

## RELIGIOUS FACTORS IN THE GEOGRAPHY OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The general expansion of western Asian peasant cultures through the Mediterranean to Iberia, France, Switzerland and ultimately to the channel coast and across into Ireland and the British Isles is well documented by detailed studies.<sup>1</sup> The resultant local European cultures, collectively known as Western Neolithic, were the product of colonists who introduced the first domestic cattle into their areas of settlement. The period of the migrations to Europe can be bracketed roughly. Mesopotamian *tholoi* and other megalithic architecture were introduced into Cyprus in the fifth millennium together with snake symbolism. At the farthest reach of the migration lies Great Britain, and the neolithic colonists, known to the archaeologists as the Windmill Hill culture, arrived at the southern shores of Great Britain ca. 2300. Obviously the expansion into Europe was not a single movement, but proceeded by fits and starts with groups hiving off and even back tracking along the routes. Longifrons cattle

<sup>1</sup> An article by the same author, bearing the title "Myths, Cults and Livestock Breeding" was published in *Diogenes* no. 41 (Spring 1963).

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

were introduced into Europe with this migration. The important migration of the fifth millennium was followed in the third millennium by a second major expansion with West Asian colonists following the track of the first expansion, but this time taking two major additional routes, one into southeastern Europe via Asia Minor and the Aegean and the other into Europe via the Caucasus, the southern Russian grassland and forest steppes.<sup>2</sup> In the settlement sites of this second migration, whether in Crete or in the Caucasus on the shores of the Baltic, the evidence for the cultural complex we have described becomes overwhelming, and primigenius, the sacred breed, is found at all major sites.

In Minoan Crete the presence of West Asian culture and its myth of the dying god is indicated by the appearance of the entire complex of symbols on frescoes, freizes, seals, and signet rings. Mother goddess and serpent, sacred ship (a representation from Tiryns shows a boat almost the exact counterpart of the sun god's boat from Karnak), plant of life, lunar discs, the double axe (including its Egyptian stylization, the *ankh*), bull, ear of barley, hourglass shield—all are joined in Minoan religion. Especially strong on Crete is the influence of Asia Minor, ultimately also deriving from Mesopotamia. One indication of this influence is the representation on Crete of the burial of a god in a *pithos*, a large sized jar, and the use of the *pithos*, filled with honey, as a burial receptacle for children. Honey symbolism first became important in Asia Minor, although the *pithos* and honey burial were known from Babylonia and Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

Greek *meiosis* applied to the myth of the dying god can be seen in relation to honey symbolism. In classical times *pithos* came

<sup>2</sup> E. O. James, *Prehistoric Religion* (New York, 1957), 58-95; M. Gimbutas, *The Prehistory of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); R. Pittioni, *Urgeschichte des Oesterreichischen Raumes* (Vienna, 1954); O. Menghin, "Europa und einige angrenzenden Gebiete," etc., *Handbuch der Archæologie*, II (Munich, 1954); V. Milošević, *Chronologie der jüngeren Steinzeit Mittel- und Südosteuropas* (Berlin, 1949); V. G. Childe, "The Origin of Neolithic Culture in Northern Europe," *Antiquity*, 23 (1949), 129-135.

<sup>3</sup> R. J. Forbes, "Sugar and its Substitutes in Antiquity," *Studies in Ancient Technology*, 5 (Leiden, 1957), 80-87.

to mean "the kingdom of the dead," Greek legend thus preserving the Cretan rite. In the Glaucos myth, burial in honey is connected with major symbols of the West Asian cycles, the plant of life and the serpent. Glaucos, son of Minos and Pasiphae, fell into a *pitbos* with honey and drowned in it. The seer Polydos, locked up with the dead boy in a tomb by order of the king, the boy's father, with instructions to resurrect him, sees a snake brought back to life by his mate through the touch of a plant. Polydos takes the plant and resurrects the dead Glaucos. (A. W. Perssons, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times*, Berkeley, 1942, 9-23) The specific association of honey with death and life was transferred from western Asia to the Aegean world and Crete. According to Hittite cuneiform tablets, the great mother sent her bee to awaken the vegetation god Telepinus whose sleep (death) caused all procreation to cease. Honey was the substance that attracted the gods and constituted their food. The entire cult of Artemis of Ephesos, the multi-breasted one, also called Britomartis (the honey-maiden) rested upon the analogy between her sanctuary and a beehive. Her eunuch priests were called "drones", *essenes*, and her priestesses "bees," *melissai*. All were ruled by a king-bee or high priest Basileus, presumably a male ruler, since the goddess herself, represented with wings and body of a bee, was the queen bee. The priestesses of Cybele of Pessinus were also called *melissai* and the bee was sacred to Hannahannas, a Hittite mother goddess, as it was to the Greek Demeter, Demeter Meleina, whose priestesses, too were *melissai*. The myth of Glaucos is, of course, only one example, albeit a striking one, of Greek *meiosis* applied to the myth of the dying god. Glaucos falls into honey (dies), and beautiful Endymion goes to sleep (dies) on Latmos and is beloved by the moon, an obvious parallel to the sleeping Telepinus and the lunar mother. Tithonus, brother of Priam, beloved by the dawn (the mother goddess as morning star goes back at least to Ishtar), is made immortal, but is unable to escape old age (emasculatation in the older fierce Hittite, Hurrian and Sumero-Accadian myths). (R. D. Barnett, "Ancient Oriental Influences on Archaic Greece" in S. S. Winberg, *The Aegean and the Near East*, N. Y., 1956, 215-28)

The death of the deity was celebrated by the West Asian immigrants to Crete in the bull fights, of which an enormous number of representations have been found on frescoes and signet rings. The volume and character of the illustrations suggest that the games reached their highest development on Crete. The athletes, both men and women, were of great daring, bracing

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

themselves upon the charging bull's back or flanks and executing a full somersault as they leapt over him. Other variations included leaps to the bull's back and down to the arena floor. "No bull fighter today," asserts Axel Perssons "would dare execute such maneuvers." That it was perilous in Cretan times is indicated by representations of gored and dying bull fighters.<sup>4</sup> In Greece, too, games served a similar religious function. According to the *Oneirokritikon* of Artemidoros (I, 8) the adherents of the Eleusian mysteries celebrated ritual bull fights, as did the most prominent citizen of the Thessalian city Larissa. At the great spring festival of Artemisia Ephesia, the bull fight introduced the celebration (the season of these *Taurokathapsia*, as they were called, is significant—spring, the period of resurrection).

Archaeological evidence for the migration of Western Asian farming groups to eastern, southeastern and central Europe has been found in numerous local neolithic cultures of the early and middle Neolithic, and there is no doubt in the minds of leading prehistorians such as Sir John Evans, Déchelette, Åberg, Mahr, Bosch-Gimpera and Kühn and Atkinson that an actual colonizing movement was involved in the diffusion of West Asian cultic art. That the colonizing movement in eastern and western Europe was nearly simultaneous is indicated by archaeological finds of this cultic art dating to roughly the same period in many areas. The geographic connection and chronological relationship of the Danubian, First Northern, Vucedal, Mondsee, and Altheim cultures of central Europe, the Glina culture of Transylvania and the Rinaldone of central Italy is evident. In the case of Tripolye cultures of southern Russia, there is evidence of continuous contact with western Asia throughout the Neolithic. Towards the end of the Neolithic, Western Asian influence becomes even more marked and primigenius cattle begin to be found in all the areas previously settled by the early western Neolithic peoples who had introduced longifrons as the first domestic cattle breed. Primigenius becomes prominent in Spain, France and England, especially in

<sup>4</sup> A. W. Perssons, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times* (Berkeley, 1942), 95.

the Atlantic coast lands of these countries. The megalithic tombs and barrows which marked the route of the first neolithic migrants could have served as roadsigns to the later primigenius introducing cultures. The rock art of Spanish Galicia, unique in the context of Spanish rock art, appears in identical forms in the sepulture of Brittany, southern England and Ireland. The same cultic bronze axes with symmetrical, decorated drooping blade, or with the double edge, made in amber, clay, nephrite or jadeite and engraved with lunar discs, crescents, spirals etc., appear throughout eastern and northern Europe. That the axe in Europe as well as in Asia was a ritual item not a tool or weapon has been convincingly demonstrated by Marija Gimbutas<sup>5</sup>. The globular amphorae people of east central Europe equipped their dead with double edged axes of banded flint and with miniature axelets. In the time of Vytautas, pagan Lithuanians honored gigantic axes and minute axelets, and as late as the 19th century equipped the dead with an axe. An axe was put under the bed of a woman in labor, on the sill which the newly wed couple crossed, and on the barn lest the cows be barren and their milk dry up.

The smith probably derived his ritual importance from the axe symbol. The smith is prominent in ritual at least as far back as the Canaanite Koshar, a dying fertility god and god of iron workers, and continued to be of ritual importance in folk rites throughout Europe, e. g. the smith of Gretna Green in Scotland who sanctifies marriage with his axe.

Use of the symbols and retention of the beliefs associated with them persisted in Europe, despite conversion of the population to Christianity, until recent times. In 567 A.D. the Council of Tours prohibited priests on threat of excommunication from participating in rites at ancient tombs. Similar prohibitions were made by the Councils of Nantes in 658 A.D., Toledo 681 and 682 A.D., and by Charlemagne in 789 A.D. when he demanded the destruction of heathen objects. In addition to prohibiting the cult, the Church confronted it by converting places holy to the cult into Christian holy places. The barrow

<sup>5</sup> M. Gimbutas, "Battle Axe or Cult Axe?," *Man*, article No. 73, vol. 53 (April, 1953), 51-54.

of Saint-Germain-de-Confolens in Charente was converted into a chapel in the eleventh century. The tomb of Plouaret, in the Côtes-du-Nord, became the chapel of Sept-Saints. The dominant tomb hill near Carnac, Saint-Michel, is crowned today by the seventeenth century church which replaced an older one built by Irish monks. Excavations in the tomb mound have revealed the interment of a chief and his entire retinue, as well as 39 stone axes of which ten were made of jadeite. Beneath Notre Dame Cathedral lies a sanctuary of Cernunnos, a horned god.

Dances celebrating the death and resurrection of the slain deity continued in churches in Catholic Spain on saints' days. Efforts at suppression were in vain. The concilia of Valencia and Salamanca of 1565 forbade the dancing and any dramatic performances. The government had to reinforce the ban by ordering the clergy not to tolerate any dancing in churches, or in front of images taken out of churches (generally to cemeteries) for this purpose. Even today in the eastern provinces of Spain, when a child dies, the family and neighbors dance around the corpse.<sup>6</sup> Remains of the Pyrrhic dance, the Phaiakian dance, and the Dionysian dances survive in the Balkans, southern Russia and southern France. In Ireland, the hero and sun god Lug, spoken of by the Irish chroniclers, is supposed to have founded the Tailteann games in honor of Tailtiu, his foster mother (a lunar deity). The games and dances were conducted over a large mound he raised over her remains and were thus funeral games just as much as were in their origin the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian, Nemean and Panathenean games. The feast of Lug was also the day of lamentation for the dead.<sup>7</sup> The modern wake in Ireland and Scotland is a relic of the ancient rites. In Scotland King "Geigean" presided over the wake carrying sickle, sword and scythe—emblems of death and harvest.

The symbolism of serpent and milk was carried both to eastern and western Europe where it is prominent in Spain,

<sup>6</sup> L. Araquistain, "Some Survivals of Ancient Iberia in Modern Spain," *Man*, 45 (March-April, 1945), 36.

<sup>7</sup> L. Spence, *Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game and Rhyme* (London, 1957), 12-15.

France, Ireland, Scotland and Scandinavia. Here it must suffice to point to a few of the innumerable forms in which the symbolism survived until recent times. In Lithuania, according to a Jesuit missionary's report of 1604:

The people have reached such a stage of madness that they fully believe that deity exists in reptiles. Therefore they carefully safeguard them lest someone injure the reptiles kept inside their homes. Superstitiously they believe that harm would come to them, should anyone show disrespect to these reptiles. It sometimes happens that reptiles are encountered sucking milk from cows. Some of us (monks) have tried to pull one off, but invariably the farmer would plead in vain to dissuade... When pleading failed the man would seize the reptile with his hands and run away to hide it.<sup>8</sup>

The Lithuanian name for snake, *gyvate*, is suggestive in view of the snake's meaning in West Asia—it is derived from the word meaning life or vitality (*gyvybe*, *gyvata*). At certain burial mounds near Pier o' Wall in Orkney, known as "Wilkie's Knolls," up to around a hundred years ago people offered libations of milk daily. Wilkie resembled the *gruagachs* or spirits of the west coast of Scotland who were guardians of cattle and were placated by milk offerings.<sup>9</sup> Burials of serpents under doorposts and under new foundations were extremely common throughout Scandinavia where the western and eastern primitive cultures met. Snakes, alive or dead, were buried in holes drilled into the door sill, and in the gate sill of cowsheds live snakes were enclosed and kept in such a way that they would not suffocate or die of hunger. Even after the snake's death a little of the freshly taken milk was poured on the sill, the reason given being that the cows were thus protected from disease and harm.<sup>10</sup>

The sacred ship also became a part of European sacred symbolism as a result of West Asian migrations, and survives

<sup>8</sup> M. Gimbutas, *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art*, Memoirs of the American Folklore Society, vol. 49 (Philadelphia, 1958), 33.

<sup>9</sup> Spence, *op. cit.*, 20.

<sup>10</sup> G. Ränk, "Die Schlange als Schwellenschutz in der schwedischen Volksüberlieferung," *Ethnos*, 21:1/2 (1956), 57-72.

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

to the present in folk tradition. In the rock art of Scandinavia thousands of ships are depicted. It has been argued that this is natural in a sea-faring folk, but the fact that the ships are shown in association with lunar or solar discs, axes, and trees indicates that the ships were ritual representations. The sacred ship, to choose only a few examples, has been found in Backa, Bottna, Disaosen, Brastad, Tose, Löckeberg, Vanum, Valla, Sotorp, Hvitlycke, Görlöv, and Bro, all in the Bohuslän region of Sweden, as well as in Himmelstadelund near Norrköping. Near the church of Boglösa in Uppland, Sweden, gods are depicted carrying ships in their hands. The voyage of the deity through the water of death and rebirth was symbolized by submerging statues in the water and recovering them. The parallel is close to Theocritus' description in his *Idyll* (15) of the submergence of the Adonis statue. Astarte was annually submerged, and the sea voyage of Dionysus is well known. In fact, as H. Kühn has pointed out, carnival is derived from *carrus navalis*, procession of the ship.

In Christian Europe the carnival is, of course, directly derived from the sacred voyage. One of the oldest reports quoted by Kühn is a Belgian monastic chronicle, *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium*, where it is reported for the year 1133 that a ship was built, put upon wheels, and pulled by celebrants with ropes to Maastricht, Tonger, Looz and other places which opened their gates to it with great festivities. The arrival and sojourn of the ship was celebrated with licentious abandon. The wrath of the clergy finally prevailed upon the duke of Löwen to prohibit such celebrations forcibly. Kühn cites a document still extant from Ulm, Germany, of 1531 which explicitly prohibits processions of ship and plow around fields to make them fertile. The floats of European spring carnivals still reflect the tradition.<sup>11</sup>

In Europe too, the bull character of the central figure of the myth was celebrated. The bull nature of the deity was indicated by representing him in a bull mask, although there were sometimes substitutions for bull masks and instead ram or stag horns were worn. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (668-90) fulminated against those who went about as a stag or a bull

<sup>11</sup> H. Kühn, *Die Felsbilder Europas* (Stuttgart, 1952), 176.



"dressing in the skin of a herd animal, and putting on the heads of beasts..."<sup>12</sup> The East Saxon king Redwald, according to Bede, had "in the same temple an altar to sacrifice to Christ and another smaller one to offer victims to the devils." The Norman Bishop of Coventry was accused by the pope of doing homage to the devil in the form of a ram. In many trials bull masks figure as a ritual disguise. At Anvers (1593) the "Black Man" was reported to have transformed himself into a bull. In English Cernunnos, as the horned god was known to the Romans, became Hernie or old Hornie, while in northern Europe ancient Nick or Neck (spirit) was canonized as Saint Nicholas, who in Cornwall still retains his horns.<sup>13</sup> The submergence (death) of the god in the waters of chaos was celebrated not only by submerging ship representations but by sacrificing cattle in rivers and ponds or else sinking cattle statuettes in the waters.<sup>14</sup> Classical literature as well as folklore preserves the tradition, e.g. Martial's *Cornibus aureis* (x. 7.6), Suetonius's story of Epidius of Nuceria (*De Gram.* 28), the Irish Ox of the Flood.

The bull fight as theobiography was also carried to Atlantic Europe with the cult and in England took the form of bull-baiting. The ancient ritual degenerated in England into the worrying of captive bulls by bull-dogs. The ceremonial aspect of the bull games, however, survived in some measure. At Eccles in Lancashire bull-baiting was preceded by games calling to mind the funeral games of Greece. In almost all parts of Celtic Britain, in Wales, in the Highlands of Scotland or in Cornwall, bulls until recently were sacrificed by farmers to avert disease among cattle. In Carnarvonshire, bullocks were offered to St. Beyno as late as 1589 and Reginald of Durham reported that at Kirkcudbright in 1164 St. Aelred interfered with the sacrifice of a bull, which was first baited. Numerous bulls were sacrificed to "St. Mourie," actually a pagan deity, at Gairloch during the seventeenth century, a practice ended only with great difficulty

<sup>12</sup> B. Thorpe, *Monumenta Ecclesiastica*, II (London, 1840), 32-34.

<sup>13</sup> M. Murray, *The God of Witches* (London, 1934), 31-43.

<sup>14</sup> Eiichiro Ishida, *The Kappa Legend*, Mus. Orient. Ethnol., Folklore Studies No. 9 (Peking Catholic University, 1950).

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

by the Scottish Presbyterian church. The last bull to be sacrificed in Scotland was buried alive in 1870.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the death of the god continued to be enacted sometimes in actual human sacrifice, particularly the sacrifice of children. Just as in the Bacchanalia, cannibalism was ritually practiced, and the existence of the rite in Scotland was brought out by a trial in 1658. The most important sacrifice of the cult, as Margaret Murray has demonstrated, was the sacrifice of the god himself, which took place at one of the great quarterly Sabbaths every seven or nine years. In France a goat was burnt to death at the "witches" Sabbath and its ashes strewn over fields and animals. Often the sacrificial creature was considered as a mock king.<sup>16</sup> Lord Raglan, Margaret Murray, Lewis Spence and others have pointed out that the folklore hero Robin Hood represented a sacrificed god, and that the day of his immolation and resurrection survived in folk belief as Robin Hood's Day.<sup>17</sup> The ill-fated Bishop Latimer complained that a village church which he visited was empty on Robin Hood's Day, the whole congregation having attended the pagan celebration.

We have said that longifrons was the first domestic cattle type introduced into Europe from the ancient West Asian centers of domestication. The appearance of these cattle in the sites where the symbols we have discussed first appear—including North Africa, Crete, southeastern, Alpine and central Europe, and as far north as Scotland<sup>18</sup>—means that the immigrants took their cattle with them to the furthest limits that they reached. With the spread of longifrons a number of dwarf varieties appeared, probably the result of inexperienced handling and inadequate feeding in the new environment. Such small cattle (*Bos taurus brachyceros*) are identified in the Swiss Neolithic, in the Balkans and in the Caucasus in the second millennium.

Primigenius cattle appeared in Europe in part due to

<sup>15</sup> Spence, *op. cit.*, 46-47.

<sup>16</sup> Murray, *op. cit.*, 122-125.

<sup>17</sup> Lord Raglan, *The Hero* (New York, Vintage Books, 1956), 43-53; M. Murray, *The Divine King in England* (London, 1954); L. Spence, *op. cit.*, 29-33.

<sup>18</sup> J. Ritchie, *Influence of Man on Animal Life in Scotland* (Camb., 1920), 54.

subsequent migrations introduced by West Asian migrants bringing with them their sacred cattle as was undoubtedly the case in Crete and Iberia. Jersey cattle seem almost certainly the descendants of the original Asian primigenius. In part primigenius types evolved from crosses between longifrons or types derived from it and local wild urus, crosses which became possible as the population became more skilled in the handling of domestic cattle under the new conditions.<sup>19</sup> Stratigraphic sequences in European Russia (Tripolye) and Siberia (Afanasyevo) etc. as well as elsewhere in Europe show such a transition from longifrons to longifrons x urus. Descendants of such crosses can be identified among present day European cattle and survive as economically important breeds in the north European plain. The Dutch Friesian, the MRY (Meuse-Rhine-Yssel) breeds, and the German black pied and red pied lowland cattle are examples of European primigenius cattle, as are probably also the feral park cattle of Chillingham, England.

Crosses were made, of course, not merely with the urus, but between all domestic types. One resultant group retained the primigenius body conformation except for its foreshortened skull—*Bos brachycephalus*. Among the modern descendants of this animal are the French Tarentaise, the Swiss Herens and the Austrian Tux-Zillertal. An especially massive primigenius type, *Bos frontosus*, appeared first at the end of the European Neolithic, and includes among his present day representatives the Blond Pyrenean, the German Yellow Hill, Swiss Fribourg and Simmentaler, and Austrian Pinzgau cattle. Centuries of agricultural progress in Europe have made it of course very difficult to establish the ultimate derivation of many present day European cattle types. Economic targets became early supreme and have successfully obscured ancestral characteristics. In Africa, where economic considerations in breeding cattle have not been dominant, the original characteristics of the animal have been preserved by the breeders, for the religious values early attached to certain characteristics have not yet been lost.

The evidence in Africa for the myth of the dying god

<sup>19</sup> C. R. Boettger, *Die Haustiere Afrikas*, 51-54.

is for the most part that of continued practice of the rites and continued presence of the symbols in the areas which were occupied by West Asian primigenius and longifrons cattle keepers. It is not our intention here to expatiate on the massive evidence accumulated by physical anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and plant science dealing with the occupation of large parts of Africa by West Asian peoples, but merely to point to the presence of the myth of the dying god and the symbols and cattle that accompanied it.

The funeral custom of child burial in clay pots may appear at first glance too widespread in Africa to provide more than a feeble diagnostic criterion to connect the many cultures that practice it with the West Asian home of the ritual myth of the slain deity. Recent ethnological study, however, has shown the overwhelming association of infant pot-burial with the symbolism that permeates the myth in Asia and Europe. We may indeed refer to a ritual complex to which the Glaucos myth would be not only an appropriate but a definitive commentary. The Amatshabi of Southern Rhodesia buried not only children, but also the honey badger (*Mellivora ratel*) in pots. This tribe, which occupied sites in the municipal area of Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, left many clay figurines of cattle on their former occupation sites, and their descendants, who live near Gwanda in Southern Rhodesia, still bury the honey badger at the entrance of their kraals.<sup>20</sup> The Amatshabi were one of many southern African Sanga-cattle herding groups who preserved the ritual of the myth which occurs in more pronounced form in northeastern Africa among related peoples.

In Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika cattle and snake are associated ritually. Among the Nandi who live northeast of the Kavirondo Gulf of Lake Victoria deities are offered milk when they enter the huts at night in the form of snakes.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly in terms of Semitic food prohibitions, milk and

<sup>20</sup> C. K. Cooke, *The Waterworks Site at Khami, Southern Rhodesia, Stone Age and Proto-History*, National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, vol. 3, N. 21 A (Cambridge, 1957), 40.

<sup>21</sup> G. W. Huntingford, *The Southern Nilo-Hamites*, Ethnographical Survey of Africa, part 8 (Internat. African Inst., London, 1953), 38.

meat may not be consumed by the Nandi on the same day.<sup>22</sup> Among the Kipsikis, who occupy territories about 25 miles west of Lake Victoria, the same ritual prescriptions are followed. To the Dorobo of the Kenya highlands honey is as sacred as milk to the Nandi, and honey and blood may not be consumed on the same day. Among the Keyo, who live about 60 miles southeast of Mt. Elgon, Kenya, snakes are fed with a honey and water mixture. Among the Suk and Pakot of Kenya, too, a snake entering a hut may not be killed, but must be offered milk.<sup>23</sup> The same association of serpent and cattle can be traced throughout eastern, central and southern Africa.

Studies by Seligman, Schilde, Irstam, Patai, Frankfort, Meyerowitz and others have abundantly documented that the institution of sacral kingship (sacrifice of the king recreating the fate of the God) is an inherent part of the culture of cattle keeping peoples, and the African record bears out the thesis.<sup>24</sup> In the Sudan in 1922 Biyordit, the rainmaker "king" of the Bor Dinka was killed and buried in the cattle byre. The Malwal rainmaker consumes millet and milk, whereupon his elbows and knees are broken, and he is strangled by the succeeding son. According to Seligman the evidence is clear that among the Western Dinka the rainmaker to be took a prominent part in his predecessor's death.<sup>25</sup> On the east bank of the Sudanese White Nile the Nuer have a *kwor muon* or land chief, who breaks the first sod, prepares the first seed bed, and makes rain, from which Seligman infers that there is a spiritual unity of rainmaker, rain, and crops.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-80.

<sup>24</sup> C. G. Seligman, *Egypt and Negro Africa* (London, 1934); W. Schilde, "Die Afrikanischen Hoheitszeichen," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 61 (1929); T. Irstam, *The King of Ganda, Studies in the Institution of Sacral Kingship in Africa*, Ethnog. Mus. N. S. 8 (Stockholm, 1944); R. Patai, "Hebrew Installation Rites," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 20 (Cincinnati, 1947); H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago, 1948); E. L. R. Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana* (London, 1958).

<sup>25</sup> Seligman, *op. cit.*, (see note 24), 21-22.

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

Among the Bari just north of the Uganda-Sudan border, the rainmaker is killed; the Shilluk of Nubir ceremonially despatch their kings; and divine kingship was an institution among the Bakitara, Banyakole and Bawanga in the western Great Lakes area. In Abyssinia the custom of ceremonial killing of the kings continued to the third century<sup>26</sup> and as far south as Nyasaland the Konde ruler is slain ceremonially. Among the southern Bantu also traces of divine kingship are apparent. Thus the Rhodesian and South African Rozwe killed their kings and the divine queen who ruled the Lovedu was obliged to drink poison after every fourth initiation school.<sup>27</sup>

The close parallel between African kingship and West Asian sacred kingship in some specific points is worth pointing up. In Egypt, on the occasion of the Sed festival the king shot arrows in the four cardinal directions. In a scene from Karnak, the Pharaoh (Thotmes III) holds the bow and arrow while a god places his own hands upon the arms of the king.<sup>28</sup> In the Bible there is a ritual performance by a king so similar to the one depicted in the Egyptian representation that it might almost stand as a description of it—proving, of course, that the Egyptian rite was one characteristic of a large area. Elisha ordered King Joash to put his hands upon the bow, and then put his own hands over the king's hand "And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said shoot. And he shot..." (II *Kings* 13:16-17). In Africa we find the ceremony performed at the coronation rites of the king of Kitara (Unyoro), a man providing the sinews for the strings of the bow (which is restrung at every succession), and it is called "shooting the nations." (An Asian example of the tradition is cited by Patai: the Indian king of Kurus stands in the presence of the demon Citrarja and shoots arrows to the four quarters of the world.)

The aspects of sacred kingship we have touched upon do not exhaust the specifics of ritual and religious ideas which

<sup>26</sup> P. Hadfield, *Traits of Divine Kingship in Africa* (London, 1949), 44.

<sup>27</sup> Seligman, *op. cit.*, 28-31.

<sup>28</sup> Patai, *op. cit.*, (see note 24), p. 188.

were introduced via Egypt into Africa by longhorn-primigenius herding cultures from western Asia. We have mentioned before that the throne was equated in western Asia with the primeval hill or cosmic mountain, the place of the god's birth, death and rebirth. H. Frankfort, like others before him, has shown how the sacred throne of the Shilluk is another expression of the same idea.

Among the Shilluk of the upper Nile, who retain many traits recalling Egyptian usages and beliefs, the king becomes charged with the supernatural power of royalty by being enthroned on the sacred stool which normally supports the fetish Nyakang, who, like Osiris is both a god and the ancestor of the new monarch. In Egypt, too, the central ceremony of the accession took place when the ruler was enthroned and received the diadems and scepters. Thus the Egyptian might well refer to the throne, which had received a prince who arose king, as the ruler's "mother." In the same way a pyramid text states that the dead king goes to heaven to sit upon the "great throne which made the gods."<sup>29</sup>

The ceremonial stools carried by the means of many east and central African tribes are further road markers of the dispersal of the sacred throne. Thus the stools carved and carried by the Karamajon, Jie, and Dodo of Uganda,<sup>30</sup> by the Nandi and Suk of Kenya, and the Masai of Kenya and Tanganyika are but ceremonial survivals of the throne-primeval hill. Eva L. R. Meyerowitz has shown, moreover, the remarkable ritual emphasis given to ancestral stools by the Akan of Ghana, and the derivation and remarkable survival of Egyptian-West Asian sacred kingship in West Africa. Among the Umundri, an Ibo group whose sacred city Aguku is some thirty miles east of Onitsha on the Niger, the throne dais is a mound on which the skull of the deceased ruler is buried, while the entire mound is covered with cattle skins. The myth of origin held by the Umundri asserts that food originated from the sacrifice of children from whose bodies sprang yams

<sup>29</sup> Frankfort, *op. cit.*, (see note 24), pp. 43-44.

<sup>30</sup> P. Gulliver and P. H. Gulliver, *The Central Nilo-Hamites*, Ethnog. Survey of Africa (International African Institute, London, 1953), 36.

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

and koko yams.<sup>31</sup> The West Asian myth of agriculture is here presented in its most obvious form. It is interesting to note that the Umundri visualize the emergence of the earth as a primeval ant hill coming from a morass which was dried by four heavenly blacksmiths.<sup>32</sup>

The ceremonial position of the smith in much of north, east, central and southern Africa, as one who combines the skills of metal working with the crafts of healing and the art of music, recalls the slain and resurrected Canaanite Koshar, smith and god of music and art. The Haddada or smith caste of the Gorane, who live south of the Tibesti mountains, is regarded with a mixture of esteem and revulsion. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika as well as in southern Africa, we find that the smith serves a special ceremonial function and in addition to making the instruments of death and agriculture serves as *nganga* or healer. On the upper Niger, the Bambara have the smith lift their new ruler upon bull hides.

The association of bull and god king is as obvious in Africa as it was in ancient western Asia and certainly more pronounced than it was in Europe. A widespread African practice was to bury the king in a bull mask while his entire body was pressed into a bull carcass. His burial place was then the cattle kraal. The priest king of the Hausa of Gobir puts on the still dripping hide of the sacrificial bull at a periodic ceremony.<sup>33</sup> The chieftain of the Bodi of Southern Ethiopia appeared at the planting festival in a black cattle skin and subsequently was washed in the blood of the slaughtered ox. Parts of the animal's body were then buried in the chief's field.<sup>34</sup> The symbolism here is transparent: the initial sacrifice of the deity, the symbolic resurrection of the ruler, the burial of the body to produce new life. The cycle was acted out in very similar fashion in Gobir, Katsina and Daura in the far

<sup>31</sup> M. D. W. Jeffreys, "Negro Agricultural Origins," *South African Journal of Science*, 47:5 (December, 1950), 130.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>33</sup> H. Straube, *Die Tierverkleidungen der Afrikanischen Naturvölker* (Wiesbaden, 1955), 100.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.



north of Nigeria. After the ritual murder of his predecessor, the new king had to go to the center of his town and prostrate himself on a bed. A bull was slaughtered above him and the blood bathed the new king. The body of the former king was then stuffed into the skin of the bull and buried.<sup>35</sup> In Benin, northwest of the Niger delta, the new ruler could enter his residence only after being painted with the blood of sacrificial cattle. Dead kings, moreover, were sewn into cattle hides by the Uha of Tanganyika, Herero of southwest Africa, Uganda and Unyoro of Uganda, and by the Bodi, Male and Konso of southern Ethiopia. The Nkole of Ruanda and Uganda first wash the dead chief in milk; this recalls the Orphic formula for the ritual sacrifice "I have fallen into milk." The Unyoro of Uganda and the Bodi and Male of southern Abyssinia also wrap their dead kings in hides. The Babudja of Southern Rhodesia forced their dead kings into a bull carcass which was then sewn up and supported by sticks to make it appear like a live animal.

The divine nature of the living king was indicated by his ceremonial bull dress. The cattle skin is the royal garb of the Uganda and Nkole. A new Shilluk chief was wrapped in a bull hide during the installation ceremonies. The ancient rulers of Limmu in the Ethiopian highlands, and Sennar and Meroe south of Khartoum carried horn ornaments as head-dress as did the "emperor" of medieval Monomotapa in Southern Rhodesia, and as chieftains still do in Angola and central Africa, e.g. among the Luanda, Katanga, Ngalla, Tonga, Mfumu, Teke, Yanzi, Kwese and Roswi. Titles given to rulers express the divine bull nature of the chief. Thus a Bena chief of southwestern Tanganyika is addressed as "Sanga," the sultan of Merera, Tanganyika used to be saluted with "Peace be with you, bovine," and the Xosa of Cape Province, South Africa use "ox," "cow," and "bull" as honorific titles.<sup>36</sup> It should be remembered here that a favorite title of the Pharaohs was "mighty bull."

The Asian and derived European practice of sacrificing

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-107.

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

cattle in rivers, which we have explained as a reenactment of the death of the deity in the waters of death, has its complement in Africa among the Fulani, Nandi and Shilluk, who believe that cattle originated in a river or a lake.<sup>37</sup>

The axe as sacred symbol is retained almost universally among African cattle keeping cultures. Moreover, the cultic character of the axe is in no way more obvious than in the absence of its use as a weapon combined with its great frequency in ceremonial use. A symbol of Shango, the thunder god of the Yoruba, is the stone axe, and neolithic celts are regarded as thunderbolts about Benin. The Ashanti call celts which they unearth *Nyame akuma*, i.e. the sky-god's axes.<sup>38</sup> The *ngangas* or "healers" of central Africa usually carry more or less elaborate ceremonial axes.

Perhaps nowhere in Africa is the association of deity and cattle clearer than it is on Madagascar. Cattle, which in Madagascar are mainly Sanga, are held sacred. In the Malgasy language cattle are called "little gods." Cattle kraals have sanctity and are the scene of prayers and of the sacrifice of both man and animal. The serpent also appears in Madagascar with similar symbolic significance to that he possessed elsewhere. The Sakalava of northwestern Madagascar believe that ancestors survive as snakes and to appease them offer up cattle blood.<sup>39</sup> The Betsileo believe that their dead kings become serpents and when serpents are seen in the vicinity of the tomb they slaughter cattle and pour the warm blood over the snakes.<sup>40</sup> Cattle skins are esteemed for magical powers inherent in

<sup>37</sup> M. D. W. Jeffreys, "Mythical Origin of Cattle in Africa," *Man*, 40: 112/122 (Nov.-Dec. 1946), 140-141.

<sup>38</sup> M. D. W. Jeffreys, "Some Notes on the Neolithic of West Africa," in J. D. Clark, edit. *Third Pan-African Congress on Prehistory* (London, 1957), 256. (Sumero-Accadian mythology is replete with references to thunder or lightning stones—the concept survives in *Ezekiel* 28:14; 28:16).

<sup>39</sup> M. A. Grandidier, "Les Vazimba de Madagascar," *Revue de Madagascar* (1905), 101.

<sup>40</sup> L. Mattei, "La vieille légende du serpent," quoted by A. Leib, "Das Rind in der magischen Vorstellungswelt der Eingeborenen Madagascars," *Archiv für Völkerkunde*, vol. 6/7 (1951-1952), 51.

them and are generally used as shrouds for the dead. Horn and cattle symbolism and appellations figure significantly in royal ceremonial. Elaborate ritual bull-fighting was and is still practiced on Madagascar and often the animal's horns were tipped with iron to make them more dangerous.<sup>41</sup>

The spread of domestic cattle into Africa has involved repeated introductions of animals from Asia. Primigenius cattle were probably first introduced into Egypt before the fifth millennium.<sup>42</sup> Shortly thereafter longifrons appeared in North Africa and crosses occurred between the two types and the local wild urus. Brachyceros cattle too appear early in North Africa, although whether they emerged as the result of mismanagement of herds or constituted an actual Asian introduction remains doubtful. Longhorned primigenius cattle moved through Africa from their entrance at the relatively constricted Egyptian gateway but descendants of the "Egyptian" longhorn survive today only in West Africa where the *N'Dama* of Sierra Leone,ambia, Senegal and the Ivory Coast, and the Kuri cattle of the Lake Chad area have retained in relatively pure form the major characteristics of their primigenius ancestors. Earlier the longhorn was not confined to these areas but was also common in the Sahara and Ethiopia as well as in Egypt. Worth noting is that in ancient Egypt of the proto-dynastic and old kingdom period, we first find evidence of the breeding of cattle to obtain certain characteristics which

<sup>41</sup> Leib, (see note 40), p. 86.

<sup>42</sup> H. H. Curson and R. W. Thornton, "The Study of African Native Cattle," *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Science*, 7 (1936), 618-739; E. A. Nobbs, "The Native Cattle of Southern Rhodesia," *South African Journal of Science*, 24 (Dec. 1927), 328-342; J. H. R. Bisschop, "Parent Stock and Derived Types of African Cattle with Particular Reference to the Importance of Conformational Characteristics in the Study of their Origin," *S. Af. Jl. Sc.*, 33 (March, 1937), 852-870; H. H. Curson and H. Epstein, "A Comparison of Hamitic Longhorn, West African Shorthorn and Africander Cattle," etc., *Onderstepoort Jl. of Vet. Sci.*, 3:2 (1934); H. Epstein, "Descent and Origin of Africander Cattle," *Jl. of Heredity*, 24:12 (December, 1933), 449-462; I. L. Mason, *The Classification of West African Cattle*, Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux (Farnham Royal, 1951); N. R. Joshi, E. A. McLaughlin, R. W. Phillips, *Types and Breeds of African Cattle* (F.A.O., Rome, 1957); D. E. Faulkner and H. Epstein, *The Indigenous Cattle of the British Dependent Territories in Africa* (H.M.S.O., London, 1957).

## *The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

are still held in highest esteem by contemporary Sanga cattle breeders, e.g. lyre or sickle shaped horns, pied coats and color markings.<sup>43</sup>

The longhorn of Africa was substantially the same animal as the primigenius of Europe. As H. Epstein has written.

Throughout this area (West Asia, Europe and North Africa) we find a striking resemblance in the longhorn cattle represented in numerous wall engravings and in statuettes of stone, bronze, silver and gold. There is but little difference in conformation between the recent highland cattle of Scotland and the sculptures of longhorn cattle of Spain and the breed type of the ancient inhabitants of the Nile valley, or between the cattle of the Mandingoes of West Africa and the clay, bronze and silver statuettes of longhorn cattle from Mycenae...<sup>44</sup>

From the middle of the third millennium shorthorned cattle, longifrons and brachyceros, entered Egypt from western Asia. Every successful Egyptian military expedition brought back these cattle which by the middle of the second millennium had completely superceded the longhorn. Today all North African cattle are essentially descendants of the shorthorns. Although the shorthorns were formerly also widespread in East Africa, they have been steadily pushed out by Zebu cattle, only an isolated group remaining in the Niba hills of the Sudan. West African shorthorn types are also derived from this ancient strain.

The distribution of milking customs further reflects the derivation of African and central Asian herding complexes from an original West Asian farming complex. Inflation of the anal passage to induce milk flow, long believed to be a peculiarly "east Hamitic" milk custom, is now known to have been practiced in Mesopotamia (at Al Ubaid at least as far back as 3000 B.C.), as well as in ancient Egypt and

<sup>43</sup> A. Lucas, "Some Egyptian Connections with Sudan Agriculture," in J. D. Tothill, edit., *Agriculture in the Sudan* (London, 1948), 19-22; Seligman (see note 24).

<sup>44</sup> H. Epstein, "Die Unbrauchbarkeit einiger anatomischen Merkmale für die Rassengeschichte europäischer Langhornrinder," *Zeitschrift für Tierzüchtung und Züchtungsbiologie*, 71:1 (1958), 68.

among the Scythians and other peoples of the Eurasian steppe belt.<sup>45</sup> Similarly the awkward and dangerous technique of milking the cow from behind and the ingenious technique of presenting the cow with a stuffed calf hide to encourage her to release milk are also not peculiarly African customs but were known earlier in West Asia and are indeed still practiced there.

It seems clear that the distribution of European and African cattle today can not be explained merely in terms of environmental or economic forces, but that cattle distribution is in large part the outcome of an irrational attachment of cultures of West Asian origin to cattle. The West Asian cultures in their migration brought with them their sacred animals and while the economic use of cattle and their adaptation to given environments were later to prove decisive in the development of specific breeds and farming or husbandry complexes, the influence of the original sacred breeds on the present character of cattle has still not been obliterated. Throughout Europe and Africa religious ceremonies remain, pointing up the ancient cult of cattle as animals sacred in the myth of the immolated deity. While in Europe evidence obviously is historical, including considerable evidence of Christian struggles with the pagan cult, or lies in surviving folk "superstition," in Africa rites continue today with much the same significance they originally had. Indeed in areas of Africa as inimical to cattle as the Glossina belts of the Congo and Central Africa, special herds are with great difficulty maintained because of their ritual significance.

The ritual position of cattle in India is of course well-known, and while the province of this paper is confined to Europe and Africa, it should be noted that the ritual importance of cattle in India seems to derive from a west Asian migration in the second millennium B.C. Where the actual development of the zebu took place is still a matter of controversy and various areas of central or west central Asia have been designated. The ritual and mythological position cattle occupied

<sup>45</sup> H. Plischke, "Das Kuhblasen. Eine völkerkundliche Miscelle zu Herodot," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 79 (1954), 1-7; S. Lagercrantz, *Contribution to the Ethnography of Africa*, *Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia* I (Uppsala, 1950).

*The Geography of Animal Husbandry*

with the Vedic Indians is the same that it occupied in the other areas we have discussed. It is likely that the development of domestic cattle types in different parts of eastern and southern Asia was influenced by divergent ritual attitudes. Thus the development of cattle in India and China could probably be shown to be the result in each case of different religious conceptions of the role of cattle.