

## India and Malay Beliefs.

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By the kindness of Dr. O. Schrieke, Assistant Adviser for Native Affairs to the Government of the Dutch Indies, I have had my attention drawn to an article by M. Winternitz—"Bemerkungen zur malaischen Volksreligion"—being a review of Mr. Skeat's "Malay Beliefs," in *Wiener Zeitschrift fuer die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, XIV Band, pages 243-264: Wien 1900. I am further indebted to the Batavian Society for a loan of the journal, since no library in the Peninsula possesses it. I propose here to summarize the conclusions of the reviewer, author also of "Altindisches Hochzeitsrituell" (*Denkschriften der kais. Akademie d. Wiss.*, Wien 1892, page 68) as contributing further evidence on a subject I handled in a paper on "Hindu Survivals in Malay Custom" (*Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums*, Volume IX, part I). And I add some additional matter.

In a Javanese version of "the churning of the ocean" Wiseso (= Visvesa) or Brahman is still the highest of the Gods and supplies Batara Guru or Siva with the water of life wherewith to sprinkle the Gods and restore them to life (E. Metzger, *Globus* Bd. 44 (1883), p. 171 ff.). But in another Javanese legend Brahman and Visnu are sons of Batara Guru (*ib.* page 184). And in the *Ht. Sang Samba*, the Malay version of the Bhaumakavya, Batara Guru is the supreme God and as such is accepted by Malay magicians (Skeat pages 86-87). Now, Skeat says, "I was repeatedly told that the Spectre Huntsman was a God, Batara Guru." In Malay legend the Spectre Huntsman is not only a God, Batara Guru, but known by other appellations of that God, such as "King of the Land-folk" (*ib.*, page 120) (= To' Panjang Kuku, page 90), and identified at times with the Raja Hantu (page 418) who is sometimes said to be Batara Guru. Skeat compared the Malay legend with the English legend of the wild huntsman and his dogs or Gabriel's hounds (page 113): Sir William Maxwell opined it was of Aryan origin. In European folklore the wild huntsman is identified with historical or half-historical personages and a connection between him and the old German God Wodan can be traced (Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* 4. Anfl., page 766 foll.) Now Batara Guru or Siva is Rudra of Vedic times, Rudra "the roarer, the terrible," the God of storms (Dowson's "Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology"). And it has been pointed out that in Rudra we find the same characteristics which are found in the German Wodan or Odin (and in the classical myths of Dionysus and Mars) namely those of a storm-god followed by hosts of spirits, a leader of lost souls, identified both in Malay and German legend



with the Spectre Huntsman. Accordingly it has been surmised that we must premise an Indo-Germanic storm-god, the common source of the Indian and German myths (L v. Schroeder: *Wiener Zeitschrift fuer die Kunde des Morgenlandes* Bd. IX, 1895, pages 235-252). The identification by the Malays of the Spectre Huntsman with Siva clearly corroborates the relationship between Siva or Rudra and Odin.

Again just as in German folklore there are various versions of the tale of the wild huntsman, so Malay legend sometimes identified him with Rama and even made him a descendant of the Prophet Joseph (Skeat, page 119).

Further evidence that Malay magic came from India is the practice of Malay magicians declaring they know the source of the spirit they would exorcize or repel (ib. page 117): parallels for this occur in the Atharvaveda *e.g.* I, 3; VII, 76, 5. Compare also the use of *hong* = *om* in Malay charms. "The syllable *om* is the door of heaven. Therefore he who is about to study the Veda shall begin his lesson by pronouncing it. If he has spoken anything else than what refers to the lesson, he shall resume his reading by repeating the word *om*: thus the Veda is separated from profane speech. And at sacrifices the orders given to the priests are headed by this word. And in common life at the occasion of ceremonies performed for the sake of welfare the sentence shall be headed by this word" (Apastamba p. 49, "Sacred Books of the East vol. II). In this context I would quote two sentences from Havell's "Aryan Rule in India" (pages 46 and 118) on the *mantra*, the Vedic forerunner of the Malay magician's charm:—"A *mantra* could bring victory or defeat in wars, assure the prosperity of a State or the destruction of its enemies; it could be used to win votes in a popular assembly or to silence the arguments of an opponent and either by itself or in conjunction with medicinal prescriptions it could stop a cough or promote the growth of hair. It lost its efficacy if a single syllable were incorrect in expression or intonation." Moreover it had to be kept secret. In every respect the Malay charm corresponds with it. (Cf. J. R. A. S., S. B. 81, p. 8).

The idea that eclipses of sun or moon are due to the attempt of a dragon to swallow those bodies is not now associated by Malays with Indian legend. But there is a Javanese legend (Metzger, *op. cit.* page 186) practically identical with the Indian legend of Rahu quoted by Skeat (page 11).

Belief in were-tigers or were-wolves is worldwide. It was current in India in Vedic times: in the Vaja-saneyi-Samhita XXX and the Satapatha-Brahmana XIII 2, 4, 2 are mentioned *puru-savvaghra* or "men-tigers." (H. Oldenberg, *Religion des Vedas*, Berlin 1894, p. 84).

Tabu vocabularies are employed in all departments of Malay magic (Skeat, pages 35, 139, 192, 315, 253, 523). They were



common in ancient India:—Satapatha, Br. VI, 1, 1, 2, etc.; the Mantrapatha (*Anecdota Oxoniensia*) Oxford 1897, p. 29. The Snataka or young Brahman, who had concluded his study of the Vedas and taken vows, had to observe many such tabus:—he must say *bhagala* for *kapala* “head,” *manidhanus* for *indradhanus* “rainbow,” *dhenubhavya* “a cow which will become a milch-cow,” instead of *adhenu* “a cow which gives no milk” (Gautama Dharmasastra IX, 19-22; Apast. Dharmas. I, 31, 11; 12; 15; 16;—“The Sacred Laws of the Aryas” Part I, pages 216-224, 92-98, Oxford; Baudh. Dh. II, 6, 11, 18; Vasistha Dh. XII, 32).

Winternitz finds parallels for the figurative language of Malay betrothal verses (Skeat pages 364 and 634), where the girl is called a calf, in the language of the Ests where the wooer pretends to search for a lost calf (L. v. Schroeder, *Hochzeitsbrauche der Esten*, Berlin 1888, page 36); of the Finns where the wooer pretends he wishes to buy a bird; of the Sardinians, where the wooer asks for a white dove or a white calf.

The mimic combat for the person of a Malay bride (Skeat, page 381) is widespread, of course, even in Europe: it was practised in ancient India (Winternitz: *Altindisches Hochzeitsrituell*, page 68). The throwing of rice over the head of the bridegroom (Skeat, page 382) is commonly observed by all Indo-Germanic peoples. *Confarreatio* forms part of a Malay wedding as of marriages among so many races: it was a ceremony known in ancient India (Winternitz, *op. cit.*, page 79). Malay bride and groom are princes for the wedding-day (Skeat, page 388). In Kashmir the bridegroom is entitled for the day Maharaja:—cf. A. Stein’s *Rajatarangini* I, page 131. In the Ramayana “a marriage-crown” is mentioned:—Growse’s “Ramayana” Book I, page 182 (Allahabad 1877). In Modern Bengal the poorest bridegroom wears a tinsel crown (Lal Behari Day, “Bengal Peasant Life” 1884, page 88)—A similar custom obtains in Russia, Scandinavia and parts of Germany.

Winternitz notes that Malay animistic beliefs concerning trees and plants are derived neither from Islam nor from Brahmanism

There are other customs and beliefs which the reviewer might have noted, had he found space. The belief in the need for human sacrifice at the founding of a building is common to East and West:—Skeat, page 144; Crooke’s “Introduction to Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India” page 237 and Index; Robertson Smith’s “Religion of the Semites” page 158; Greek modern folk-songs (Passow *Carm. Pop. Gr.* 512, and “Folklore” 1899). The Malay notion of a mousedeer in the moon (Skeat, page 13) must be derived from the “hare” in the moon common in Indian folk-lore and found in the Sanskrit epithets *sasin*, *marganka*, *harinanka* “having the mark of a deer.” The Brahman held the work of a police officer to be degrading:—Gautama,



XVII, 17 ("The Sacred hands of the Aryas" Volume I, Oxford). So to this day does the Malay. In the code of Manu among persons to be avoided were physicians, sufferers from phthisis, elephantiasis, epilepsy, leprosy and erysipelas, persons with thick hair on the body, a one-eyed man, a usurer, a mariner, a gambling-house keeper and dancers. Even now the Malay regards the professions of physician and sailor as degrading, and distrusts one-eyed men and hairy persons.

The Brahman student "shall not eat food offered at a funeral oblation" (Apastamba, pp. 7 and 43, "Sacred Books of the East," vol. II): there are Malay rajas who observe this tabu. "He shall not sit on a seat higher than that of his teacher" (*ib.*, p. 30); "he shall not drink water standing or bent forward" (*ib.*, p. 57); "sheep's milk is forbidden" (*ib.*, p. 83). All these tabus are common among Malays. The Brahman student, "may not feed a thief, a eunuch, an outcast, an atheist, a destroyer of the sacred fire, *the husband of a younger sister married before the elder, the husband of an elder sister whose youngest sister was married first, . . . , a younger brother married before the elder brother, an elder brother married after his younger brother*" (Gautama, *ib.*, p. 254). The objection to younger children, especially girls, marrying before elder is called by Malays *langkah batang* and universally disliked.

The henna dance with lighted candles (Wilkinson's "Incidents of Malay Life, 2nd ed., p. 58 and Skeat's "Malay Magic") is hardly likely to have been invented by a primitive people to whom candles were unknown. A dance with lighted candlesticks is common in Persia (Hales' "From Persian Uplands," p. 121. London 1920) and the Malay dance would seem to have come with other marriage-ceremonies from India.

There would seem to be a similarity between the outlook of those of Hindu faith towards Mahameru, the abode of Indra and Vishnu, the pivot of the universe, (Dowson *op. cit.*) and the outlook of the Greek towards Olympus. "Whatever the original meaning of Olympus may be, it seems clear that the Olympian gods, wherever their worshippers moved, tended to dwell on the highest mountain in the neighbourhood and the mountain thereby became Olympus" (Gilbert Murray's "Four Stages of Greek Religion": cf. Journal 81, page 26).

Though I do not suggest its introduction to have been of early date, yet perhaps one may note in a paper dealing with India and Malay beliefs the fact that the language of signs practised in Malay intrigue is identical with that practised in Kandy:—"Kandian girls make almost imperceptible signs to each other. If without moving the head, the eyes be momentarily directed towards the door, the question is asked, "Shall we go out? An affirmative reply is given by an expressionless gaze, a negative one by closing the eyes for an instant" (Parker's "Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon," Volume II, page 32).



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