

THE FLOATING CHEST

In his *Handbook of Greek Mythology* Professor H. J. Rose several times draws attention to the legendary theme of the floating chest, which occurs so frequently as to suggest that 'some kind of ritual lies behind all these tales'. The theme is recognised by Dr. A. B. Cook (*Zeus* II, 671 sqq.) as one of the perennials of folk-lore, and parallels are cited from modern Europe, Siberia, and India. A study by M. E. Cosquin ('Le Lait de la Mère et le Coffre Flottant' in *Revue des Questions Historiques*, 1908), based on material drawn from North Africa, India, and Java as well as the Classical world, links the floating chest to the miraculous suckling of children.

The preservation of a child or a mother and child in a floating chest was obviously a good story, and Euripides, by choosing this version of the Telephus legend in preference to that which left the child exposed on land, no doubt contributed to its popularity. Moreover, in legends of the introduction of a new cult the story teller often required a miraculous means of transport. The chest may have served a similar purpose to the floating rock of Celtic saints. But these explanations are not sufficient to account for the recurrence of the chest in a large number of stories which have important common elements. The typical Greek versions are associated with a complex of ideas familiar in the early strata of Greek tradition: the seduction of a human king's daughter by a god, the anger of the father, the exposure of the child—and his miraculous suckling, the sorrows and enslavement of the mother and the recognition of the child. The child usually grows up to be a king, sometimes killing one or other of his human grand-parents. In many legends the divine offspring are twins.

The following chest stories, Group A, are Greek examples belonging to the type of legend outlined above.

Group A. A divinely begotten child and his mother, owing to the anger or the fears of the girl's father, are placed in a chest, cast adrift on the sea and washed up in a foreign land.

<i>Child.</i>	<i>Mother.</i>	<i>Divine Father.</i>	<i>Embarkation.</i>	<i>Disembarkation.</i>
1. Perseus	Danaë	Zeus	Argos	Seriphus
2. Telephus	Auge	Heracles	Tegea	Mysia
3. Dionysus	Semele (dead on arrival)	Zeus	Thebes	Prasiae in Laconia
4. Anios (born after arrival)	Rhoio	Apollo	Uncertain	Delos
5. Tennes (young man)	Hemithea (sister)	Apollo	Colonae in Troad	Tenedos

In story 1 (Simon. fr. 31 Diehl; Schol. ad Apoll. Rhod. Arg. 4. 1091, quoting Pherecydes; Apollodorus 2.4; Hyg. fab. 63, etc.) Danaë's fate recalls that of Io, and it seems likely that both stories preserve the tradition of a ritual marriage. Danaë was kept immured by her anxious father in an underground chamber in the midst of his house, that is, perhaps, in an underground sanctuary such as would be appropriate to an earth-goddess in her own temple. The chest was fished from the sea by the fisherman Dictys, whose name associates him with the Cretan Dictynna. Since Seriphus lies between Crete and the Argolid, it is possible that the rite of the chest came to Seriphus first and thence to Argos. In Seriphus Danaë was persecuted by Polydectes, whose advances she rejected, and defended by Perseus, who later returned to Argos, inadvertently killed Acrisius and, according to one version of his story, ruled in Argos. Intervening adventures of Perseus clearly identify him as a 'young god' of the type of Heracles, but are not necessary to this enquiry.

Story 2 (Chest version in Paus. 8.4.9).

Auge at Tegea was identified with Eileithyia. Pausanias (8.48.7) mentions the Kneeling Auge as a title of Eileithyia and interprets it by saying that, on her way to be drowned, Auge fell on her knees and gave birth to Telephus on the site of the shrine of Eileithyia. Sophocles

used a version of the story in which Telephus was born in secret, exposed on Mt. Parthenios and suckled by a doe, whilst Auge was sold as a slave to Teuthras of Mysia. The reason for the exposure of the child was an oracle that he would kill Auge's brothers. According to Pausanias's first version the chest landed in Mysia; Auge married Teuthras and, on her death, was honoured by a barrow of earth. Sophocles made Teuthras adopt the enslaved Auge and try to marry her to Telephus, who, after fulfilling the oracle, had become his ally. The marriage was averted by a timely recognition.

On the Pergamene altar and on a coin of Elaea Auge and the chest are represented without Telephus: this suggests a possible version in which the child was born after her arrival, as in story 4.¹

Story 3 (Paus. 3. 24. 3-4).

This is a local version of the legend of Dionysus. Semele was dead when the chest was opened; but her sister, Ino, opportunely appeared to act as nurse to Dionysus.

Semele is known to have been an Earth Mother, and her sister, who, according to Peloponnesian legends, was washed up by the sea in the Megarid or in Messenia, was venerated as an earth-goddess. Auge, as we have seen, was a local form of Eileithyia. It seems likely that Danaë represented an Argive Mother, who could take the form of an earth-goddess as well as that of a sacred cow.

Story 4 (Diod. 5. 62).

Rhoio's name reveals her nature: she was a pomegranate-mother, daughter of Staphylus and sister of Hemithea, an earth-goddess who recurs in story 5. Her child, Anios, became father of three wonder-working daughters, givers of corn, wine, and oil. Staphylus is represented as son of Dionysus, and it was Dionysus who gave his great-granddaughters their powers; but the story is complete without him. Rhoio may be connected with Nana, the mother of Attis, who conceived by means of a pomegranate seed.

Story 5 (Paus. 10. 14. 1-4. For Apollo as father, Tzetzes in Lyc. Alex. 232 sqq.).

This story is not typical, in that Tennes is a young man, falsely suspected of designs on his human step-mother, and his companion in the chest is his sister. Coins of Tenedos reveal that she was also his consort, and she is to be identified with the Hemithea honoured as a goddess of earth, of healing by incubation and of aid in child-birth, at Castabus in Caria (*Zeus, loc. cit.*).

In all these stories it seems clear that we have to do with a mother-goddess, or rather her human representative, a sacred marriage and the birth of a 'young god'. The exposure of the mother and child in the chest is represented as due to the moral indignation or, more openly, to the fears of the girl's father, who is the ruling king. The fear is that the child will grow up to kill his grandfather or his mother's brothers. In an Indian version (found in the Javanese Sri Râma, quoted by Cosquin, *op. cit.*) the motive for the exposure of a girl child in a chest is the prophecy that her husband will become a world ruler, that is, will supplant the king. This is the real fear.

The sacred marriage in the pre-Hellenic Mediterranean world was the union of a human pair, representing a dominant mother-goddess and her consort. In some places, as at Patrae (Paus. 7. 19. 1-8), the ritual once involved the death of both partners immediately after their marriage, and there are traditions which suggest that earlier still a woman may have perished annually as representative of the corn-mother to be reborn as the corn-maiden of the new year. But the majority of the stories which reflect agricultural ritual, Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Syrian, are stories of a goddess and her mortal partner. It is his fate which

¹ As suggested by F. Marx, who collects the Greek chest stories, in *AM X* 21 sq. 'Broncemuenze von Elaia.'

typifies the death and promotes the rebirth of vegetation. This need not necessarily mean that his human representative was in fact killed annually; a mimic death and rebirth normally sufficed. What is reflected in the contrast of goddess and mortal consort is the position of the mother in a society which recognised mother-right. The office of high-priestess, once it became hereditary, passed from mother to daughter; the office of priest, to the daughter's husband. When the priest, who was the human prototype and representative of Tammuz or Osiris or the nameless 'young god' of the Aegean, became a priest-king, it was still his wife's defection or his daughter's marriage that brought his reign to an end. The imposition of father-right, never carried through in ancient Egypt, produced in the Greek world shifts and struggles which have left their mark on religious tradition and the legends of innumerable families. In the stories under consideration the priestess of the mother-goddess is the king's daughter not his wife; her consort is an immortal; but the king still fears her marriage. The seclusion of Danaë and the chastity of the Vestal Virgins have probably a similar origin. The double relationship of the mother-goddess and her consort—she was both wife and mother, since the new god was the old reborn—resulted in a shift from fear of the girl's husband to fear of her child; but the numerous legends of strangers who 'married the king's daughter and succeeded to the kingdom' show that it was her husband who succeeded. Tennes, like Hippolytus, was suspected of trying to supplant his human father by other means, by taking his place beside a step-mother. The hostility of the father can thus be explained as the reflection of what was once a well-based fear. It has its counterpart in the marriage or projected marriage of the young mother to another king, as in stories 1 and 2.

The exposure of the mother in the chest takes the place occupied in other stories by her enslavement and of sufferings which last until she recognises her child: Danaë continued to suffer after the arrival of the chest, until Perseus returned from his adventures. These misfortunes are paralleled by the grief and servitude of Demeter and Isis during their wanderings in search of Kore and Osiris. Behind them lies a ritual search, interpreted by the earth's annual sterility but derived from the earliest stratum of ritual. Throwing the mother into water suggests the fate of Ino, who became a goddess and secured her son's immortality by leaping into the sea. Other nurses of Dionysus bathed in or were chased into the sea, and Professor G. Thomson (*Aeschylus and Athens*, pp. 144 sqq.) has shown that the stories spring from a ritual bath prior to the sacred marriage, in fact to the consecration of the human representative of the mother-goddess. It is probable that this ritual of consecration included a period of seclusion, ordeals, and contests; in later legends these were interpreted as preliminary to the finding of the child.

Examination of the stories in Group A has brought out certain obvious implications of the chest theme; the meaning of the chest itself will become clearer in the light of further examples. These are, first, Greek legends which contain chests although some of the elements of the typical story are missing.

Group B. Variants.

6. (Apollod. Bibl. 3. 7. 5/6). Arsinoë was placed in a chest and carried into slavery at Tegea by her brothers, after the murder of her husband, Alcmaeon. Alcmaeon was a king on whom the crops depended; his other wife, Callirhoe, had a divine lover and twin sons, and his grave at Psophis was surrounded by cypress trees of wonderful height called *parthenoi*. Pausanias (8. 24. 7 sqq.) calls his first wife, the daughter of Phegeus, Alphesiboea; Apollodorus, who gives the chest story, calls her Arsinoë, perhaps by confusion with Arsinoë, daughter of Leucippus and, in Messenian legend, mother of Asclepius, who might well have been associated with the chest.

Here the elements of the chest story are divided between the two wives of Alcmaeon, and the chest is not thrown into the sea. If, as suggested below, the chest represented the mother-goddess in tree form, Arsinoë's chest was probably of cypress wood, and she lay in it as priestess of the cypress-maidens.

7. (Apollonius Rhod. 1. 620 sqq. and scholia).

Thoas, son of Dionysus, was cast adrift in a chest from Lemnos by his daughter, Hypsipyle, who so preserved his life from the Lemnian women. He was rescued by fishermen and brought ashore on the island of Oenoe off Euboea, so called from its vineyards. Here he married Oenoe and had a son, Sicinus, after whom the island was renamed.

Apart from the connexion with Dionysus and the vine (*cf.* Nos. 3, 4, 8), this story has two points of interest. Thoas was cast adrift as an old man; when brought ashore, he immediately married. Secondly, Hypsipyle soon afterwards bore twin sons to Jason, one of whom was called Thoas; later she was sold into slavery and served as nurse to the infant Opheltes at Nemea. Disregarding a warning not to let her charge touch the ground, she set him down on a bunch of wild parsley and so allowed a serpent, who was perhaps his alter ego, to kill him. She was rescued from this situation partly by the appearance of her own twin sons.

8. (Paus. 7. 19. 6-9). Eurypylos acquired at Troy a chest containing an image of Dionysus, the work of Hephaestus. The sight of the image drove him from his senses; but he was informed by the Delphic oracle that he would be cured if he settled in a place where he found a human sacrifice in progress. Landing at Patrae, he interrupted the annual sacrifice of a young man and a girl to Artemis Triclaria, a rite believed to avert the sterility which Artemis would otherwise have sent to avenge the pollution of her temple by the intercourse of the priestess, Comaetho, with Melanippus. Behind this account lies the sacred marriage of human victims, intended not to avert blight but to ensure fertility. The arrival of Eurypylos with his chest, in which the people 'guessed there was a god', put an end to the human sacrifices, substituting, it may be assumed, the milder rite of the chest.

Pausanias calls this receptacle a *larnax*, and it is represented as a box, but a box small enough to be carried under the arm, on Hadrianic coins of Patrae. Other coins of like date show it as a round box with a conical lid, more like the mystic *cista* than a chest. (Reproductions in Frazer, Paus. *loc. cit.*)

This bare account probably comes nearest to the actual rite of finding the chest, except that it is brought by ship instead of being fished from the sea. The madness of Eurypylos marks, here as elsewhere, the introduction of the cult of Dionysus; but it may owe something to the disasters believed to fall on people who looked at secret rites. The fate of Melcander's sons in story 9 is comparable.

After a chest containing an old man and a chest containing an image, it is not surprising to find one that contained only a corpse. This is provided by a third group of chest stories.

Group C. Stories relating to non-Hellenic divinities known to the Greeks.

9. (Plut. *de Isid.* cc. 13 sqq.). Osiris, king and benefactor of the Egyptians, was enticed into a chest by his brother Typhon/Seth. The lid was nailed down, molten lead poured in, and the chest thrown into the Nile. It drifted by the Tanaitic mouth and over the sea to Syrian Byblos, where it was washed ashore on to a tree. The tree grew up round the chest to miraculous size, was cut down and made a pillar in the palace of King Melcander and Queen Astarte. Isis, sister and wife of Osiris, was guided in her search for him to Byblos, where she took service as nurse to Melcander's infant son. She tried to confer immortality on the child, by giving him her finger instead of her breast to suck, and by secretly burning away his mortal parts; but, being interrupted by the mother, she desisted, revealed herself and asked for the pillar. The chest, now significantly called *soros*, was removed and the remains of the tree embalmed and left at Byblos. One of Melcander's sons died of terror on hearing Isis's lamentations over the coffin; another died later from the fierceness of her glance when he interrupted her opening it. Isis took the coffin back to Egypt, opened it and embraced the dead Osiris, so conceiving Harpocrates, the Child Horus. There followed a further attack by Typhon/Seth, the dismemberment of the corpse and a further search by Isis, who found and buried the scattered limbs.

Plutarch's story is primarily intended to account for the existence of Egyptian rites at Byblos, which possessed a temple of Egyptian type dating from the 2nd dynasty. Hathor of Byblos was a goddess compounded of the Syrian Mother, Astarte, and Hathor, the Egyptian Mother qua mother of Horus and in some respects a double of Isis. From at latest the end of the 4th millennium the Egyptians were importing from Byblos the coniferous *sd* wood, whether cedar or cypress, used in ship-building and particularly associated with Osiris, and the gums and resins used in making incense. Osiris himself probably came to Egypt from this region or farther north and was originally akin to the Syrian Adonis. This kinship and commerce was expressed by a strange rite at Byblos. Lucian (*de Syria dea* 7. 454/5) records that every year, at the time of the death and resurrection of Adonis, a head or a papyrus-head (the interpretation depends on the presence or absence of a capital letter in the phrase τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔθεισάμην Βυβλίην) made a miraculous journey from Egypt to Byblos, accomplishing the voyage by the most direct possible route in seven days. Reduced to terms of ritual this must mean that the Giblites fished out of the sea something which they regarded as the symbol of Adonis.

Isis's search for Osiris may well owe something to Demeter's search for Kore, since long before Plutarch the Greeks had identified Isis with Demeter, Osiris with Dionysus. It seems certain, however, that the chest belonged to Osiris and his kindred gods before it passed to Dionysus, and even the details of the search may be part of a genuine and independent tradition. The magic tree which is made the roof-tree of a house is widespread in folk-lore and belongs to a primitive conception of the tree spirit, and suckling with the finger recurs in Indian legends. Here its most primitive form may be the suckling of the motherless Mandhata by means of the finger of Indra, the rain-god.

Chest stories are also told of the two divinities most closely connected with Osiris, Adonis and Tammuz.

10. (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3. 14. 4. Authorities for variant forms of the legend, of which there are many, in Frazer, Apollodorus, ed. Loeb).

Aphrodite, wishing to conceal the infant Adonis, who was born of the myrrh tree, from his human grandfather, put him in a chest and handed him over to Persephone.

The goddess of the myrrh tree had a human representative in the king's daughter; for legend related that Myrrha was turned into a tree in order to conceal the results of her intercourse with her father, Theias, king of Assyria. The anger of the father therefore follows the usual pattern, except that in this case it was really the child whom he feared. The tradition of his incest may be due, as Sir James Frazer suggests, to one of the shifts imposed on a widowed king who wished to remain in power.

11. (See Langdon: 'Tammuz and Ishtar' in *Semitic Mythology*.)

The Babylonian Tammuz, whose cult under the title of Abú goes back to a remote period in Sumeria, as an infant was cast on the waters; he 'lay in a submerged boat'. This statement probably refers to a rite reflected in the romantic account of the birth of Sargon of Akkad (B.M. tablets, K 3401, 4470), in which Sargon claims to be the son of a priestess and an unknown father, cast adrift on the river in a cradle of reeds and rescued by the peasant, Akki.

In his manhood Tammuz perished at the midsummer harvest, as the stream sank to its lowest point, and Inanna, his mother, sister and wife, implored him to rise again from the river, saying, as she described herself waiting for his return: 'My side is the cedar, my breast the cypress, O offspring of the house.' In the Babylonian New Year festival the return of Tammuz was fused with the victory of the sun-god; but it seems likely that earlier he was reborn in the rising flood.

In the case of Osiris we can to some extent check the myth against the ritual it was meant to explain. Osiris was a god of vegetation, dying in the flood water of the Nile in autumn, reborn in the sprouting seeds. The celebration of his death and resurrection took place, in historical times, in the fourth month of the inundation, just before the first ploughing. The ritual is known to us from documents of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods; but the celebration

goes back to the Old Kingdom, and corn-mummies are at least as old as the Middle Kingdom. The body of Osiris was 'found' in the Nile and brought to the shrine. This rite is represented at Philae by a picture of a crocodile (Sebek) bearing a mummy on its back and emerging from a marsh. Human actors probably carried out an equivalent rite. Elaborate ceremonies were then performed to revive the dead Osiris: he was reborn of Nut, his heavenly mother, and suckled by Isis and her double, Nephthys. In one form of the ritual of regeneration figures of Osiris were fashioned of earth and water, seeds and precious stones, shaped in moulds of gold or cedar wood. When taken out of the moulds, the figures were laid on sycamore branches, set before the mother-goddess and then enclosed in mummy-cases of sycamore wood. Finally they were laid in the upper part of the grave-shrine, whilst the figures of last year, after lying for seven days on sycamore branches, were deposited in the lower chamber. Over the grave rose a tree which represented the renewed life of Osiris and received daily offerings of milk.²

It is expressly stated that the seven days during which the old corn-mummies lay on sycamore branches stood for the seven months Osiris lay in his mother's womb. If we leave aside the significance of the number seven for Osiris, it seemed, at least to a late Egyptian theologian, that to lie on sycamore branches was to be reborn of Nut; for the sycamore of the underworld was the tree of Nut, heavenly mother though she might be. It seems likely that the mummy-cases or coffins of sycamore wood were themselves the vehicles of rebirth, a probability which is strengthened by the cow form of one mummy-case of sycamore wood (the Rement Cow), since Nut was also a cow-goddess. The mould of cedar wood and a cedar-wood shrine used during the proceedings recalled a place where the mother-goddess was embodied in the cedar tree.

For Osiris the equation, chest = coffin = tree = mother's womb and means of rebirth, seems virtually certain, and the throwing into water, everywhere a rite of regeneration, was particularly appropriate to a god whose renewed life would be seen springing from the earth as the flood receded. However, the 'finding' of Osiris or Adonis in Egyptian and Gibilite ritual means the finding of his corpse; the floating chest stories in their most common form postulate a rite of finding the god restored to life as a young child.

Classical authorities on Egyptian religion were sure that someone was sought and found but doubtful about who was seeking whom. Plutarch not only doubled Isis's search for Osiris but introduced two stories of the finding of children, one concerning Osiris himself, whose birth was miraculously announced to a man drawing water in the precinct of Zeus (Chnum/Ra/Amon) at Thebes, the other the finding of Anubis, the exposed child of Isis's sister, Nephthys, and Typhon/Seth. In the last story Anubis, the jackal, who is generally the assistant of Isis, has become the baby, and his place is taken by helpful dogs. Other late Classical authorities are definite about the search for and finding of a child. Hyginus associates the discovery of sails with Isis's search for Harpocrates; Minucius Felix expressly refers to the finding of the child as the culmination of the mourning and search—*mox invento parvulo gaudet Isis*, a statement repeated or supported by Lactantius.³ We know that the cult of Mother and Child was important in Roman times, and that at Alexandria the birth of Harpocrates was brought into connexion with the birth of the infant sun at the winter solstice. Traditions of 'finding the child' may be due to a late development under the influence of Dionysiac or Babylonian/Persian cult; but it is more likely that they go back to an early stage in the development of Osirian ritual.

Diodorus (1.25) attributed to Horus the fate of Osiris, with an Orphic twist in the substitution of the Titans for Typhon/Seth. He recorded that Isis found Horus dead in the water as the result of an attack by the Titans, restored him to life and at the same time gave him immortality. His story need not be a mere doubling in the myth, since it receives some

² Brugsch, *ÄZ* 1881, 77 sqq.; Junker, *Mysterien des Osiris*; Junker, 'Götterdekret' in *Denk. Kais. Ak. Wiss. Wien*, Ph.-Hist. Kl. 56-8; Gressman, *Tod und Auferstehung des Osiris*;

Frazer, *A.A.O.* II 110-11.

³ Hyg. *Fab.* 277; Min. *Fel. Oct.* 23; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 121.

support from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Chapter 113 relates that Horus fell into a papyrus swamp and, by some means, lost his arms. These were rescued by the same crocodile, Sebek, who recovered the corpse of Osiris, and they became sacred relics at Nekhen. There are repeated references in Egyptian texts to the concealment of the child Horus in the swamps to evade a search by Seth, and one chapter of the Book of the Dead (c. 157) mentions Isis's search for her child. All these references are associated with the swamps of the Delta, and it seems likely that here a rite of 'finding the child', originally the culmination of the ritual of Osiris, survived either in something like its original form or detached from its context and provided with a separate myth. That there were local variants in Roman times is clear from Plutarch's account (*de Is.* c. 39) of the Rement Cow and the corn-mummies: he states that the ritual was carried out by night on the sea shore, and that it was when the fresh water was poured into the mould that the participants hailed the 'finding of Osiris'.

There is much that is obscure in the early history of Osiris in Egypt; but it is fairly clear that he entered Egypt from the North-East and was localised first at Busiris in the eastern Delta, where he assimilated a local god, *Andety*. His connexion with Horus was due to the political predominance of the Horus people of the western Delta. The king of the Delta kingdom probably claimed, like the later Pharaohs, to embody Horus, a falcon-sky-god, and the functions of Osiris came to be limited to those of the dead king. In myth Osiris found a full-grown son to restore and avenge him; in ritual the finding of the child became detached or localised.

So far it has been argued that the Greek legends of the floating chest reflect a widespread rite of fishing from water the symbols of a tree and a child, the tree representing the mother-goddess, the child a young god, newly born of the tree. The presence of the mother in the chest, a mythological doubling of the function of the chest itself, is due, it has been suggested, to a tradition of ordeals undergone and rites performed in the consecration of a human representative of the mother-goddess. Her consecration preceded a sacred marriage which would ensure the earth's fertility for the year. In legend the male partner in this marriage has appeared as an immortal, as a dying god and as a human king. In ritual, it has been argued, he was a priest, who became a priest-king, consecrated or reconsecrated annually by means of rites which reproduced the pattern of the death and rebirth of vegetation. A further examination of the ritual of his consecration will elucidate the rites of the chest and of 'finding the child'.

It is generally characteristic of primitive peoples to regard critical changes in human life as a process of dying and regeneration. This is particularly true of the passage from childhood to adult life, which has been marked, among primitive peoples widely scattered in place and time, by fundamentally similar rites of initiation. The ritual of initiation into the Greek and Hellenistic Mysteries makes it clear that such rites formed part of the background of Greek thought. There is no question here of importing the customs of remote savages to interpret Greek civilisation; it is only the customs of peoples longer surviving in a barbarous stage of development which have enabled us to find sense in what appears to be the savagery of Greek religious practices. Initiation ritual, which is usually found in conjunction with totemism or its survivals, served to bring about the identification of the young people of a tribe with the ancestors of their respective clans, so giving them full adult status and functions. Universal features of the ritual are a mimetic death and rebirth. Boys were taken from their mothers, who often mourned them as really dead, and removed by 'spirits' to a place of seclusion. Sometimes they were believed to be dismembered or devoured by a monster, sometimes to waste away, always to die. During the period of seclusion they underwent instruction in tribal tradition, received a revelation of the ancestors, passed through ordeals and received the specific marks of manhood (distinctive scars, the loss of a tooth, circumcision). When they returned to the women, they were regarded as newly born, had a new name and often a new language: sometimes they appeared ignorant of their former language and ways, elsewhere they were fed for some days like young children. Here we have the source of many

of the recurrent features of Mediterranean legend : the search for a concealed child, miraculous suckling by a totemic mother, recognition by means of scars. The means of renewed life could be represented by green leaves or branches (Thomson, *op. cit.* 115), with which the candidates were pelted or on which they lay, as Osiris lay on sycamore twigs or Opheltes on the wild parsley. In later cult this rite of regeneration by contact with the living green was interpreted as rebirth from the womb of the mother-goddess in tree form. It is not so much that the Mother was identified with a tree as that, in this particular and most important function, she took on the form of a tree.

In many parts of the world the incipient breakdown of tribal society has been marked by the transformation of initiation ritual into the means of admission to a closed and graded society, endowed with magical functions derived from the ritual of various clans. It seems likely that the origin of the priest-kings of the Mediterranean region is to be sought in the highest grade of such a secret society, to which admission was gained by initiation. The candidate was reborn no longer a mere member of his tribe but the medium of its intercourse with the ancestors, a 'young god'. It is to this stage in the development of initiation ritual that legends of immortality conferred on children belong.

The initiation rites of girls are less completely known. A period of seclusion and instruction in women's work seems to have been general; this is reflected in traditions of the servitude of the mother and her long search. Ordeals and contests also formed part of the women's ritual, and the final rite of rebirth was probably the bath which preceded return to the tribe and marriage. The birth of Aphrodite was the marriage bath. The female partner in the sacred marriage was chosen by similar means to the male: she was par excellence the initiated woman. Both archaeological evidence and the evidence of tradition, however, show that the mother-goddess was hypostatized earlier than the god. The priestess was regarded as embodying *the* goddess, her consort as *a* Tammuz, *an* Osiris.

Among primitive peoples there is no clear distinction between human life and the life of crops and herds. The marriage of the human representatives promoted the fertility of the whole of nature; their annual consecration or reconsecration with its simulated death and rebirth stimulated similar processes in nature. So initiation rites became the rites of consecration of a high-priestess and a priest-king. In many parts of the Mediterranean region there are traditions of periodic kingship, or of kings or kings' sons sacrificed in time of dearth, which show that at critical points such as the end of a 'great year', or when the powers of earth appeared to be failing, the ritual of death and rebirth was transformed into an actual human sacrifice and the consecration of a new priest-king. It is not necessary to assume that annual tenure underlies all periodic tenures of the kingship, or that the death and rebirth annually mimed in pre-Sargonid Sumeria was a modification of an actual killing of the king. The close parallels observable between the initiation of the Mysteries, admittedly based on cults of the 'dying god', and the initiation ritual of primitive peoples suggest that the mimic death and rebirth were original; the actual killing of the king and recognition of a successor, exceptional, although fairly common, developments.

The particular complex of rites which we have been examining, in which the mother-goddess is represented in tree form and the young god is found in a cradle of rushes, a wooden boat or a chest floating on water, has been traced to Egypt and Sumeria in the 3rd millennium B.C. and possibly earlier. It probably originated in a region in which coniferous trees were indigenous, possibly in North Syria, possibly farther east. Attis, reborn of a pine tree, is an Anatolian representative. The original form of the ritual included that of a pig totem. It was long ago pointed out that the name Tammuz is associated with the Turkish word for pig, and that Adonis, brought to birth, according to one legend, by the wild boar's piercing the trunk of the myrrh tree and killed by another boar, was originally a member of a boar clan or society. So it is possible to explain the tabu of the pig, prevalent in Egypt as well as Palestine in historical times, and the belief that eating its flesh produced leprosy, since skin diseases are commonly believed to be the result of eating the totemic animal. So too we can

see why at the other end of a long journey the gods of Troy were welcomed to Latium by the portent of the sow and her young.

There are some indications of the route of this journey. Western Anatolia is generally accepted as the source of the Early Cycladic and the first Early Helladic cultures. According to a recent survey (Goetze in *Handb. der Altertumswiss.* III. 1. 3. 3. 1), 'Urfirnis' ware, along with place names in -nth- and -s-, was brought to central and southern Greece by settlers who spoke the highly individualised form of Indo-European known as Luvian. This language, allied to Hittite, was brought into Western Anatolia by immigrants from Europe, who spread from the Troad into Mysia and S.W. Anatolia. Among the gods of this 'Luvian' province was Sandas, identified with the Babylonian Marduk. Sandas and Marduk were intermediaries between the ancient Sumerian fertility-god and the Greek Heracles (see Levy, 'The Oriental Origin of Heracles' in *JHS* LIV). It is therefore not surprising that the 'young god' whom we have found in Mysia should be the son of Heracles, and by reversing the route of Auge's chest we may arrive at an historical tradition linking Mysia with the Peloponnese. The association of Eurypylus's chest with Troy points in the same direction. The legends of Tenedos and Delos are both connected with the Carian Hemithea, and it was as Carian⁴ pirates that the Greeks of the Classical period remembered early Anatolian immigrants (Thuc. 1. 8). The Delian Apollo himself may have reached his birthplace by the same route, since he has a forerunner in the Hittite Jarrish, a god of war and pestilence, armed with the bow. Another ancient tradition gave Phoenice as an alternative name for Tenedos (Pliny *NH* 5. 140), and Argos with Seriphus is linked in tradition to Egypt, Phoenicia and perhaps Crete. It is therefore impossible to rule out Minoan or Phoenician influences. In Boeotia again tradition ascribed to the Phoenician settlers who came with Cadmus other lessons besides the alphabet (Hdt. 5. 58). There is a similar double tradition in the cult of Dionysus, that of the Northerner, Miss Harrison's Thracian, beer-drinking Dionysus, and that of the Cretan Zagreus. The Northerner has traits of the North Syrian/Sumerian fertility-god, and his father had an Anatolian predecessor in the sky-god of the double axe. Early Anatolian influences on the Danube valley (see Hawkes, *Prehistoric Foundations of Europe*, 90 sq.) may account for the northern tradition, and the cult of the Son may have reached the Thracophrygians indirectly from Anatolia before they reintroduced it as the cult of the Son of Dios. The progress of archaeology in the Near East reveals that even apparently primitive strata in Greek religious thought are the product of complex influences. At the same time it sharpens the distinction between the gods of the old civilisations, crystallised in their millennial forms, and those of the semi-barbarian Northerners, still sufficiently fluid to receive their final, purely anthropomorphic, form at the highest level to which Classical civilisation was to attain.

N. M. HOLLEY.

*Bedford College,
London.*

⁴ I am indebted to Professor G. Thomson for pointing out this connexion, as for many fruitful ideas. My thanks are also due to Dr. M. Kerr, formerly of the Department of Psychology in this College, for the insight which she gave me into the possible meaning of this ritual.