, but worshipped under trees or at springs. These unnatural peoples were, it seems, quite happy to leave their gods and spirits without shelter. They may well have believed, however, that their gods dwelt in the sky, and so had no need of houses.

The other writer referred to above is Baldwin Smith. He says: 'It is axiomatic that from the remote time when men began to visualize their deities as like themselves in need of shelter, and then began to see in their rulers either priest-kings or god-kings, the palace and the temple developed as inter-related forms of architecture.' But this is very far from being axiomatic. In the first place, as we have just seen, many peoples even down to historical times did not visualize their gods as being in need of shelter. In the second place, as Hocart has shown, god-kings in early times were not, and in many cases still are not, rulers. They are heads of the ritual with little or no secular power. Thirdly, the probability is that both the palace and the temple developed from an undifferentiated cosmic building.

His explanation of the cosmic building is as follows. 'At the primitive level the most prevalent and usually the earliest type of shelter, whether a tent, pit house, earth lodge or thatched cabin, was more or less circular in plan, covered by necessity with a curved roof. Therefore, in many parts of the ancient world, the domical shape became habitually associated in men's memories with a central type of structure which was venerated as a tribal and ancestral shelter, a cosmic symbol, a house of appearance and a ritualistic abode. This domical shape, as an ancient and revered house form, was preserved in many cultures and gradually translated into more permanent materials.' This is all sheer assumption. The shelters made by peoples who have no permanent dwellings are of many shapes and roofed in various ways. And cosmic symbolism could be based only on the idea of the microcosm, an idea which could hardly be present in the

2 K&C passim.
3 *The Dome*, 6.
minds of the earliest builders of shelters. He goes on to say that 'this tendency', that is to preserve the domical shape of the house, 'was strengthened by the primitive habit of visualizing both the cosmos and divinities in the shape of the ancestral house'.¹ He speaks, as many writers do, of 'primitives' as if they were a single set of people with a single set of habits and ideas. He gives no example of people who have this habit. The earliest men can hardly be supposed to have had ancestral houses or ideas of the cosmos, and these people must have differed far more in every way from such peoples as the Maori and Ashanti, to whom the term 'primitive' is commonly applied, than the latter do from ourselves.

As I pointed out in Chapter X, the sky bears not the slightest resemblance to a man, nor the earth to a woman; the same applies to the cosmos, the combination of sky and earth; it bears not the slightest resemblance to a house. I am quite sure that when Baldwin Smith looks at his own house it never occurs to him that it resembles the cosmos. The idea of the macrocosm and microcosm, as exemplified in myth and ritual, corresponds to nothing that anybody has ever seen, and nothing that any ordinary person, starting without preconceived ideas, could possibly imagine.

When we look up at the sky, either by day or by night, what strikes us is its vastness, its limitless character, as contrasted with the puny works of man. Can it really be believed that to early man it seemed like his own roof, something which he had himself made of sticks, and against which he often bumped his head? He could not possibly have thought so. And no Hindu can ever have supposed that a circle of stones was the sea, or any Cheyenne that a buffalo skull was the earth. The Tahitians called their king’s house 'the clouds of heaven', but they did not believe that it was made of clouds, and the Dogon do not believe that their chief's staff is really the axis of the world. They have been taught to regard these identifications as meaningful and important, and in some sense true, but not as physical facts.

These identifications are based upon symbolism, and symbolism has no necessary connection with resemblance, real or fancied;¹ Ibid.

¹ Ibid.
it is based upon ritual equivalence. And ritual equivalence is based upon the belief that you can influence the cosmos by making a miniature cosmos and acting upon that. Once you have accepted this belief there is no difficulty in equating a buffalo skull with the earth, but how this belief came to be formulated we shall probably never know. Anyhow there is not the slightest justification for assuming that it came naturally to early man.

We cannot be sure what Bishop Severianus of Gabala meant when he compared the world to a house of which the earth is the ground floor, the lower sky (the firmament) the ceiling, and the over-sky the roof, but he probably had the idea that so to describe it gave him some power over it. Anyhow it was, as K. Lchmann says, as a result of identifying the roof of a cosmic building with the sky that in later antiquity ‘caelum’ came to be used for ‘ceiling’. And Skeat says that the French ciel and the Italian cielo mean heaven, or a ceiling, or a canopy over a bed or carried over a prince. But I decline to believe that these ideas are ‘primitive’.

To return to the temple. In the earliest mythology it seems that the sky-god was thought of as being in the sky and sending his semen down in the form of rain to fertilize the earth. He was induced to do so by means of the ritual of the sacred marriage. This was performed by a pair who represented, that is were ritually equivalent to, the sky-god and earth-goddess, and as these, or perhaps rather the rain-clouds and the cultivable land in which they were manifested, were enclosed within the cosmos, so the pair who performed the ritual must be enclosed in a representation of the cosmos, that is to say a cosmic building. This building, at first merely the scene of the ritual, became the residence of the sacred pair, and other houses were built in imitation of it. Hence their sanctity, which reflected the sanctity of the cosmic building. It came about later that the god was believed to have come down from heaven in the form of his image; this image was housed, and the house, owing to its permanence, gradually became the temple, a building more sacred than the palace which housed a temporary king.

1 AMM, 26.  
2 W. W. Skeat, Etymological Dict.  
The temple was, however, the god’s house and not a place of public worship, which is a much later idea. As Crooke points out: ‘The temple in India is intended as an abode for the god, not for congregational worship. As a natural consequence of this we find that most rites and social meetings take place in the open air.’

In the land of the Hittites ‘the temple was the house of the god and the priests were his domestic staff. Every day it was the duty of the staff of the temple to attend to the god’s “bodily needs” according to a fixed routine; he must be washed, clothed, provided with food and drink, and entertained with dancing and music.’ And in India today ‘the central object in a Vaishnavite temple is an image of Vishnu in some form. This has its servants who wait upon it as they would upon a nobleman.’ I should say rather that a nobleman is, or used to be, waited upon like a god, or rather like a divine king, for it was no doubt the rigid etiquette practised in the household of such kings as the Pharaoh which set the fashion for both divine and noble households.

Our next task is to show that the world was, in early times, always thought of as round, and that was the reason why early cosmic buildings, and the houses which copied them, are round. This may not seem surprising, the world being round, but the fact that the world is round is by no means obvious, and we shall see in the next chapter that it later came to be thought of as square, and then houses were built square. ‘The ritual chariots of prehistory,’ says Eliade, ‘which were made to reproduce the movement of the heavenly bodies, can be looked on as the prototype of ordinary chariots later, just as the ritual boat on which corpses were placed was the prototype of all boats.’ Just so, in my view, were cosmic palaces or temples the prototype of all houses.

Cosmic buildings in their earliest form, it seems, were spherical, so that cosmos was presumably thought of as spherical. The sphere consisted of a hemispherical pit dug in the earth and covered with a hemispherical roof, so that Earth and Sky had

1 FL, 1918, 114.
2 O. R. Gurney, The Hittites, 149.
3 Priess and Schneider, op. cit., 105.
4 GB, iii, 12.
5 Patterns in Comparative Religion, 148.
equal shares in it. As Professor Leopold Schmidt writes: 'The pit was not only a pit but a microcosm, an image of the macrocosm and also a contrasting image of the heaven. As the heaven appeared vaulted, so the earth beneath it was concave, like two bowls, two baskets or two boats. The Sumerians conceived the earth as a round basket, and the Babylonians, according to Diodorus, thought the earth was like a reversed boat; not a boat like ours but like the round boats of the Tigris, which were made of plaited rods covered with hides. Thus the dwelling built on a circular base was at the same time the image of the earth and of a boat.'

In the course of time, as buildings increased in size, the hemispherical pit became a flat-bottomed pit, and was eventually replaced by a structure built on the surface of the ground with cylindrical walls and a domical roof. The floor remained the earth and the roof the sky, but the walls variously symbolized the mountains or the trees, the horizon or the atmosphere, and the waters which were believed to surround the earth were symbolized by moats, tanks of water or circles of stones. Another development was the belief that the sky was supported by pillars, and these were symbolized by the posts supporting the roof.

Some of the earlier of these beliefs are still held. Thus of the Lango of Uganda Driberg says that 'their notion of the universe is the inside of a sphere, the bottom concavity of which is this world, while the top concavity is another inhabited world. . . . Between the two worlds are the sun, moon and stars.' By the Dusun of North Borneo 'the world is taken as a small clay pot. for it is known to be shaped as a pot is shaped. As man makes the pot with the wah-wah-run (rounded stone), shaping the clay as he turns the pot, so God created the earth with his great wah-wah-run. Man is inside the pot created by God.'

One of the most widespread beliefs about the origin of the world is that it originated from an egg. It has been found in Ancient Egypt, Phoenicia and Greece, as well as in China, Japan, Finland, Fiji, parts of Central and South America and one tribe

1 Antaios, ii, 205.  
of West Africa. The fullest account of it appears to be that in the
Chandogya Upanishad, from which we learn that it did not exist
from the beginning, but appeared, grew, and then broke open.
The two halves were one of silver and the other of gold. The
silver one became the earth and the golden one the sky. Various
parts of its contents became the mountains, clouds, rivers and sea.
From it was born the sun.\textsuperscript{1} It is to be noted that whether the
world is thought of as a boat, basket, pot or egg, its natural
features and its inhabitants are supposed to be inside. But nobody
was ever led by observation to such a conclusion. The writer
on Japanese cosmology in Hastings’s Encyclopaedia says that the
egg theory ‘may have been one of the spontaneous hypotheses
which struggled for mastery in the minds of the primitive
Japanese’.\textsuperscript{2} One tries to imagine the scene—a circle of primitive
Japanese speculating about the origin of the world. Each has his
spontaneous hypothesis, but one of them exclaims: ‘It came from
an egg; can’t you see it, you fools!’ And by his vehemence he
gains the mastery. I do not suppose for the moment that the
writer pictured such a scene or indeed any scene; he used the
words ‘spontaneous hypotheses’ merely because he thought
they sounded well. To do him justice, however, he concluded
that the idea was more probably imported from China.

One day it will come to be realized that to speculate about the
origin of the world, or indeed about the origin of anything, is a
very rare intellectual feat. It may be doubted whether one in a
thousand of the inhabitants of these islands has ever attempted to
perform it, and it is most improbable that it has ever been per-
formed by an illiterate. Wherever we find these cosmological
beliefs, they have come down from the remote past, and they
can have originated only in rites which carried the idea of the
macrocosm and the microcosm even further than the construction
of a cosmic building. They are valuable to us, however, as con-
firming Professor Schmidt’s statement that the original cosmic
building had a spherical interior, half being above and half
below ground. We shall see later that many houses have been
built in this form.

\textsuperscript{1} ERE, iv, 157.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 163.
Professor Schmidt goes on to say that the lower half of the sphere, that is to say the pit, was identified not only with the earth but with the uterus; it was, that is to say, the womb of the Earth. That a house can symbolize a womb has been noted by Hocart. The Aitareya Brahmana, describing preliminary consecration, prescribes that the consecrated man, after robing, should retire to a hut. There he must remain from sunrise till sunset and must not be spoken to. He sits with clenched fists like an embryo. The hut is identified with the womb and the robes with the placenta.¹

In the grounds of the temple of the sun at Cuzco is a round stone more than two metres high and carefully hollowed out. It had a big cover of pure gold upon which was an incised figure of the sun. In the time of the Incas the queen took a ritual bath in it before her marriage.² She was reborn, it seems, from a cosmic womb. This reminds us of fonts such as that at Brookland in Kent, round which are the signs of the zodiac.

These ideas and rites, associated with the cosmic house, the cosmic egg and the cosmic womb, must have been based upon belief in the sanctity of the round shape, and belief in its sanctity went a good deal further. We find a remarkable statement of belief in the sanctity of roundness in an Irish text which is probably of the 10th century and the translation of an unknown Latin original. It describes the order of the universe as follows: ‘Though you do not see it, it is in roundness that each element has been appointed, and it is in roundness that the seven seas were made all about. And in even roundness that the stars circle about the round wheel of the earth; and it is in roundness of form that the souls are seen after going forth from their bodies; and in roundness the circle of the noble heavens is seen, and in roundness is seen the circuit of the sun and moon. All that is fitting, for roundness without beginning or end is the Lord, Who always was and always shall be and made all these things. That is why the world has been embodied in a round form.’³

Similar beliefs are held by the Oglala Sioux. ‘The Oglala

¹ Man, 1932, 129.
² R. Karsten, op. cit., 181.
³ M. Dillon, Early Irish Literature, 141.
believe the circle to be sacred because the Great Spirit caused everything in nature to be round except stone. Stone is the implement of destruction. The sun and the sky, the earth and the moon, are round like a shield, though the sky is deep like a bowl. Everything that breathes is round like the body of a man. Everything that grows from the ground is round like the trunk of a tree. Since the Great Spirit has caused everything to be round, mankind should look upon the circle as sacred, for it is the symbol of all things in nature except stone. It is also the symbol that marks the edge of the world, and therefore of the four winds that travel there. Consequently it is also the symbol of the year. The day, the night and the moon go in a circle above the sky. Therefore the circle is a symbol of these divisions of time and of all time. For these reasons the Oglala make their tipis circular, their camp circle circular, and sit in a circle at all ceremonies.¹

That these beliefs in the sanctity and ubiquity of roundness are found so far apart indicates that they must have had a wide distribution. We have no idea how they originated, but it is probably they, rather than any kind of natural development or any observed phenomena, which caused cosmic buildings to be constructed in a spherical or circular shape, and houses to follow their example. In face of this sanctity it is remarkable that cosmic buildings changed their shape, but that they did so we shall see in the next chapter.

XVI

Squaring the Circle

It was Lethaby’s first belief that the idea of the world as square is older than the idea of it as round. He wrote: ‘It would appear generally that to the great civilizing races a square-formed universe preceded the hemispherical; indeed we are very much in the hemispherical age at present, but an old poet like Job found his comparisons in the chamber form, a cubical box with the lid on. In the centre of this vast box rises the earth mountain, which is its prop and the pivot of its revolutions.’¹ By the time, however, that he came to write what was to be published after his death as Architecture, Nature and Magic, he had changed his mind about the relative priority of the circle and the square. He then wrote: ‘The discovery of the square as a general geometrical idea was a great advance of mind. . . . The square, when discovered, became the rival, and more than the rival, of the circle in representing the foundational conception of a building, and general adoption of the square type of building was soon reflected back on the world structure.’²

He does well to point out that the square does not occur in nature but is something which has to be discovered, for it is commonly supposed to spring to the mind of the savage as readily as to the mind of the schoolboy. If, as he says, the square type of building was reflected back on the world structure, this could only be after cosmic buildings had come to be built square. We shall see that this change took place in the Ancient East long

¹ AMM, 12. ² ANM, 20.
before the time of Job. There seems to me, however, to be evidence of an intermediate stage in which a round building was divided into four quadrants by four posts.

The earliest known sacred buildings in the world, dating probably from about 5000 B.C., have been found at Tall Arpachiya in Assyria. There 'the most interesting buildings are the tholoi. These had a circular ground plan with stone foundation and domed superstructure of beaten clay. The precincts of these buildings seem to have had a special sanctity, and it is more than probable that they were shrines, perhaps connected with the cult of the "mother-goddesses"; for, as we shall see in our examination of the cult figurines, "mother-goddess" worship must have taken a prominent, if not a pre-eminent place in the ritual of the earliest inhabitants of Tall Arpachiya."\(^1\) We cannot be sure that this ritual included a sacred marriage, but what we know of the later cult of the great mother-goddess Ishtar makes it probable. Perhaps a thousand years later came the earliest ziggurats, square-based pyramids no doubt reflecting the idea of the earth as square. And a temple at Ur, going back to the first half of the third millennium B.C., has been restored as a square covered by a dome.\(^2\)

In early times the Egyptians regarded the sky as supported on a circle of mountains surrounding the world, and Budge says that 'as we can see from the shrine of the god Menu' their god-houses were circular.\(^3\) After they had acquired the idea of the four corner-posts these became the corner-posts of a square temple chamber.\(^4\) Later Egyptian temples were rectangular.

In Persia 'as proved by archaeological evidence a dominating type of fire-temples and throne-rooms was a square domed building, and the dome must have had the same heavenly function in temple and palace'.\(^5\) Parsi fire-temples retain this shape, but the 'Towers of Silence', on which the dead are exposed and which probably follow an older tradition, are circular.

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2 ANM, 22.
4 AMM, 41.
5 Ibid.
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At Rome there is evidence of a change of cosmic symbolism from round to square. Kerenyi notes the apparent contradiction between the two geometric forms in the accounts of the founding of Rome. According to Plutarch’s *Romulus* there is a circle described from a centre and drawn with a plough. The centre takes the form of a circular pit called *mundus*, which was shaped inside like the vault of heaven. From it the new world of Rome radiates in all directions like the radii of a circle from its centre. This runs counter to the tradition of the city of Romulus which was called Roma Quadrata, in which the primeval furrow was in quadrangular form. In line with it was a building called Quadrata Roma, where the instruments for the ritual city-building were kept.

The word *urbs* is from *orbis*, round, which suggests that the city was originally round. The two forms, though to some extent combined in the form of a square within a circle, are fundamentally inconsistent.¹

Roman camps and fortresses were always square, the latter having towers at the corners. These were probably in origin the pillars of heaven, and are found also in temples. The little temple of Zeus at Djmer in Syria once had roof towers at the four corners, and these flanked a *thalamos* sculpturally decorated with a flat astronomical dome and other celestial symbols. The *thalamos* at Palmyra may have been a circular chamber for the occupation of the deity.² These square buildings, then, contained chambers of an earlier cosmic form.

‘Churches in Abyssinia’, says Budge, ‘have and always have had two shapes, viz. round and square. The round church is the round hut in which the pagan Abyssinians kept their god or the sacred symbol of their cult. . . . Round churches have four doorways, each facing one of the four points of the compass.’³

Passing to India, we find in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, as quoted by Hocart, evidence of the change from the world conceived as circular to the world conceived as square. The reference is to

burial mounds, but these, as we have seen, are cosmic. 'The burial mound is square. The gods and demons, both descended from Prajapati, were contending for the points of the compass. The gods drove out the demons, their rivals and enemies, from the quarters; they were deprived of the quarters and overcome. Therefore the followers of the gods make their barrows square, but those who are followers of the demons, the Easterners and others, make them circular.' Hocart comments: 'The Eastern school therefore make their barrows conform to the visible shape of the universe, and we may suspect that their was the original method, but among the Westerners the four quarters have assumed such a ritual importance that this school was prepared to sacrifice the resemblance of the mound to the world as seen, in order to secure concordance with the world as conceived.'

We may doubt whether the world was ever seen in the likeness of a hemispherical mound, but agree that the gods probably left the outmoded form to their defeated rivals.

The belief that heaven is round and the earth square seems to have been held in China at an early date. 'The altar to Heaven was enclosed in a circular space and that to Earth in a square, because according to the Yi-Ching Heaven was round and the Earth square.' And 'a later edition of the Li-chi describes the Ming T'ang (palace) as being round above and square below (as a commentator explains) to signify the roundness of Heaven and the Squareness of Earth.'

This symbolism continued with Buddhism. In Chinese Buddhism the symbolism of the stupa is that 'the square platform represents earth, the semicircular dome figures out the air, the railed structure at the top denotes the heaven, where watch the four gods (indicated by eyes). Thus before the coming of Buddhism the Chinese had, like the Sumerians and Persians, the strange symbolism of the square earth and the round heaven.

In Mexico there was uncovered in 1936 at Malinalco a

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1 Kingship, 177.
2 J. Ross, The Original Religion of China, 64.
3 Sickman and Soper, op. cit., 214.
4 ANM, 49.
rectangular temple enclosing a circular chamber, described as different from anything previously found in Mexico. The four cardinal points are marked by the doorway and by large sculptures of two eagles and a jaguar’s head.\(^1\)

Redfield says that though the circle is the basic pattern of the universe for the Oglala Sioux, for the Maya Indians of Yucatan it is the quadrilateral.\(^2\) We can see the change taking place among the Pueblo Indians, who live between them. ‘The rectangular kiva’, says Vera Laski, ‘as part of a larger dwelling structure is by no means an original Tewa trait. It is probable that, up to about the middle of the fourteenth century, all Tewa kivas were detached and circular. Circular free-standing kivas still exist today in the Tewa pueblos of Nambe and San Ildefonso, but San Ildefonso has also rectangular kivas which form part of two-storey structures. The rectangular kivas may have been introduced to the Tewa along with other western culture traits around A.D. 1350 by a group of western people who came from east-central Arizona and might have been the Keres. ... This change is a visible expression and direct result of the fact that the Tewa had accepted a new ritual from the immigrants.’\(^3\) We also find a survival of the circular kiva in the Tewa pueblo of Picuris, New Mexico. There all the kivas and houses were rectangular, but there was also the ‘round house’, a conspicuous feature. Both moieties, though they had their own kivas, used this building in connection with dances and races.\(^4\)

In the last chapter we saw that the Oglala Sioux had theories about the roundness of the world; let us now see how they carried them into practice. The onikare (sweat-lodge) of the Oglala is a hemispherical building of young willows. ‘It utilizes all the powers of the universe; earth and the things which grow from the earth, water, fire and air. The willows which make the frame of the sweat-lodge are set in such a way that they mark the four quarters of the universe; thus the whole lodge is the universe in

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\(^1\) Ethnos, 1938, 61.
\(^3\) V. Laski, Seeking Life, 6.
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image, and the two-legged, four-legged and winged peoples are contained within it. The round fire-place in the centre of the sweat-lodge is the centre of the universe.’ The leader of the ritual ‘makes an altar of the centre hole by placing tobacco at the four corners’. The diagram shows that these are the cardinal points of the circle. The sacred booth of the Oglala, that is to say, is like the Babylonian gigunu a cosmic hemisphere of greenery, and its fire like that in the Greek tholos was at the centre of the universe. It differs, however, from what we are told of them in that the four quarters of the universe are marked both in the structure itself and in the circle surrounding the hearth. The idea of the square is beginning to make itself felt.

The Creator of the Pawnees told their Adam and Eve how to build a lodge. They were to cut ten forked sticks and set them in a circle, and cut some poles to lay across the forks. Four of the upright posts were to form a parallelogram, with the longer sides extending east and west. These posts represent the four gods who uphold the heavens. This reminds us of the Roman square within a circle.

In Negro Africa the great majority of traditional buildings are still round, so that we can expect little evidence of a change from round to square. We find it, however, among the Yoruba of Nigeria. Yoruba buildings are now rectangular, but ‘for public temples a hut is built, and in the thunder cult it is round (old style)’.

The belief that the earth is square and heaven round is no doubt responsible for the painted domes from many parts of the Ancient World which shows the canopy of heaven as a circle enclosing celestial symbols supported at the corners by four celestial beings, all within a square. In an Etruscan tomb at Chiusi the supporters are four syrens; at Dendera in Egypt they are four female figures probably representing the seasons; in the temple of Bel at Palmyra the circle encloses figures of deities representing the planets and the supporters are again syrens; and at St. Mark’s at Venice the circle encloses a bust of Christ surrounded by saints, and the

2 K &C, 228.
3 G. Parrinder, op. cit., 76.
supporters are the four evangelists with outstretched wings. Lehmann, who tells us this, says that 'the evidence suffices to show an unbroken continuity of pagan and Christian monuments of this kind'.

These facts are of great interest because we can see the possibility of getting the change from a round temple to a square temple into a historical sequence; first Mesopotamia and Egypt; then China; then India and Persia followed by Rome; later Abyssinia and lastly North America and West Africa. That this change took place anywhere and at any time is most remarkable, but is less surprising if it followed a geographical pattern in its diffusion.

In Egypt the change from the round to the rectangular occurs in the tombs as well as in the temples. By the beginning of the first dynasty the graves of kings, nobles and their retainers were surmounted by a rectangular structure of brick filled with rubble; those of the peasantry and poorer classes were covered by a low circular mound. Later in the dynasty the graves of important commoners are still covered by a circular tumulus, but have a rectangular brick lining. By the end of the second dynasty graves of commoners have begun to assume the same form as those of the upper classes.

XVII

The Four Quarters

For many centuries, as we saw in the last chapter, the people of the world have been, or were, changing over from the idea of the earth as round to the idea of the earth as square. There has been a general tendency to divide the earth into quarters, while heaven has mostly remained round and undivided. The origin of the quarters is unknown, and not easy to imagine. Often they appear as quadrants, that is as quarters of a circle, while at other times they are clearly quarters of a square. In either case they are generally associated with the corner-posts of a wooden house, but whether these posts were originally the corner-posts of a square house or four posts put in in a square to carry the roof of a round house can only be guessed. Anyhow the four quarters and the symbolism attached to them became of great importance almost all over the world.

The cosmic city, divided into four quarters, as an extension of the cosmic temple or palace, appears early in Mesopotamia. Sargon of Akkad called himself ‘He who rules the Four Quarters’, and his son Naram-Sin assumed the title of ‘King of the Four Quarters’, which was also borne by the great gods Enlil, Anu and Shamash.¹ The same title was borne by Shulgi, King of Sumer and Akkad from 2106 to 2059 B.C.² These titles were borne originally in connection with a circular cosmology; to


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quote L’Orange: ‘In Babylon the king was “the Sun of Babylon”, “the King of the Universe”, and “the King of the Four Quadrants of the World”. Is there not a striking correspondence between these titles of the king and his place in the cosmic city? Wall and fosse are traced mathematically with a compass as an image of the heavens, a projection of the upper hemisphere on earth. Two axis-streets, one running north-south and the other east-west, divide the city into four quadrants which reflect the four quadrants of the world. At the very point of intersection, in the very axis of the world-wheel, the palace is situated. Here sits the king, “the axis and pole of the world”.¹ There were similar cosmic cities at Baghdad, Ecbatana, Hiraqla, Antigonia and Firuszabad, and at Trelleborg and Aggersborg in Denmark.²

‘We start’, says Hocart, ‘with a camp or city, round or square, which is a miniature of the earth, and so must have four quarters like the earth. This little earth is also impersonated by the queen, the consort of the sun-god on earth. . . . If cities are represented in the shape of a divine woman it is the memory not of a play of fancy but of a reality, of a queen crowned with battlements who sat enthroned beside her heavenly spouse.’³

The Chou-Li, the Chinese book of rites of the Chou dynasty, is full of the symbolism of the four quarters, which are fixed by the sovereign. His palace is in the centre of the capital, which has four suburbs and is the navel of the earth.⁴

The empire of the Incas was divided into four quarters, reflecting the four quarters of the world. The capital, Cuzco, was supposed to be the navel or centre of the earth. It was divided into four parts, corresponding to the divisions of the empire, and four roads led out of it, north, south, east and west, to the provinces. The king lived in the centre of the capital and thus at the centre of all.⁵

In Mexico city the great temple was in the centre, with four straight roads leading away from it in the four cardinal directions. The city was divided into four quarters, with a ceremonial centre.

² Ibid.
³ K&C, 254.
⁴ W. J. Perry in FL, 1928, 54.
⁵ Garcilaso, cit. FL, 1928, 51.
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According to tradition the sacred palace of the Toltecs had four principal halls, facing the four cardinal points.¹

Cosmic cities are, as already noted, found elsewhere, but these examples should suffice. What I now propose to draw attention to is a type of cosmic building the existence of which as a type seems not to have been recognized, that is to say the temple, palace, house or other structure which has four entrances facing the four cardinal points. It seems to me that the idea of such buildings can have arisen only in connection with a cosmic city, wherever they are now found. We saw that the round churches of Abyssinia have doors at the four cardinal points, and that these churches are said to have succeeded round pagan temples. The altar of the sun at Peking consisted of three marble terraces, each with a marble balustrade and accessible by a marble staircase which faced the four cardinal points.² In India booths for certain marriage and other ceremonies are square and are built over a pit, in which fire is consecrated, with four doors towards the four cardinal points.³

In the fatherland of the Maori is the entrance to the underworld at a house called Hawaiki of the Solstice. There are four doors to this house, whence come forth the winds which, blowing in the direction of the four cardinal points, have spread abroad the children of the Sky-Father and Earth-Mother upon the bosom of the Mother. To this house the dead return, each from his own quarter to his particular door.⁴

The houses of the Wichita, a Plains Indian tribe, were beehive-shaped. A house had four entrances, one facing each point of the compass, and from the top there were four poles pointing in the same directions.⁵

In Ashanti the king, when he appears in public, sits on a dais. This is usually square, with three steps leading up to it, usually on all four sides at the four points of the compass. . . . In some states

¹ Bandelier, cit. FL, 1928, 49.
² ERE, iv, 13.
³ J. Abbott, op. cit., 528.
⁴ University of Pennsylvania Journal, 1928, 96.
⁵ K. B. Smith, op. cit., 79.
the dais is round, and in this case the points of the compass are usually marked by protuberances on the second step. The king's sacred number is four, and his and the Sun-god's symbol is the equal-limbed cross.\textsuperscript{1} Besides the four-way approach, we seem to have here another example of the transition from round to square.

The principal hut of the chief of the Mbum, Northern Cameroons, was surrounded by a circular veranda divided into four compartments, each with a door leading to the outside.\textsuperscript{2}

To revert to the four quarters, the Egyptians came to believe that there were four posts set on earth to carry the weight of heaven. These were set at the outer limit of the earth, as is indicated by such texts as 'I have set the terror of thee as far as the four pillars of heaven'.\textsuperscript{3} In early times also the sky was symbolized by the goddess Nut, supporting herself on her arms and legs, and Hathor the celestial cow, whose underbelly was studded with stars, and whose four legs constituted the four posts on which the sky stood.\textsuperscript{4} The Egyptians also acquired the idea that each quarter or corner has its guardian deity; 'the guardians of the corners of the world stand at the four angles of the sepulchral Chamber shown in the papyrus of Ani'.\textsuperscript{5} And four goddesses with outspread wings support the corners of Tutankhamun's sarcophagus.\textsuperscript{6}

The Pharaoh shot four arrows to the four cardinal points and was enthroned four times facing the four cardinal directions.\textsuperscript{7} There were also four winds associated with the four quarters.\textsuperscript{8}

The four corners or quarters are often mentioned in the Bible. Isaiah speaks of 'the four quarters of the earth' (xi, 12); Ezekiel of 'the four quarters of the land' and of bringing the wind from 'the four ends of the earth' (vi, 2 and xxxvii, 9); Jeremiah of 'the four winds of the world' (xlix, 36); God asks Job whether he has

\textsuperscript{1} E. Meyerowitz, op. cit., 57.
\textsuperscript{2} B. Lambezat, op. cit., 204 n.
\textsuperscript{3} J. A. Wilson in Before Philosophy, ed. H. Frankfort, L. 1954, 55.
\textsuperscript{4} E. O. James, Myth and Ritual in the Early Near East, 152.
\textsuperscript{5} AMM, 51.
\textsuperscript{6} P. Fox, Tutankhamun's Treasure, Pl. 26.
\textsuperscript{7} E. O. James, The Ancient Gods, 115.
\textsuperscript{8} H. Frankfort, op. cit., 117.
ever 'given directions to the dawn to take the earth by the corners and shake out the wicked' (xxxviii, 13). And St. John 'saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth and holding back the four winds'.

According to the Hindu scriptures there are four gods who guard the four quarters of the world, and the Brahmanas contain rituals in which the king goes through the ceremony of creating the world, including the four quarters. According to the Buddhists there are four demon kings, or lokapalas, guardians of the four quarters of the universe. Each has his special colour.

The legendary emperors of China were said to have controlled the four quarters of heaven. They were sometimes paired with four spirits symbolized by the White Tiger of the West, the Green Dragon of the East, the Red Bird of the South, and the Dark Warrior of the North. During the Han dynasty the ruling classes decorated their coffins with the four animals denoting the four quarters, with a golden sun and a silver moon on the top. And we are told that: 'The celestial sphere has, since ancient times, been divided into four quarters ... and no part of the soil can be fully impregnated with the beneficent influence of Heaven unless these four quarters operate upon it conjointly.'

Pavilions used in a Siamese court ceremony consisted of a square dais with a canopy supported by four posts at the corners. At each corner there is an image, said to be of one of the four 'spiritual professors who preside over the ceremony', to which offerings are made. At each corner of the dais sits a young lady of royal degree, and the four stir a large round pan filled with corn, fruit, etc.

The Polynesians of old, we are told, conceived of the sky as a dome or inverted bowl resting upon the rim of the hemispherical

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1 Rev. vii, 1.
2 Kingship, 162.
3 FL, 1928, 55.
4 University of Pennsylvania Journal, 1928, 96.
5 W. Watson, China, 19.
6 J. M. de Groot, op. cit., i, 316; iii, 949.
7 H. Q. Wales, op. cit., 233.
earth. Yet heaven was supported by four great pillars at the four cardinal points. And according to the Maori priests' secret version of the myths, when the Sky-god Rangi was forcibly separated from the Earth-goddess Papa and pushed up, he was kept in the position he now occupies by four props.

Apart from the Incas I have found no myths of the four quarters in South America, but there are many in the north. In Mexico the kingdom of the Tabascos was divided into four parts, whose rulers, probably representing the four winds, formed with the king the council of five. The goddess of water, Cuavaraperi, had four attendant goddesses, the personification of the rains from the four cardinal points. At the sacred dances these were represented by four priests, clad respectively in white, yellow, red and black, to represent the four colours of the clouds.

In the Hopi pueblos the altar is composed of sand, the square interior white, with bordering strips of yellow, green, red and white, symbolizing the four cardinal points. At the top of the central square are four figures symbolic of the four rain clouds, from which depend four serpents, typifying lightning. At the bottom of the altar are four water-gourds, typifying the four quarters of the sky.

In the four-pole ceremony of the Skidi Pawnees a circular embankment was thrown up. In the centre of this was a circular fire-pit. Between the latter and the embankment were four poles coloured white, red, yellow and black. These represented the stars and the seasons. Each pole had its priest, and the chief priest attended the hearth. Among the White Mountain Apache 'the scheme of the four directions permeates all ritual, is present in ceremonial and painting ... songs, etc. This is represented by colours: east, black; south, blue; west, yellow and north, white.' The four quarters, with guardians, winds or both are found

1 M. W. Makemson in AA, 1938, 370.
2 P. Buck, op. cit., 445.
3 D. G. Brinton, American Hero Myths, 209.
4 ERE, i, 336.
among tribes including the Salteaux, Winnebagoes, Crow and Arapaho.

The Eskimo are said to tell of four posts underpinning the firmament. When these posts go rotten they have to be renewed by the anjekok or wizards.¹

Turning to Africa, we are told that the Malagasi of Madagascar regard the cardinal points of the compass as four deities.² On the mainland these beliefs seem to be confined to West Africa. Of the Ekoi of Nigeria Dr. M. D. W. Jeffreys says that ‘recent investigation has shown that the religious and ceremonial use of the number four has its origin in the recognition of four quarter-gods’, and that a similar complex is found among the Igbo and Yoruba.³ And among the Songhai and Mande the world is considered to be divided into four quarters.⁴ The Ibo of Nigeria say that the earth was divided into four quarters by the crossing paths of the sun and moon. The four quarters are associated with the four days of the week.⁵ According to the Mukulehe of Northern Cameroon the sky is supported by four wooden posts which must constantly be guarded against termites. The posts are guarded by a mythical old woman.⁶

Returning to these islands we find in Ancient Ireland the four quarters in the arrangements of the royal palace at Tara. Round the Central Hall were the four provincial halls, and the Central Hall was divided into four quarters. The king sat in the middle and the men of the provinces sat round, each in the quarter facing his province. That these quarters had a cosmic significance appears from the statement that on his way to woo Emer, Cuchulainn came to ‘the Food Storehouse of the Four Corners of the World’.⁷

In Somersetshire the function of the weathercock is to crow from the tower to the four winds and warn them off,⁸ but in this case the identification of the four quarters with the four winds may be of Biblical origin. But this can hardly apply to the cosmic hat. The Poles have a square-topped head-dress from which our

Lancer helmet was adapted. The Lapps acquired it by borrowing and call it ‘the four corners of the earth’.\(^1\) Perhaps our ‘mortar-boards’ had a cosmic significance.

The sacredness which attached to corner-posts was extended to the corners of temples and houses built without posts. Thus: ‘Among the Semitic peoples and others an especial sacredness was supposed to pertain to the corners of structures, fields and other objects. . . . Among the Babylonians it took the form of making a deposit of inscriptions and images under the corner or corners of a temple, palace or tower.’ Similar deposits, and the remains of bird and animal sacrifices, have been found under the corners of many temples and other buildings in Egypt. At Gezer, in Palestine, human skeletons were found under the corners of houses, apparently the remains of human sacrifices. There are many passages in the Old Testament which reflect the sacred nature of corners and corner-stones.\(^2\)

Let us take some more modern examples. In the coastal plain of South Arabia, when a man makes a new house, the first thing he does is to hammer four nails into the four corners of the house. These are supposed to keep away the evil eye.\(^3\) To honour the memory of a tribal head the Sakalava of Madagascar erect four posts, one in each corner of his house.\(^4\) The Quechua of Peru bury coca leaves etc. under the corner-stones of a new house as offerings to the earth-mother.\(^5\) Other tribes of the area bury the foetuses of llamas.

French Canadians sprinkle holy water at the four corners of a house during a thunderstorm.\(^6\) Finnish elves punish those who enter new houses without making obeisance to the four corners.\(^7\) In Galway there was a festival, probably St. Martin’s day, at which a fowl was killed and its blood shed in all four corners of the kitchen.\(^8\) In Leitrim ‘the ground for the house having been measured out, a sod would be turned at the four corners. The four sods would be left for two or three nights to see if the

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\(^1\) K. B. Smith, op. cit., 133.
\(^2\) ERE, iv, 119.
\(^3\) B. Thomas in JRAI, 1932, 91.
\(^4\) FL, 1946, 136.
\(^5\) HSAI, ii, 440.
\(^6\) Toronto Globe, 15, 2, 61, 16.
\(^7\) FL, 1956, 351.
\(^8\) Man, 1959, 77.
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proposed house were on a "fairy walk", in which case they would be found replaced and another site would have to be found. If nothing occurred a hen or some such small animal would be killed and the blood allowed to drip into the four holes.1

Reginald Scot, in his Discoverie of Witchcraft, says that to drive away spirits that haunt any house you should write the 'Paracelsian charm' on virgin parchment and hang it in every corner of your house or 'Item, the triumphant title to be written cross-wise in every corner of the house, thus: Jesus ✠ Nasarenus ✠ Rex ✠ Judaeorum.'2

The four corners have still in England their ritual significance. On 31 December, 1959 the Vicar of Edgbaston, Birmingham, held a service of blessing in a room in which a murder had been committed. Sprinkling holy water in each corner, he prayed that the room should be filled with holy goodness.3

It might be thought natural that people should attach importance to the cardinal points of the compass and to quarters and corners generally, but there are many peoples who have never heard of the points of the compass and who have no idea of a square.

Abbott says that in spite of the importance of the cardinal points in Hindu ritual there are many tribes in India that are still unacquainted with them. The Katkari, for example, and other tribes in the neighbourhood of Bombay call the east and west 'rising' and 'setting', but have no words for north and south.4 Similarly the Incas, though they knew of the four quarters, seem not to have recognized the cardinal points. East and west were important because of the rising and setting of the sun, but their language, Quechua, lacks words for north and south.5 On the other hand the Finnish words for north and south seem to have appeared in the language earlier than the words for east and west.6

We saw that in Negro Africa the points of the compass seem to be known in Madagascar and parts of West Africa but not

1 FL, 1899, 118.  
2 140, 151.  
3 Daily Telegraph, 1, i, 1960.  
4 J. Abbott, op. cit., 528.  
5 HSAI, ii, 300.  
6 A. Sauvageot, op. cit., 143.
elsewhere. Professor Schapera tells me that if you wish to mention a compass direction to a South African Bantu, you have to give the name of the tribe living in that direction. It is difficult to get information on this matter, but it seems probable that the cardinal points are unknown to, besides those mentioned, the tribes of Siberia, Australia and South America, besides such Indian tribes as I have mentioned, and the Ao Nagas, who know only east and west.¹

It should be realized that there is nothing in nature to suggest the square, the discovery of which was, as Lethaby says, a great advance of mind and one which may not have been made twice. In the same way there is nothing in nature which causes one to divide the circle of the world, in itself by no means obvious, into four. If the ancient sages who made this division had had pointed out to them the advantages now claimed for the decimal system, we might now have ten cardinal points.

¹J. P. Mills, op. cit., 397.
XVIII

The Temple and the Tomb

Having traced the change in the shape of the cosmic building from round to square and noted the mythology of the four quarters which accompanied it, we now return to Chapter XV and the separation of the palace from the temple. This happened, I suggested, when the custom arose of making an image of the god. The god had then a double representation, in that he was represented by the image and also by the divine king. But as the divine king was mortal and the image immortal, the image came to be thought of as holier than the king, and worthy of a more permanent abode. Thus we get the difference in structure between the temple and the palace which we shall discuss in the next chapter. The question we now have to consider is how it came about that the god was represented by an image.

As usual attempts have been made to represent the familiar as the natural. Thus Goblet d’Alviella says: ‘Everyone likes to have near him whatever reminds him of the beings whom he loves or worships—especially their image; this feeling alone would suffice to explain the frequency of figures representing either persons who have played an important part in worship ... or the superhuman beings to whom worship is rendered.’ But it obviously does not explain why the Jews and Muslims were forbidden to make images, nor why, for example, there is a profusion of images in West Africa but a complete lack of them in
East Africa. A few pages later, however, Goblet proceeds to contradict or correct himself. ‘Strictly speaking,’ he says, ‘idolatry is neither a general nor a primitive fact. It was entirely unknown in India in Vedic times. We have to come far down in the history of China and Japan to find any traces of its development. . . . According to Varro the Romans lived 170 years without representing their gods by images.’ And so he goes on with the Semites, Teutons and Greeks. He finally notes that the majority of savage peoples have no idols.¹ On the other hand images are known to have been made in Egypt and Babylonia in very early times, and it is probably there that we must look for their origin.

Hocart, in his Social Origins, has pointed out that in very early times the dead king came to have more importance than the live king. That is to say that for a king death was promotion. We need not follow him in all he has to say about this except that one result was that the king was given a most elaborate burial. He was clearly believed to go on living, in some sense, in the grave, and to require for his comfort and maintenance everything that he had when he was alive. Among these needs was a wife, and this led to the custom of suttee. This custom is usually spoken of as if the wife was simply killed to accompany her husband in death. But this is not so. Suttee, which has never been performed except for kings and nobles, is a sacred marriage. Some years ago, in an article which I contributed to Folklore, I examined the accounts of suttee in Peru, Ashanti, Fiji and among the ancient Scandinavians and found that they yielded the following pattern:

1. Some of the king’s women are killed at his death.
2. They should be volunteers.
3. They put on their finery, that is they dress as brides.
4. They are made drunk.
5. They are strangled.²

We are often not given the details, and when we are they do not always follow the pattern, but usually they do. That the wives volunteered is emphasized, in addition to those mentioned above, by the Thracians, the Natchez and the Maoris, and in recent times the Chinese and Japanese. They were strangled by

¹ ERE, vii, 110, 113.
² FL, 1953, 259.
the Scythians and Natchez, and Maori wives hanged themselves. High-caste Indian wives were burnt on their husbands’ pyres, but the idea of marriage was preserved in that they lay on a bed on the pyre with their husbands’ bodies.

It is interesting to find in Bali, where an archaic form of the Hindu religion has been preserved, cremation and suttee performed in a cosmic structure. There, we are told, important men are cremated in a lofty tower, which is carried to the place of burning on the shoulders of men. Cremation towers express the Balinese conception of the universe. A turtle with two serpents coiled about it forms the broad base of the tower as of the Balinese world. Three receding towers resting on the turtle symbolize mountains. Above them, in an open space to portray the zone between heaven and earth, the body is fastened on a protruding platform. The entire structure is topped by pagoda-like roofs which represent heaven. The roof is supported by four corner-posts. The structure is set fire to and in former times the wife of a prince, if she volunteered, was made drunk and jumped into the flames, or was stabbed and thrown into them.¹

The richest tomb at Ur was that of King Abergi. With him were buried numerous attendants and quantities of valuables. In the chamber next to his was his queen, Shubad, gorgeously attired. Near her hand was a gold cup, and there were cups near all the other victims. There was no sign of violence, and it is probable that they went voluntarily to their deaths and drank some fatal potion before the grave-shaft was filled in.² It has then all the elements of my pattern except that the victims were not strangled.

The idea of marriage to a dead hero appears in a strange story told in the Elder Edda. Helgi had been killed and was buried in a barrow, but he was seen to ride at night with a large company. His valkyrie lover, Sigrun, is told and goes to the barrow. There she spreads a bed for her lover as if he were alive and places herself in his arms. She leaves him in the morning and returns later to find that, as the suttee has been performed, Helgi has gone to

¹ Habenstein and Lamers, op. cit., 338, 341.
² E. O. James, Sacrifice and Sacrament, 93.
Valhalla and rides no more.\textsuperscript{1} Here the barrow is both tomb and bridal chamber.

The idea of marriage to the dead takes a different form in Egypt, where Isis conceives by the dead Osiris and gives birth to Horus. There is here no question of suttee and this custom, though there is evidence for it in Egypt, ceased to be performed in very early times. It continued to be believed, however, that the dead king was in some sense alive in the tomb. It seems that he had two souls or spirit doubles. One of them, the \textit{ba}, came with him from heaven and returned there when he died, but it could visit the tomb and partake of the offerings. The other spirit, the \textit{ka}, lived permanently in the tomb and preserved the identity of the dead king as long as a suitable habitation was provided for it. This was the mummy, but the mummy was liable to perish so there grew up in very early times the practice of placing an image or images in the tomb, made to resemble as closely as possible the dead king.

Finally, as the divine son of the Sun-god, the dead king became, in the funerary temples raised for his worship, a patron deity, theologically distinct from the ancestor-god, though one of his manifestations.\textsuperscript{2} Thus the dead Pharaoh seems to have been at the same time a god in heaven, a god in his tomb and a god in his temple. In the last two he was represented by his statue. It may well be that the tomb was cosmic, and that the temple was a magnified copy of the tomb placed above ground so as to be in closer contact with the sun. It may have been a similar complex of ideas which led the Babylonians to place statues of the gods in their temples, but at the same time to bring them down from heaven to visit their partners in the sacred marriage. And this marriage of women to gods may have been a development from the marriage of women to dead men, that is to say from suttee.

We are not told what relation the Pharaoh’s temple had to his tomb, but it has been a common practice to build temples over tombs. St. Peter’s at Rome is, of course, built over the reputed

\textsuperscript{1} N. K. Chadwick in FL, 1946, 57.
\textsuperscript{2} ERE, vii, 133 and 714; E. A. W. Budge, \textit{From Fetish to God}, 328; E. O. James, \textit{Sacrifice and Sacrament}, 164.
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grave of St. Peter. In China the great Yu, who is said to have reigned in 2205 B.C., has a special temple on the site of his reputed place of burial.¹ The tomb of a Fijian chief became his shrine and a roof was built over it to protect him and it from the weather. If the grave of a great chief were neglected and misfortune ensued, it was carefully weeded and offerings were renewed. Some member of the priestly family would be possessed by his spirit, and would squeak oracles in a high falsetto. The process of evolution from tomb to temple would now be very short. So says Sir Basil Thomson,² but I should say that this was already a temple. It is similar to the temple which, we are told, was built in Uganda to house the king's jawbone and umbilical cord, which were supposed to contain his life. The king's ghost chose some man, who became his medium and lived in the temple. When possessed by the ghost he used the king's tones and expressions. The ghosts of kings were placed on an equality with the gods, and received the same honour and worship.³ These last two instances may be compared to the oracles given out at Delphi and other Greek temples, and may be degenerate derivatives of such oracles. It would be rash to conclude that the gods of Uganda were once kings; the cults of the latter, like those of the Roman emperors, may have been copied from those of the gods.

The evidence so far adduced suggests the possibility that the original tomb was a bridal chamber for the sacred marriage of a dead king to a woman killed to be his bride. To the extent that the tomb was a barrow this is exemplified in the story of Helgi and Sigrun. These Norse barrows were the successors of the megalithic barrows the idea of which was brought from the Eastern Mediterranean some three thousand years earlier, and as to these another suggestion has been made by T. Cyriax. This is that the circular swelling of the round barrow may have been intended to represent the pregnancy of Mother Earth. He mentioned certain chambered round barrows in which it would be possible to regard the chamber and passage as uterus and vagina, and the crouched posture of the interments as the deliberate

¹ ERE, iii, 729.
² Ibid, i, 444.
³ J. Roscoe, op. cit., 110.
placing of the bodies in a prenatal posture ready for rebirth. Grinsell, who cites Cyriax's paper, says that since it was written evidence to support his theory has come to light. The great passage grave at Bryn Celli Ddu in Anglesey has been shown to contain a large upright monolith which can hardly be other than phallic, and there is corroborative evidence from elsewhere.\(^1\) I have mentioned, in Chapter XV, Professor Schmidt's identification of the cosmic building with the womb of the earth, and it may be that the megalithic barrow represented the cosmic building in a more permanent form, suitable for combining the rituals of burial, marriage and rebirth.

Childe says that the burial chambers and circular ossuaries of the Eastern Mediterranean presumably reproduce the houses of their builders,\(^2\) but this is most improbable, for we find that tombs always have a permanence of construction which houses usually lack. When, moreover, we find resemblances between sacred and secular buildings, it is the latter which copy the former. The church porch had a function, to contain the holy water with which the worshipper purified himself before entering the sacred building. It was copied in stone houses, but without any such definite function. Glass windows were inserted in churches for religious purposes, and were later copied in houses, at first on a much smaller scale. The temple and the church probably took from the tomb its permanent form of construction, but unlike the tomb were not built to keep out light, air and intruders. Buildings intended to represent the cosmos and to serve these purposes were unlikely to be copied from dwellings.

The connection, then, between tombs on the one hand and temples and churches on the other is not very clear, but that there is a connection is clear from the facts not merely that many people have been buried in churches but that in former times the central feature of a church was an altar containing the bones of a saint.

\(^1\) L. V. Grinsell in FL, 1952, 271.
\(^2\) The Prehistory of European Society, 108.
XIX

Wood and Stone

It is commonly believed not only that people have always built their houses to suit their requirements, but that they have always built them with whatever materials lay most conveniently to hand. It is believed that where timber is plentiful and stone scarce people have built timber houses; where stone is plentiful and timber scarce they have built stone houses, and where there is neither timber nor stone they have built houses of mud. This is true only to the extent that if a material is unobtainable it of course cannot be used; apart from that it is custom and fashion, not availability, which dictates what material shall be used.

Dauzat gives us some interesting examples from France. Houses are built of stone in Western Valais and of wood in Eastern Valais, both of which have stone and wood equally at their disposal. There are timber houses in the district of Caux and the country round Caen, where there are cliffs of excellent building stone but no timber, and stone houses in the richly wooded parts of Normandy. In the region of Aydat, Puy-de-Dome, where the ground is littered with boulders ready to be used for building and walls are multiplied to get them out of the way, the houses were up till the last century all built of mud. There are two districts in the south of Dauphiné; into one, a well-wooded country, stone is imported for house-building, while timber is imported into the other, where there is plenty of stone. At Morzine, Haute
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Savoie, the rural houses are always built of wood, even beside the quarries from which stone is taken to build the hotels.¹

One can give similar examples in this country. In Monmouthshire, up to about the middle of the 16th century, all the farmhouses were built of wood. There was then a change of fashion, and from then on they were all built of stone, though there was still plenty of timber. In the next county, Herefordshire, they went on building the farmhouses of timber till the end of the 17th century, though in most parts stone was readily available.² In Devonshire, up till recent times farmhouses were commonly built of mud, or ‘cob’ as it is called, and many of them still exist. In most of the county both stone and timber are available, and conditions are very similar to those on the Welsh border, where there are no mud houses.

Generally speaking we cannot hope to trace the origin of these customs, but there is one aspect of the matter on which we can pronounce with certainty—stone was, in many countries, adopted as the proper material for housing the dead and the gods, while wood remained long afterwards the proper material for houses and even palaces. According to Waterhouse ‘it has been well said that the father of all architecture was he who first discovered that he could build a wall by the simple process of piling one stone upon another’.³ One stone balanced on another is, of course, not even the beginning of a wall, and before the first stone wall was built there were probably wooden buildings of considerable size.

The earliest masonry found in the Ancient East is of such good quality as to suggest that masonry, with its methods of construction, and the art of bonding—another of those things which seem obvious only when familiar—were based on the technique of building in mud brick. The mud brick and the dressed stone are both difficult inventions, but it seems more likely that the first dressed stone was an imitation brick than that the first mud brick was an imitation dressed stone.

At Jericho the houses of the first and second settlements were

¹ A. Dauzat, Le Village et le Paysan de France.
² Fox and Raglan, op. cit., ii, 13.
³ P. L. Waterhouse, The Story of Architecture, i.
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of mud brick, but the second was enclosed by a stone wall and included a stone tower still standing to a height of thirty feet.\(^1\)

We are told that in Egypt 'the earliest known group of substantial stone buildings, the step pyramids of Zoser at Saqqara, exhibit high technical skill'.\(^2\)

'No satisfactory explanation has been given', says Hocart, 'why stone should have been adopted as a building material. It is the most durable, but the vast majority of peoples on earth do not worry about durability, not even such a highly civilized people as the Chinese... Wood and plaster last as long as anyone requires, for social habits change and houses get out of date. We have definite evidence that the earliest use of stone was ritual. In Europe the dolmens and circles were tombs and temples. In Egypt the use of stone was part of a consistent theory of immortality. In Ceylon stone was used exclusively for temples down to the 12th or 13th century A.D.; then came a brick age when king and god alike had houses of brick with a little stone. In India too stone has never been a common building material, so that the Indian architect always thinks in terms of wood. Stone belongs to temples and tombs, later to royal palaces.'\(^3\)

We can find evidence to support this view. Erman says that in Egypt stone was used for tombs and temples, while houses and even palaces were slight and made of perishable materials. Rameses III seems to have been the first to use stone in the construction of his palace.\(^4\)

Altheim notes, referring to the Mediterranean and particularly to Malta: 'The strongest and mightiest buildings, then, that this ancient civilization produced were raised for the dead and the nether gods; they stand in striking contrast to the slighter, ephemeral character which we find in the dwellings of the living.'\(^5\)

'The importance', says R. Bloch, 'the Etruscans attributed to man's fate after death, and their belief in an afterlife similar to

\(^1\) K. Kenyon in JRAI, 1959, 39.
\(^2\) S. Lloyd in Singer, op. cit., i, 475.
\(^3\) The Progress of Man, 75.
\(^5\) F. Altheim, A History of Roman Religion, 23.
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earthly life, led them to construct subterranean dwellings for their dead which were faithful copies of those in which they had lived. The only difference lay in their permanence. Whereas the houses were made of perishable materials, the hypogea were hollowed out of rock or constructed from blocks of stone. . . . Etruscan temples, however, were not built of stone, though, unlike houses, they had a stone foundation and podium. It is not known whether the superstructure was of wood or brick. 1

In this country the Saxons built their houses of wood and, in later times at any rate, their churches of stone. The Normans did the same; the castle which William the Conqueror built at Durham was of wood, and the present castle contains no stonework earlier than the 14th century. He built a stone chapel within the bailey, and 'this chapel is an instance of the honour so frequently done to the chapel, which was in many cases built of stone when the rest of the castle was only of timber'. 2 The bishop's palace at Hereford, built beside the Norman cathedral, was of timber, some of which can still be seen within the later palace.

In some parts of Europe stone was regarded as the proper material not only for churches but for their furniture. 'Among the many thousand fragments of early Croatian stone furniture we found no single piece that would not properly belong to a church.' 3

Returning to India, we note that according to Dubois and Beauchamp most Hindu temples have flat roofs supported by massive stone pillars; on the capitals are placed beams of stone. Wood is never employed except for the doors. 4 In India 'even at the present day the hut roofed with straw or reeds is the normal type of house, and there is a remarkable taboo in some places against the use of brick or tiles for building. In Bengal brick walls are supposed to attract the evil eye, because such buildings indicate prosperity. . . . In Khandesh, until recent times, tiled

1 R. Bloch, op. cit., 125, 166.
2 E. S. Armitage, op. cit., 147.
3 J. Strzygowski, Early Church Art in Northern Europe, 29.
4 Hindu Manners and Customs, 588.
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roofs were prescribed. In the Panjab, in some of the submontane tracts, tiled houses are taboo. Sometimes, again, as the result of a curse, Rajputs in the Panjab refuse to build brick houses, and a violation of the taboo is supposed to cause the death or ruin of the builder. . . . Hindus who revere the Musulman saint Mian Mitthu will not use bricks in their houses because the saint’s shrine is built of this material. In Kanara most peasant houses are thatched because custom confines the use of tiles to Brahmans and the higher classes. . . . The use of stone for architecture dates from the age of the great emperor Asoka. ¹

In Assam ‘houses and even palaces may be built of wood or bamboo, but stone must immortalize the monuments of the sacrificial feasts’. ²

The Japanese pre-Buddhist buildings of wood and thatch stand in marked contrast to the megalithic sepulchral mounds. ³

In San Cristoval of the Solomons all the dwelling-houses are of wood, but the canoe-house in which are kept the special canoes used for the sacred bonito fishing is of stone. ⁴

‘The Mayan people lived in houses of wood and leaves with a gabled roof supported on a ridge-pole, as do the peasants of Yucatan today, but the temples of the gods and the homes of the priests were of stone.’ ⁵

The general principle is that houses for the living are to be made of perishable materials and houses for the dead and the gods of imperishable materials. The probability, so far as the houses for the living are concerned, is that they are merely to be built as they have been built before the introduction of stone, burnt bricks and tiles. Burnt brick has to be mentioned, but it is not very important in this connection. It was used in Babylonia, where there is no stone, in early times, but elsewhere comes on the scene much later, in Egypt not till Roman times. ⁶ Stone was

¹ W. Crooke in FL, 1918, 115–16.
² C. von Führer-Haimendorf, The Naked Nagas, 32.
³ Paine and Soper, op. cit., 169.
⁴ C. E. Fox, The Threshold of the Pacific, 186.
⁵ E. Short, The House of God, 17.
⁶ A. Lucas, Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries, 45.
first used there, for building tombs, about 3400 B.C., and it was from there, or at any rate from the Eastern Mediterranean, that the megalithic culture spread round the coasts of Europe. In an easterly direction it spread, again we do not know from where, to Southern and Eastern Asia, Polynesia and Middle America. It is everywhere associated with circles, the purpose of which is unknown, but the cult of the dead certainly played an important part in it. The cult has had no effect on building development, and the only people, so far as I know, who still erect megaliths are certain of the Naga tribes of Assam. Professor Hutton, who saw a pair of large upright stones being erected, says they are male and female and, though a memorial to the dead, are also connected with fertility. Similar paired stones are found in Europe; they no doubt represent a sacred marriage.

The tradition of the rectangular temple, with walls and roof, seems to have no connection with the megalithic complex, though it also uses stone wherever stone can be used. It must also have spread from the Ancient East, but at a much later period. It has probably influenced house-building to the extent that all rectangular stone houses are derived from it.

We have seen that the stone town wall and tower at Jericho are dated to the 8th millennium B.C. It is not surprising that the walls are of stone while the houses are of mud brick, for city walls are always sacred, protecting the city not only from human enemies but from demons. What is surprising is that they should have been built four thousand years before the beginnings of masonry in Egypt.

1 Ibid.
2 JRAI, 1922, 243.
3 M. Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 371.
Round and Square Houses

We have now reviewed what seems to me to be ample evidence that all temples are cosmic, and that they were round when the world was round and became square when the world came to be thought of as square. It might be supposed that houses originated independently of temples or, with MacCulloch and Baldwin Smith, that the structure of temples was copied from that of houses. In either case it might also be supposed that the round house suggested itself naturally to early builders, but that they soon found that a square house was more comfortable. This is very much what Innocent says: 'The round house was the earliest but, owing to its inconvenient shape and limited size, it was quickly abandoned in favour of subsequent modifications.' It was not quickly abandoned, for it was the usual house-type in Britain for probably more than two thousand years, and is still the dwelling of many millions. It is perfectly convenient for those who sleep on the floor and keep their property in jars, and a round house can be quite large. Our ideas of what is suitable in the way of size and shape depend on what we have been accustomed to, and things seem natural and obvious only because they are familiar.

Bearing this in mind let us consider the round house. Before you can build it you have to make a circle on the ground. But the only circles known to early man would have been the sun and

the moon, and they do not suggest a plan for a house, nor how a circle could be made on the ground. One draws a circle, of course, by tying a string to a peg fixed in the ground and walking with it stretched, but how should anyone come to think of doing this? Perhaps the first circle was drawn by a tethered cow; at any rate tethered cows graze in a circle, and cows have often been used to mark boundaries. Whether all savages can draw circles I do not know, but the knowledge of how to draw circles may, like many other things, have been diffused.

The origin of the square is more difficult. There are no squares in nature, nor does any tethered animal graze in a square. The first square buildings may have been made by joining four corner-posts, but then these posts must have been in a square already. The Egyptians at one time regarded the four corner-posts of the world as the legs of a cow, but these do not normally form even a rectangle. As far as we know none of the many peoples of the world who still live in round houses have any idea of a square; they do not make square boxes or square beds, so would have no use for it if they knew it. All that we can say is that the more difficult inventions are to explain, the less probable it is that they were made more than once.

But the case that we are going to make depends not on these theoretical considerations but on the fact that in many parts of the world where the temples are round the houses are round; where the temples are square the houses are square; and there is evidence that temples and houses have changed from round to square.

We saw in Chapter XV that the mythical cosmos has often been believed to consist of two hemispheres, and that early cosmic buildings probably consisted of a hemispherical roof over a hemispherical pit. We shall see that many round houses are built over a pit, and though this may have practical advantages in the Arctic it has no advantages elsewhere. Square houses are much less often built over a pit. I use the word square as short for rectangular, but few houses are exactly square.

What are called long houses are buildings in which a number of family dwellings are built side by side, usually on piles and
with a common veranda. They occur chiefly in South-East Asia and Indonesia, and sporadically in India and North and South America. They are a form of rectangular house, and I shall not discuss them.

The Fertile Crescent having been, in all probability, the scene of the earliest civilizations, it is there that we should look for the earliest houses. Our information is very far from complete, but let us see what we can find.

We noticed the round tholoi at Arpachiya in Assyria which Mallowan dated to c. 5000 B.C. Since then Braidwood has found rectangular houses at Jarmo in the same region for which he claims an earlier date. Others regard his dating as doubtful, but his evidence, and that from Hassuna in the same region, leave no doubt that rectangular houses are extremely ancient in Northern Mesopotamia. It is probable, however, that the beginnings of civilization are thousands of years older than anything that has yet been found.

At Jericho Miss Kenyon found that the earliest town consisted of round houses with sunken floors. Carbon 14 dates these to the 8th millennium B.C., and this dating seems to be generally accepted. The builders of these were succeeded, perhaps two thousand years later, by people who built rectangular houses, one of which may have been a temple. The round houses are of brick, and are thick, solid and well built, within a massive stone town wall. There is no evidence of cult, and all we can say is that substantial round houses came long before square ones.¹

In the earliest civilization of Egypt, that of Merimde, the houses were of mud in the form of beehives.² In Early Predynastic times the huts were round, with floors partly excavated, but in Middle Predynastic they were rectangular, of wattle and daub, with timber-framed doorways.³

The earliest evidence that I have found from India is that of the bas-reliefs at Sanchi, which show that the Indians had, in the

¹ K. Kenyon in JRAI, 1959, 35 f.
² R. Engelbach in The Legacy of Egypt, 122.
³ J. Bradford in The History of Technology, ed. Singer, i, 304.
3rd century B.C., circular thatched huts with hemispherical or domical roofs.¹

In Neolithic China men lived in beehive-shaped houses sunk in the ground.² At Pan P'o Ts'un in Shensi round and oblong Neolithic foundations were found close together. The round ones were probably rondavels with sunken floors and walls a foot high.³ The beehive-shaped houses were characteristic of the Neolithic culture of an area including Siberia and North America.⁴ According to one account they continued in general use in the Bronze Age, till in Shang times (c. 1400 B.C.) 'men of position' occupied rectangular houses of rammed earth,⁵ but Watson says that though some round 'pit-dwellings' of the Bronze Age have been found, the vast majority of houses were rectangular.⁶ Anyhow it seems clear that at some time, probably about 1400 B.C., there was a gradual change from round to square houses. Whether the 'beehive-shaped' houses means rondavels is not clear.

The early pit dwelling of Japan was an excavation four to six metres across, roughly circular or squarish with rounded corners. Postholes were variously situated; if at some distance from the earth walls they were usually four. This construction suggests the influence of an early form of square building on an original round house.⁷

We shall return to Asia when we have considered the early houses of Europe. A number of house sites claimed to date from Palaeolithic and Mesolithic times are discussed by Grahame Clark.⁸ They are probably the dwellings of nomadic hunters; their plans are irregular and their structure is unknown, though some found in Russia suggest a resemblance to the dwellings of the Kamschadel of Eastern Siberia.

¹ A. M. Hocart, The Progress of Man, 74.
³ W. Watson, China, 31.
⁴ J. Needham, Science and Civilization in China, i, 81.
⁵ H. G. Creel, loc. cit.
ROUND AND SQUARE HOUSES

The introduction of agriculture and stock-raising is generally thought to have been brought to Europe by immigrants from Asia Minor during the 3rd millennium B.C. Many of these moved up the Danube Valley, and others coasted round the Mediterranean. The former appear always to have had square houses and the latter round. Both types had, as we have seen, long been known in Asia.

According to Professor Leopold Schmidt of Vienna: 'The following assumption has been extensively confirmed; whereas the pre-Indogermanic inhabitants of Europe built on circular bases, the early Indogermanic inhabitants erected their houses on rectangular foundations. Groups governed by matriarchal laws dwelt in round huts, patriarchal dwellers, however, in rectangular houses. This also has again and again proved correct.'

But many Europeans who are not governed by matriarchal laws still live in rondavels.

One of the earliest types of round house in Europe is the corbelled stone hut of beehive shape. Walton believes this to have originated in the Central Mediterranean, perhaps in Southern Italy, and spread thence to Sardinia, Spain and Portugal, and various parts of West Britain to Scandinavia and Greenland. Huts of this type called trulli are still built and lived in in Southern Italy. Grahame Clark says that there were round houses but 'in the Mediterranean, as in the temperate zone of Europe, houses of oblong and more or less rectangular form have predominated since the first beginnings of farming'. It is difficult to reconcile this with his suggestion that the apsidal Bronze Age houses of Thessaly 'reflect the influence of rectangular on round houses' and with Lloyd's that on the Greek mainland 'the circular hut formed the basic element from which the house plan evolved'.

MacIver figures models of two rondavels from Neolithic Tuscany and says that excavation shows that such houses were hollowed out inside to a depth of two or three feet below ground level. At Rome 'the hut of Romulus and a similar structure in the

1 Antaios, ii, 211. 4 Ibid.
2 Man, 1951, 82. 5 Singer, op. cit., i, 484.

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temple of Jupiter in the Capitol were round.\textsuperscript{1} It would seem that in Italy, as elsewhere, round houses were once general, but were later replaced by square ones except where they survived for religious reasons or in remote areas.

Round huts are numerous on some of the West Mediterranean islands: those in Sardinia are of the Bronze Age or later, and probably from the 2nd millennium B.C. are the numerous round huts with thick walls faced with stone, in one instance associated with an irregularly quadrangular one, found in Southern France.\textsuperscript{2}

England from early times has round and square houses, and as late as the Iron Age a large round timber house in Wiltshire has in the middle four large posts set in a square, indicating influence from rectangular buildings.\textsuperscript{3} In Scotland the rectangular ‘black houses’ of the Hebrides were preceded by beehive-shaped stone huts,\textsuperscript{4} no doubt of the type mentioned by Walton.

In Ireland ‘the earliest forms of buildings were round, first the primitive huts made of wicker and mud’.\textsuperscript{5} In Ireland also ‘most of the houses of the early Christian period were circular, many of them of wattle and daub. At Beginish, co. Kerry, the builders had dug a circular pit about three feet deep and faced with stone up to ground level.’ There was a sloping way through the seven-foot-thick walls. A rectangular room was added later.\textsuperscript{6} And Piggott says that there is good evidence, both from literary sources and from excavation, that circular wooden buildings were still used by Celtic chieftains until early mediaeval times for their homesteads or ‘palaces’.\textsuperscript{7} Yet a large rectangular Neolithic stone house was excavated by O’Riordain in co. Limerick.\textsuperscript{8} This is similar to many found in Central Europe and Scandinavia. In Central Europe it seems that no round houses have been found, rectangular houses of advanced types having been introduced in

\textsuperscript{1} Garnered Sheaves, 77.
\textsuperscript{2} J. G. D. Clark, op. cit., 136.
\textsuperscript{3} G. Bersu in Proc. Preh. Soc., 1940, 86.
\textsuperscript{4} W. Kissling in JRAI, 1943, 88.
\textsuperscript{5} H. G. Lawlor, Ulster, Its Archaeology and Antiquities, 104.
\textsuperscript{6} M. L. de Paor, Early Christian Ireland, 81.
\textsuperscript{7} FL, 1947, 246.
\textsuperscript{8} Clark, op. cit., 151.
early times.¹ In Scandinavia there seem to have been no round houses except stone ones of Walton’s type, though in Lapland there were round wooden houses as late as 1900.²

Clark, in the passage cited above, goes on to say that the Bronze and Iron Ages in the British Isles were marked by outstanding developments of the round house.

Round wooden houses are still found in Central Italy and Provence.³ Rondavels up to twenty metres in diameter are still built and lived in in many parts of Spain, chiefly in the northwest. They are thatched, but we are not told what the walls are made of.⁴ The thatched rondavels still built and lived in in Central Portugal have stone walls.⁵ To complete the Mediterranean area we may note that round houses seem to be unknown in North Africa, but the Kabyles of Algeria still build barns of rondavel type.⁶

In Syria the houses are square with flat roofs, but in the treeless area of Northern Syria and the adjacent parts of Turkey each square room is roofed with a circular dome.⁷ Rectangular houses seem to be general in Turkey and Persia, many of the latter being domed.

In India the great majority of the houses are rectangular, but round huts are not uncommon. The Chenchus, a forest tribe of Central India, make round bamboo huts with conical thatched roofs, that is rondavels, and people said to live in ‘beehive-shaped’ huts are found in Rajputana and on the coast north of Madras, and include the Wadders, a low caste spread over Southern India.⁸ As the huts of the two last are said to be mud-walled and thatched they are presumably rondavels, as are the huts of the Andaman Islanders, circular with eaves nearly touching the ground.⁹

¹ Ibid., 155.
² K. B. Smith, op. cit., 128.
³ S. Ericson in Folkliv, 1957, 125.
⁴ L. Araquistain in Man, 1945, 21.
⁵ Antiquity, 1948, 40.
⁷ W. C. Brice in Man, 1948, 155.
⁸ Man, 1948, 99; FL, 1918, 118; FL, 1894, 21.
⁹ FL, 1918, 119.
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In parts of Northern Ceylon there are thatched rondavels with mud or wattled walls. These are being replaced by rectangular buildings.¹

Chinese houses seem now all to be square, but a recent B.B.C. film showed a Mongolian village of well-built rondavels.

The Koryak of Eastern Siberia dig a circular hole one to one and a half metres deep. In this the walls, of vertical poles, are put up in the form of an octagon. Four wooden posts in the form of a square support the roof. There is a narrow ramped and covered passage for entrance in the summer. In winter this is blocked up and the house is entered by a ladder from a hole in the roof. This ladder is a family guardian and has a carved face.²

Throughout Oceania the houses are almost all rectangular, but there are exceptions. In the highlands of New Guinea one group of tribes has ‘large stockaded villages of round houses with conical roofs’, and another oblong houses with rounded ends.³ In the Lau Islands of Fiji the houses are, according to Hocart, of Tongan style, that is they are oblong with semicircular ends.⁴ He illustrates a large rondavel at Somosomo.⁵ In Mala of the Solomons the houses are nearly all rectangular; Ivens illustrates a rondavel, but does not mention it in the text.⁶ In Polynesia houses are in general square, but in Tonga and Samoa there are large round houses, like rondavels but with convex roofs. These are used for ceremonial purposes.⁷

Before dealing with America generally we may note that the Greenland Eskimo lived in winter in round houses up to the 12th or 13th centuries. Rectangular houses then appeared in Disko Bay, probably under Norse influence, and spread gradually to the rest of Greenland.⁸

¹ *Antiquity*, 1946, 205.
³ E. P. Chinnery in *Man*, 1934, 140.
⁴ *Lau Island*, 120.
⁵ *Kingship*, 184.
⁶ W. Ivens, *The Island Builders of the Pacific*, 274.
⁸ T. T. Paterson in JRAI, 1939, 64.
For a general survey of houses in western North America we can cite Waterman. From him we learn that along the west coast there is a strip about fifty to 200 miles wide and about 2200 miles long, extending from Alaska to California, in which all the inhabitants used to live in rectangular plank houses, some of them very large. Mostly inside this strip, but extending 200 miles to the south of it, is another strip about 1400 miles long and 100 to 200 miles wide, in which, at an earlier period, all the inhabitants lived in circular huts dug into the ground and entered by a ladder through a hole in the earth-covered roof. Waterman thinks that in the whole of the area which includes these two strips the type of house was once the circular hut described above, and that this type was introduced from Asia, where it has a wide distribution (as we have seen). He thinks that the rectangular house was intrusive and was diffused from some centre. The rectangular house has usually a pit inside, but unlike the round house has high walls. There are other areas of circular pit houses covered with earth in the Central and South-Western United States; many of these are used only for ritual purposes by tribes which have other types of dwelling.¹

In a later publication he says that in America 'circular houses are found without exception among the more primitive and backward tribes, while rectangular houses were built by the more progressive groups. Square houses are found in a central region; circular houses in the peripheral regions towards the poles. . . . In my opinion,' he continues, 'the square house was first invented and brought into use on the Atlantic side of Honduras. A conviction that houses ought to be rectangular seems to have spread from this focus until it reached tribes far to the south in Chile and in another direction reached the Iroquois on Lake Erie. The distribution of square houses is continuous over the middle area, though the houses become more primitive as we pass from the focus to the periphery.'²

We can agree with Waterman that house types are diffused, and do not arise from independent local invention, but some of

¹ T. T. Waterman, *Native Houses of Western North America*.
his statements may be criticized. The most elaborate plank houses seem not to be near Honduras but those built by the Coast Salish of British Columbia, some of which are up to 500 feet long.¹ Moreover, except among the Iroquois, there are no rectangular houses elsewhere in North America which bear any resemblance to the long houses of the coastal strip. The general pattern in North America does not suggest a steady spread from south to north. From about A.D. 400 to 800, we are told, the Mogollok of South-Western United States continued to live primarily in pit-house villages, but further north, in the central area, there was a growing trend towards rectangular houses.² Although the rectangular house reached the Iroquois, it did not reach the Plains tribes further south. Many of them lived in round houses with conical roofs covered with bark, which were no doubt rondavels, and others further south lived in 'beehive-shaped houses covered with straw, mats or bark, which may have been rondavels too.³ We have seen that some, at least, of these houses were symbolically associated with the points of the compass.

It seems odd that the Mandans, a Siouan tribe, once had large rectangular lodges, but in the 16th century adopted round earth lodges, retaining rectangular ones for ceremonies.⁴

In Central America the houses seem to be all square, but in the West Indies most of the houses seem to have been rondavels.⁵

In South America there is a very great variety of house-types, but of the great majority it can be said that to the extent that they are not mere forest shelters they have or may have been subject to European influence. Round houses are reported here and there, but their construction is seldom indicated. The Chipaya of Bolivia live in domical houses of sods on a wooden framework,⁶ and the Cagaba of Columbia build rondavels similar in appearance and method of construction to those of Africa. The doors

¹ H. G. Barnett in AA, 1938, 128.
³ K. B. Smith, op. cit., 79.
⁴ A. W. Bowen, Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization, 16.
⁵ ERE, i, 687.
⁶ HSAI, ii, pl. 114.
are made of a single slab of wood and are 'harr-hung', that is to say that they are hinged on two nubs on the corners which fit into holes in the door-frame. Walton figures similar doors from the Transvaal, and says that they extend to other parts of Africa.

He also says that, according to Sir Leonard Woolley, they were known in the Near East in 4000 B.C.¹

The problem of house-types in Africa south of the Sahara is much simpler, firstly because the types are few and secondly because their distribution has been admirably plotted by Walton. The only ancient buildings are ruins of the Arab towns on the east coast, and the complexes at Zimbabwe, Nanatali, etc. These, once attributed to King Solomon, are now regarded as not older than the 15th century A.D. By this time the Malays had been colonizing Madagascar and trading along the coasts of the mainland for centuries, and there is reason to think that the large buildings at these sites show signs of Malay influence.² All the surviving huts on these sites are rondavels, though there are differences in structure. Some of these complexes include circular pits without roofs but entered by a tunnel. Their purpose is unknown, but similar pits now found in the Nuba Mountains of the Sudan are used for keeping pigs. It is thought probable that those in the south, at any rate, had some ritual significance.³

Walton, unlike some of the other writers I have cited, distinguishes carefully between the beehive-shaped hut and the rondavel, and divides Africa south of the Sahara, less an area including the eastern tip, into three. The distribution of the beehive-shaped hut suggests that it was once general in Africa. Made of various materials, it still covers a large area south-west of a line which extends roughly from the middle of Angola to the north of Natal. There are also an irregular area round Lake Victoria, and pockets in Abyssinia, Eastern Nigeria and Senegal. Unlike those of Europe, Asia and North America, these huts seem never to have been built over pits.

Rectangular houses cover a large area of West Central Africa, and extend along the coast in a belt about 250 miles wide as far west as Sierra Leone. There are also some on the coast opposite Madagascar. Those in the Portuguese colonies are in part at least due to Portuguese influence, but on the west coast they are

1 HSAI, ii, 875 and pl. 178; Man, 1954, 58.
2 J. Hornell in JRAI, 1934, 330 f.
3 J. Walton, African Village, 105 f.
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probably older and may have been introduced by the Malays. In this area there are many striking resemblances to Malay culture. In all the rest of Africa south of a line drawn from the Sudan coast to Senegal the rondavel is universal. This area amounts to about three fifths of the whole.

Beehive Hut—Basutoland.

Rondavel—Cagaba Indians of Colombia.

Our evidence suggests that there have been four main stages in the development of house-building:

(1) That of the early hunters and food-gatherers. Those still surviving may all have been influenced to some extent by the more advanced, but it is probable that their building efforts consisted in partly blocking cave-mouths, twisting branches into growing trees, making crude fences for use as windbreaks and propping hides on sticks.

(2) The invention of the beehive-shaped hut. This invention embodies three new ideas, a perfect circle drawn on the ground,
a pit dug within it, and a symmetrical dome of the same material throughout starting from the ground and meeting in the middle. It would be a remarkable coincidence if this combination of ideas occurred independently to people in various parts of the world. It seems likely that the first hemispherical huts were of green branches, the tradition of which persisted in the gigunu. The next development may have been wicker-work plastered with mud.

(3) The invention of the rondavel. This, like the beehive-shaped hut, starts with a circle on the ground, but the principle of its construction is quite different. A wall, about five feet high or sometimes less, is made, often of forked posts interlaced with strips of bamboo or bark. The conical roof, which is made of light but stiff poles, their tops tied together and their bottoms inserted into a circular bundle of flexible twigs, is lifted on to the wall and then thatched. This radical departure from the principle of the beehive-shaped hut was a brilliant invention which deserved to, and did, spread over most of the world.

(4) The rectangular house, which involved a complete break with all that had gone before, involving not only a knowledge of how to lay out a right angle but ability to make some form of framed truss.

That cosmic theories were involved in these changes seems likely, though of course it cannot be proved. The ingenuity and originality required to devise the new techniques should be clear to anyone who thinks about the matter.

It should also be clear from the distribution of these types that in some parts of the world, generally remote ones, the beehive-shaped hut has remained, but merely as a survival. In many others the rondavel has ousted the beehive-shaped hut and still holds its own. In most of the world the rectangular house has replaced the round one, though the sacred associations of the latter have sometimes secured its retention. We shall never know where these types were invented, but it was probably not very far from where we find the earliest examples.
Conclusion

The accounts which I have given of customs and beliefs associated with temples and houses may not always be accurate and are certainly incomplete. I claim, however, that in general they represent the facts, and that these facts deserve explanation. At various stages of the book I have attempted partial explanations of individual customs, but the important question is how it has come about that so many of these customs are found in all continents, whereas none of them is universal or even nearly so. We find in many parts of the world people doing things which would astonish or horrify us if done by our neighbours—killing a man as a foundation sacrifice; knocking a hole through the wall to take a corpse out; driving a woman into the bush to bring forth her child without help; dragging a sick man out of doors to die; killing a widow to be buried with her husband—and we find not only civilized peoples but quite uncivilized tribes in which none of these things is done. Besides that there are innumerable peoples which observe some of these customs but not the others. How did this come about? If it is natural to observe these customs, why does not everyone observe them? If they are unnatural, why does anyone observe them? My answer is that they, and all the other customs and beliefs discussed in this book, either originated in or eventually resulted from a complex religious system which came into existence in the Ancient East long before the beginning of recorded history. This complex did not come into existence by itself, but in all probability formed part of what is known as the Neolithic Revolution, which included the development of corn-growing, the domestication of cattle and sheep, the invention of pottery and weaving,
and of building the earliest houses. The religion of those who spread abroad these arts and crafts no doubt accompanied them in their travels; it could not, in fact, have failed to do so, for it was believed that each of them had their appropriate rites and ceremonies without which they could not be carried on, and that, in particular, corn could not be grown successfully without the ritual of the sacred marriage.

The opposition to this view of history, and prehistory, has taken various forms. One of them is to exaggerate the inventive abilities of mankind in general, and Professor Clark Wissler went so far as to assert that 'there may be differences among peoples as to the degree of inventiveness, but all can and do invent'.¹ In fact, however, in most parts of the world and in most periods of the world's history no inventions have been made. For the great majority of mankind in the past, and a large minority even now, inventiveness has not been merely not encouraged, but has been actively discouraged. The proper ways to do everything and the proper things to think had been laid down by the ancestors long ago and any innovation would be fatal to the innovator and disastrous to the whole community. The attitude of uncivilized races has been well expressed by Mrs. Kuper, who says of the Swazis: 'No effort is made to be original, and originality is in fact condemned and avoided.'² Of the Hindus K. Muckerjee says that 'innovations are usually frowned upon. The customary ways are sacred, and it is not uncommon for individuals to be punished for seemingly slight deviations in methods of production.'³

In the realm of ideas things are the same. We are told that in Islam 'the truth is already established and the student is not expected to add to the store of inherited truth. Similarly, poetic originality is discouraged.'⁴ And this is what Professor Macmurray has to say of our own ancestors: 'The attitude of mind which was characteristic of the Middle Ages could not have produced

¹ Man and Culture, 206.
³ Cit. O. C. Cox, Caste, Class and Race, 10.
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science. It had no interest in doing so. Mediaeval society did not want scientific questions asked and because it had no intention of modifying the traditional forms of social life.¹

But matters go further than that. W. H. R. Rivers pointed out long ago that uncivilized peoples are not merely unprogressive, they are decadent. He showed that the Polynesians and Melanesians whom he studied had lost many arts since they reached their island homes. Some, though wood is available, have forgotten how to build canoes. Some can no longer shoot with bows. On many islands sherds of fine pottery are dug up, but though clay is available the art of making good pottery was lost long ago.² And on many islands there are the ruins of elaborate stone buildings of which the present inhabitants know nothing. The same applies to many other parts of the world; I shall not go further than to mention that the Bantu have long lost the arts which enabled their ancestors to build Zimbabwe. These facts are of course well known to all students of these subjects, but as they do not fit in with fashionable theories of progress they are simply ignored.

Since the Neolithic Revolution there have been occasional bursts of activity such as those which led, in South-West Asia, to the development of working in bronze and later in iron. In Greece, about 600 B.C., contacts with Asia and Egypt led to an outburst of intellectual activity, but to almost nothing in the way of invention. In China, a few centuries later, contacts with India and Persia led to a series of important inventions, but China later sank back into isolation and stagnation.

The fact that stagnation and slow decay are the normal condition of mankind has been obscured by the remarkable progress made during the last four centuries, and it seems not to have been realized that this progress has, till quite recently, been limited to Northern Italy, Germany, France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia and Britain, and to a tiny minority of the inhabitants of those countries. Until within the last century the rest of the world, with the exception of the United States, has contributed nothing.

¹ J. Macmurray, The Boundaries of Science, 42.
² Psychology and Ethnology, 190.
The old civilizations of the East are now reviving, but only under stimulus from the West. The West is now doing for the world something comparable to that which the Ancient East did for it ten thousand or more years ago, the difference being that ideas which can now be transmitted to the most distant parts of the world in days then took centuries or even millennia.

Resisting the temptation to pursue this subject further, I will now turn to a favourite argument of those who wish to believe that the same inventions have been made independently in various parts of the world. It is that, since many discoveries and inventions have been made independently and simultaneously by scientists in different countries, there is no reason to think that all the inventions known to the American Indians before the arrival of Columbus were not independently invented in America. Ogburn, a leading proponent of this argument, gave a list of these alleged simultaneous inventions and discoveries. He says that the solution of the problem of respiration was discovered independently by five scientists in four European countries in 1777; that three scientists independently invented the centrifugal pump in 1850, and so on.\(^1\) Ogburn’s claims have recently been investigated by T. Chandler, who concludes that none of these inventions was really made twice simultaneously. He makes a possible exception for photography, but says that there is a good deal of doubt about that.\(^2\) If Chandler is right, Ogburn’s argument is a very poor one, but even if Chandler is wrong the argument is still not a good one. The scientists whom Ogburn cites had all been brought up in the same cultural tradition, had read all the same textbooks, and were familiar in practice with the steps taken by their predecessors in the investigations which they were pursuing. They probably did not take the same step forward simultaneously, but if they had done so it would not be astonishing.

The parallel which Ogburn and others seek to draw between this and inventions in the Old and New Worlds is quite illusory. What they ask us to believe is that the Americans, starting from the very beginning, and without any contact with the Old World, gradually developed a calendar, a system of picture

\(^1\) W. F. Ogburn, *Social Change*, 90 f.

\(^2\) AA, 1960, 495 f.
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writing very similar to those of China, and highly skilled methods of bronze-casting, pottery-making and weaving which, in the methods themselves, are indistinguishable from those of China, and in their products distinguishable from those of China only by experts. Harrison asked why there was so much in the higher American cultures that compelled comparison with Eastern Asia and not with Bronze Age Europe, and answered it by expressing his 'strong belief that the culture of the American Indian is a derived culture, in all essentials, and that an explanation is to be sought in frequent contact with Asia'. In my view no one who considers the subject dispassionately can fail to agree with him.

But strong as is the case for the single origin of inventions and discoveries, it is stronger still for the single origin of rites, customs and beliefs. Inventions and discoveries are based on the facts of nature, and these facts exist even if nobody knows of them. It was a fact that wine can be made of grapes and cheese of milk before anyone made wine or cheese, and it would still be a fact if these arts were lost. That the sky is supported by four pillars is not a fact which somebody might discover, but a product of somebody's imagination, based no doubt on some theory of cosmic symbolism. We find it among the Egyptians, Israelites, Polynesians and Pawnees, and it apparently succeeded an earlier theory that the sky rested on a circle of mountains. Some people explain similarities in belief by attributing them to the similar working of the human mind; does the human mind work naturally towards a belief that the sky is supported by four pillars, and if so why do not more people believe this?

The fact is that there is nothing natural in human culture in any of its manifestations. For some forms, language for example, this is universally recognized. Nobody supposes languages to be natural, and if languages have features in common they are recognized as being of common origin, not a result of the similar working of the human mind. The Malayo-Polynesian languages are spoken from Hawaii to Madagascar, a distance of 12,000 miles, but nobody complains when linguists postulate a common origin for them. Yet if a common origin is suggested for some

beliefs or artefacts found in Japan and British Columbia, a third of the distance apart, some people’s indignation knows no bounds. The Chinese have had ships capable of crossing the Pacific for many millennia: the Polynesians, in the days of their prime, found every island in the Pacific and certainly reached Peru, and the Peruvians, as we now know, may well have sailed west.

To return from the diffusion of culture in general to the subjects discussed in this book, I have said that in my view these formed part of a complex religious system which came into existence in the Ancient East. This system certainly did not persist for millennia unchanged, and of its earlier forms we have no certain knowledge. Professor Hooke has, however, told us what is known of it when it was first placed on record. Its chief feature was an annual festival, in which the most important incidents were representations of the death and resurrection of the god and of the creation; the ritual combat and victory of the god; the god’s sacred marriage, and his triumphal procession. All these rites are still found, in one form or another, but I have confined my study to the sacred marriage as the others have no special connection with the house. This and the other rites may well have been in existence for thousands of years before they assumed the form in which we find them at Babylon, and passed through many stages of development, for Babylon was at or near the centre of world civilization where, if anywhere, there was progress.

Some of the customs I have dealt with, particularly those concerned with birth and death, could not have formed part of the temple ritual, but they could have formed part of the religion, as they form part of religions today. The ritual no doubt included the foundation sacrifice, the construction of the cosmic building, the consecration of the threshold, the lighting of the sacred fire, and the performance of the sacred marriage with, or with many of, the rites which I listed in Chapter XI. Suttee also formed part of the ritual, though probably not till fairly late, as also the custom by which the dead king lies in state.

1 Myth and Ritual, 8.
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We have seen that some of the features of this ancient cult have been preserved in the religions of today, and it is perhaps not surprising that the most ancient of these, Hinduism, has preserved more of these features than any other. Other religions have the sacramental marriage, but it is only in Hinduism that the bridegroom says: 'I am the Sky, thou art the Earth; come let us marry.' Other religions have sacred fires, but it is in Hinduism that the hearth-fire is recognized as a manifestation of Agni, the Fire-god. The practice of suttee is hardly yet extinct, and human sacrifice at the foundations of important buildings has occurred in recent times. Moreover ritual purity, especially of the house, and freedom from the pollution of birth and death, are more strongly insisted upon in India than anywhere else. These features have probably descended in an unbroken tradition from very early times.

Some of these features are also found in non-literate societies, but though many writers have begged the question by describing these societies as 'primitive', thereby implying that all their customs are ancient, it is very rarely that we know anything of their history. In non-literate societies the past is very soon forgotten, and a custom found among them when they were first visited by Europeans may have been of quite recent introduction. For though, as I have said, savages never make any changes in their own cultures, they are often susceptible to outside influence.

And this brings me to my last question, how was this ancient cult propagated? Unlike later religions, it had no sacred books, no regular missionaries and no armies of fanatics at its disposal, but its votaries had a belief in the supreme efficacy of ritual as an adjunct to all human activities. All ritual is, of course, believed to be to some extent efficacious, or it would not be performed, but in the ancient religion it was believed to be even more important than the activity which it accompanied or preceded. It was not merely that nobody could hope to grow corn or smelt iron successfully, or to win a battle, without performing the proper ritual, but that the performance of the ritual pre-enacts the success of the activity. As Gronbech puts it: 'When the priest or chieftain ploughs the ritual furrow, when the first seed is sown while the
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story of the origin of corn is recited, when the warriors act the war game, they make history, do the real work, fight the real battle, and when the men sally forth with the plough or the seed or the weapons, they are only realizing what was created in the ritual act.  

Such beliefs are still widely held, but there is nothing natural or 'primitive' about them. Like the techniques themselves, they formed part of the civilization evolved by the creators of the Neolithic Revolution and their successors, and the techniques and rites were so closely linked that the peoples to which the techniques were diffused were unable to take them over without taking over the rites as well. Thus it is that we find the sacred marriage, and the other rituals which I have discussed in this book, most prominent among the peoples with the mostly highly developed techniques, especially that of agriculture. The Plains Indians may seem to be an exception, but in fact they were all corn-growers before they acquired horses from the Spaniards.

These observations may seem to have taken us far from the origin of the house, but this is not really so. The house, like corn-growing and iron-smelting, arose from a combination of ritual and technique, and its origin cannot be understood by studying one aspect apart from the other.

1 W. Gronbech, *The Culture of the Teutons*, ii, 223.
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