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SMITHS, SHAMANS AND MYSTAGOGUES

« Masters of the Fire ».

Primitive peoples universally represent magico-religious power to themselves as « burning », expressing it by words meaning « heat » « a burn » « incandescent » etc. This is why magicians and sorcerers drink salt or spiced water and eat highly spiced foods: they wish by this means to increase their inner « heat ». Masters of the Fire, the Shamans and sorcerers swallow hot coals, touch red hot iron, walk on fire. On the other hand, they can stand great cold: the Shamans of the arctic regions as well as the ascetics of the Himalyas, thanks to their « magic heat » have incredible powers of endurance (1). The true meaning of « magical heat » and « mastery of the fire » is not difficult to guess. These powers show that they have access to a certain ecstatic state or, when they are on a higher cultural plane — as in India, for instance — to an unconditioned state of perfect spiritual freedom. The « mastery of the fire » and insensibility both to extreme cold and to the temperature of burning coals, are the expression, in sentient terms, of the fact that the Shaman or yogi have gone beyond the conditions of human life and already partake of the condition of « spirits ».

No less than the Shamans, smiths are held to be « masters of fire ». Thus, in certain cultural areas the smith is held to be the equal if not the superior of the Shaman. « Smiths and Shamans come from the same nest » says a Yakut proverb. « The wife of a Shaman is deserving of respect; the wife of a smith is venerable » says another (2). And a third: « the first smith, the first Shaman and the

first potter were blood brothers. The smith was the elder, and the Shaman came between the two ». This accounts for the fact that a Shaman cannot cause the death of a smith (3). The Dolgans believe that the Shamans cannot « swallow » the souls of smiths because they (the smiths) keep them in the fire; but it is possible for a smith to seize the soul of a Shaman and burn it in the fire (4). According to the mythical beliefs of the Yakuts, the smith learnt his trade from the « evil » divinity K'daai Maqsin, the head-smith of Hell, who lives in an iron house surrounded by flares. K'daai is a renowned master; it is he who repairs the broken or amputated limbs of the heroes. He takes part in the initiation of the famous Shamans of the other world; he tempers their souls as he tempers iron (5).

Another tradition has it that the ancestor of the Yakuts, Elliei, was the first smith. Another mythical smith, Chyky, was the counsellor of the warriors. He forged their arms while giving them wise advice. The Yakuts believe that smiths have the power to cure by natural means without the assistance of spirits, as do the Shamans. In the ninth generation smiths possess supernatural powers; they do not fear spirits and this is why they dare to forge the iron accoutrements that bedeck the costume worn by the Shaman (for the clanking of iron drives off spirits) (6).

Among all the Siberian peoples, the smith ranks high in the social hierarchy; his trade is not looked upon as commercial. It is a vocation or a hereditary legacy and as such it implies the secrets of initiation. Smiths are under the protection of special spirits. In the Sugnan and other regions of Pamir, the

smith's art is reputed to be a gift of the Prophet David, and on this account the smith is held in greater respect than the mullah. But he must be pure, physically as well as spiritually. The forge is revered as a place of worship, and where no special building is set aside for prayers and assemblies, believers meet at the forge (7).

The « prophet David » has evidently taken the place of a celestial being or cultural hero of the aborigenes. This is clearly shown by the beliefs of the Buriats who relate that before men knew the use of iron they stoned their beasts to death and tore their flesh to pieces with their teeth, and clothed themselves as best they could in the hides. Then the white Tängris, the good gods, sent Boshintoj the celestial smith, to the earth with his daughter and their nine sons to teach men the use of metals. Their first pupils were the ancestors of the families of smiths. According to another legend, the sons of Boshintos married the daughters of men, and thus became the ancestors of the smiths. No one may become a smith who is not descended from one of these families. The Buriats also tell of « black smiths » just as they divide their pantheon between « white gods » and « black gods »; their Shamans are divided between « white » and « black » (good and bad). The « black smiths » who are under the protection of evil spirits, are particularly feared by the population; they are able to « eat » the souls of men. During their ceremonies they smear their faces with soot.

The gods and tutelary spirits of the Buriat smiths not only help them in their work, but also defend them against evil spirits. The smiths have their special rites. A horse is offered in sacrifice; he is cut open, and his heart is torn out, a specifically Shaman rite. The horse's soul joins the celestial smith, Boshintoj. Nine youths enact the part of the nine sons of Boshintoj and a man who represents the celestial smith himself, falls into a state of ecstasy during which he recites a long monologue revealing how, in ancient times, he sent his sons to the earth to civilise men. Then he touches a hot coal with his tongue; according to the ancient customs the person representing Boshintoj took melted iron in his hands (8) as the Siberian and North American Shamans still do.

The links connecting Shamanism with the smith's craft are also shown in the pageant that accompanies certain initial rites of the

Shamans. In the dreams or halucinations of their initiation the future Shamans witness themselves being torn to pieces by the « demons » who are the mystagogues. Now the traditional *mise en scène* suggests more or less directly the gestures, tools and symbols pertaining to the work of the smith. A Yakut Shaman saw, during his initiation illness (= *maladie initiatique*), his limbs being detached and torn apart with iron hooks by the demons; after a number of operations (scraping of the bones, skinning of the flesh, etc.) the demons collected his bones and soldered them together with iron. Another Shaman had his body cut into small pieces by the Mother-Bird-of-Prey, who had an iron beak and feathers of iron. Another was cradled during the halucinations of his initiation in an iron cradle. Lastly we take the following details from a long autobiographical account given by an Avam-Samoyed Shaman: the future Shaman saw himself enter, during his « *maladie initiatique* », into the interior of a mountain where he saw a naked man working the bellows. Beneath the fire was a cauldron. The naked man seized him with an enormous pair of pincers, cut off his head, broke up his body into little bits and threw everything into the cauldron where he left it to simmer for three years. In the cavern there were also three anvils and the naked man forged his head on the third, which he used for forging the best Shamans. Then he fished out the bones, brought them together and clothed them with flesh. A Tungus Shaman relates that during initiation his head was cut off and forged with metallic pieces (9). We should also note that the costume worn by Shamans is loaded with bits of iron in the shape of bones that give the wearer the appearance of a skeleton (See our work *Le Chamanisme*, pp. 143 et seq., 152 et seq.).

From what we have so far said it would seem that the presence of iron in the body of the Shaman plays a part somewhat similar to that played by crystals or other magic stones with the medicine men of Australia, Oceania and South America. The rock crystals with which he is stuffed, allow the Australian or Oceanian Shaman to « see » spirits and souls, to fly in the air, etc., for he has assimilated the uranian sacred quality of crystals fallen from the vault of heaven. We can note a similar solidarity between certain Siberian Shamans and iron (10). This entails consequences; iron is reserved to the smith, who

thus acquires greater magical-religious prestige. As we have seen, the fact that the sacred character of Shamans and smiths has a common origin is proved by the « mastery of fire ». Expressed in theoretic terms, this « mastery » means that they have risen above ordinary human conditions. Moreover, the smith forges the weapons for the heroes. He not only makes them materially, but invests them with magical powers. It is the mysterious art of the smith that transforms them into magic tools. Hence the close relations that exist between smiths and heroes as attested in the epic poems. F. Altheim notes that in the epic songs of almost all the Mongol tribes and in those of the Turks also, the word « smith » (*darkhan*) also means « hero » and « free lance » (11). The same writer throws light on the military importance of the drum and the Shaman costume, which is a kind of metal cuirass. Smiths sometimes rise to royal rank. Some accounts state that Gengis Kan started as a mere smith, and the tribal legend of the Mongols traces the trade of smith back to the Royal House (12). In the Iranian tradition the smith Kavi was the ancestor of the Kavya dynasty; one day he « fixed his leather apron to a spear head thus raising the standard of revolt against the dragon king. The leather apron became the royal banner of Iran » (13).

Let us bear in mind these points of contact: « masters of the fire », Shamans, smiths, heroes, mythical kings (founders of dynasties). We shall have more to say on the relations between the « magic heat », heroic (military) initiation, and the smith. For the present, let us examine the religious and social status of the smith in other cultural areas.

Divine Smiths and Cultural Heroes.

The smith in Java is now a poor man, but certain facts show that he still enjoys a privileged position. He is addressed as *pande* (expert) when he is a blacksmith and as *empu* or *kyai* (Lord, Master) when he is an armourer. But in ancient times the smelting of metals was considered a mysterious work and a whole literature arose around the smith who forged the *kris*, who was often honoured as a prince. The smith formerly occupied an honorary position at Court, and under some circumstances he could represent the whole community. In ancient Java the relation between the smith and the prince were comparable to those

between brothers of the same blood. The genealogies of smiths, like those of princes were traced back to the gods. Even now, when the armourer is getting ready to forge a *kris*, the workshop is decorated as though it were a *kayon*, i.e. a holy place; the offerings brought before the work starts are like those brought for the ceremony of circumcision or marriage (14). At Bali there are initiation rites for apprentice smiths and while the work is going on *mantras* are pronounced before using each of the tools. The *pande-west* of Bali boast written traditions telling of their creation through the intercession of Brahma who also conferred on them the *Sakti* (= mystical power) needed for their trade (15).

If we eliminate recent Hindu influences (*mantra*, Brahma, *sakti*) we can easily disentangle the original complex of the Indonesian smith. The myth of divine origin and the oral or written transmission of genealogies (which may be described as epics in the bud), the sacred nature of the work and initiation rites, the mystic fraternity with kings and persons of privileged social position. Most of these specific features have claimed our attention in the complex mythical ritual of the Siberian and Central Asian smith. Let us here call special attention to the written genealogies which point to the existence of a long oral tradition.

Now, to know and recite these genealogies is the work both of a Shaman priest and of a poet. Witness is borne to the relations existing between Shamans, heroes and smiths by the epic poetry of Central Asia; and Karl Meuli, after showing the Shaman structure of some Greek epic themes, has very opportunely called attention to the connexion between the smith and the Shaman heroes in the Finnish *Kalewala* (16).

Some aspects of this affinity between the trade of smith and epic poetry can be noted in our day in the Near East and in East Europe, where gipsy smiths and tinkers are generally genealogists, bards and minstrels (17). We cannot here dwell at length on this complex and interesting question which would require lengthy studies, but it must be noted that the smith, by the sacred nature of his occupation with its myths and genealogies of which he is the guardian, by his structural affinity with the Shamans and warriors, is called on to play a part in the creation and spread of epic poetry.

As far back as 1880, Richard Andrée, with

the documentation then available, pointed out that metal workers form almost everywhere a group apart; they are mysterious beings who must be isolated from the other members of the community (18). Little is still known of the social position and the magico-religious function of the smiths in pre-Columbian America (see Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 68). Among the tribes of North-West America they enjoy a privileged position and the secret traditions of their craft are transmitted only to the members of their family (19). Much more is known about the matter in Africa, thanks above all to the works of Walter Cline and the Griaule Mission. In 1936 Cline's enquiries led him to the following conclusions: (1) in the grass-lands of North East Africa smiths are held in little account and their craft does not offer a markedly ritual character; (2) in West Africa, on the other hand, smiths are connected with secret societies and are much esteemed as magicians; (3) in the Congo and the neighbouring regions, smiths are grouped in guilds, associate with the priests and chiefs, and work at the forge is a ritual, carried on with the aid of spirits and charms. Cline adds that it should be remembered that throughout the Black Continent the magical-religious complex of the smith is recognised, with its secret initiation, sexual taboos, the personification of the anvil and hammer, and the hereditary nature of the craft.

Besides the guilds of resident smiths there are the itinerant tinkers who enjoy the reputation of being powerful magicians (see Forbes, p. 64). While the Baris of the White Nile look upon these travelling tinkers as outcasts (20), the Ba Lolo of the Congo hold them in great respect and believe them to be of royal or aristocratic descent (21).

This dual aspect of the craft of the negro smith is to a large extent explained by the cultural history of Africa. As Herman Baumann has shown (22) the paleonigrific civilisation (which includes the North of the Congo, the Upper Nile as far as Abyssinia, Central and South East Africa) represents the civilisation of the African iron age, and it is by that civilisation that the smith is most esteemed and plays an important part in religious beliefs. The Mythical Smith is believed to have brought to man the implements needed for tilling the soil and has become a cultural hero, who collaborates in the divine work of creation. The smith is bound to the sacred soil, as are potters, and women who dig for

gold, and in more than one place (for instance in the cultural cycle of the Upper Niger) the wives of the smiths are the potters of the tribe (Baumann, *op. cit.* p. 498).

But by the civilisation of the hunters of the plains and by Hamitic pastoral civilisations, smiths are despised and form a caste apart. Iron and the implements forged by the smiths do not play the civilising part which belongs to them in the paleo-nigrific cultures. This is the case also with the Abyssinians, the Somalis (among whom the Toumal smiths are held to be untouchables), the Tedas (to the North of Lake Chad in the Central Sahara) where smiths are despised and form a caste of endogamous parias (BAUMANN, p. 283, 431). The Wandorobos (Hamitic nilotic hunters) also despise smiths, who enjoy no legal rights in their communities and may even be put to death by their superiors (Cline, p. 113). Their neighbours, the Massais, (Hamitic nilotic nomads, great cattle-breeders), leave iron smelting and work at the forge to the Il-kononos, a caste held in great contempt (Baumann, p. 259). In the belief of the Massais, the vicinity of a kraal of smiths may bring death, disease or other misfortunes to a kraal.

« The proximity of a smith's *kraal* may bring to a normal *kraal* death, sickness and various misfortunes. Sexual intercourse with a woman of the smith caste will cause a man to lose his reason, to beget defective children or to be killed in the next raid. *Ol kononi* — « a smith » — is a term of insult when applied to a non-smith, and to pronounce this word after dark is to invite the nocturnal attacks of lions or human enemies. Even the smith's handywork is unclean » (Cline, *op. cit.* p. 114).

Let us return to the African populations among whom the smith is held in honour. Amongst the Wa Tchaggas (Hamitic Bantus, farmers) smiths are both feared and honoured. There is a reverse to the medal in the case of marriage; « An outsider does not like to give his daughter to a smith, since to divorce him could expose her to great danger. Should the divorce become necessary, the smith may free her by rubbing her all over with butter in the presence of his mother or another female witness — a method reminiscent of the Masai way of removing the smith's contamination from a new iron object — and by handing her a staff before he pronounces the divorce » (23).

The hammer possesses quite special power.

Before forging a hammer, the smith receives from his customer a buck and some beer. It is above all thanks to his hammer that he can give a magic blow to a thief or personal enemy (24). Generally speaking, smiths do not make use of their powers for black magic and many are famed to be beneficent Shamans. Iron lends efficacy to amulets and is an excellent remedy for illness. The women of the Western WaTchaggas wear iron rings round their necks and arms as these objects render them fertile and cure children's diseases (Cline, p. 116).

Among the Katanga (Southern Congolese culture), metal-workers are organised in a secret religious society (*bwanga*) with rites of initiation and specific forms of worship (Cline, p. 119). The Master Smelter among the BaYakes (Nyamwezi tribe, South Congolese culture) collaborates with a Shaman. Among the Ballas (farming folk of the Zambesi circle) the « iron doctor » supervises metal smelting (Cline, *ib.* p. 120). In South Congo the smiths form a hereditary guild « the members of which enjoy a social status about equal to that of Shamans, and are led by masters who are often called *ocim banda*, Witch doctor, as well as *ocivinda*, blacksmith » (Cline, p. 122). Among the Mosengers and BaSakatas (South Congo circle) the master-smith is generally the founder of the village and his craft is hereditary (*ibid.* p. 124). « The partial identification of smiths with chiefs is manifested in a number of other groups in the Congo area: notably on the Upper Ogowe, where smiths are always sorcerers and often chiefs; in Loango, where the national sacred fire is tended by the priest-smith; among the BaSongo, where smiths rank immediately after chiefs; among the Holoholo, where they rank just below the chiefs and hunters and above the chief's lieutenant and shamans, etc.» (Cline p. 125). The Tivs of North Nigeria ascribe to iron the power of assuring communion between the living and the dead; they also believe that iron tools and implements share in the magic power which is in the forge and finds expression above all in thunder (*ibid.* p. 126).

The privileged position of the African smith and his religious functions, are explained above all by cosmogonic myths and myths of origin. Thanks to Marcel Griaule and his colleagues, we are now fully informed on the mythology of the First Smith as held by the Dogons (cultural circle of the Volta) and the Bambaras

(circle of the Upper Niger). The Dogons hold in high esteem the craft of the smith and his tools have an important place in their religion. The First Smith, indeed, fills an essential part in their mythology. He received from the supreme god, Amma, samples of the principal seeds that can be cultivated, which he placed inside his sledge hammer, then he grasped an iron chain and the god lowered him down on to the earth. Another version says that the smiths lived originally in heaven and worked for Amma (25). But one of the smiths stole the millet and hid it in his sledge hammer, and when Amma lowered him down on to the earth he became impure on touching the soil and was therefore unable to reascend to heaven. A third and fuller version says that the Ancestral Smith built in heaven a granary divided into eight compartments, representing the principal organs of man. In each compartment he placed one of the eight cultivable seeds. This granary built in heaven was afterwards brought to the earth by the First Smith and was dispersed there and became the original field around which, later on, the human family was organised (26). Likewise, the first celestial Smith invented fire, taught men the art of agriculture and how to tame animals (27). Other myths relate that the Cultural Hero of the Dogons, Nommo, transformed into a smith, came down to earth to teach civilisation to mankind. In the sky, Nommo is visible during storms when he hurls the thunder bolts that hit the earth (28).

The connexion of the Celestial Smith — the Civilising Hero — Agriculture — the religious importance of the smith, forms a chain that has not been forged by the Dogons alone. We find it more or less complete in the beliefs of the Sawadogos (Tegnaeus, p. 35), the Gourouvis (the first smith, was the Cultural Hero; the smith is the priest of fire and thunder; *ibid.* p. 40). We find it in the beliefs of the Bolos, one of the most archaic populations of the Volta region (the myths relate that the first smith, son of the Supreme God, came down on earth, revealed fire to man, and taught him how to domesticate animals and till the soil. The smith plays an important part in religious and social life; he is the Master Teacher in initiation rites, the soothsayer, the prophet, etc.; Tegnaeus, p. 42 et seq.). We find him with the Somons, Bambara fisherfolk (a cosmogonic myth ascribes to the primordial smith the role of co-operator in creation: « it is he who offers the sacrifice

to the Genius of the Water »; he belongs to a family whose ancestors were the smiths who descended from heaven; Tegnaeus, p. 47). Among the Bambaras the high-priest is almost always a smith, and the secret societies are generally controlled by smiths. Tauxier had already shown that this is also the case with the other populations — Mandés, Malinkés, Uassulonkés, etc. (29). Amyth of the Ashantis tells that the smith descended on earth with orders from the god to form two dozen men and animals (Tegnaeus, p. 55). Among the Ewès the smith and the implements of the forge occupy an important place in their religious life. The hammer and the anvil are believed to have fallen from heaven, and oaths are taken in front of them. The smith brings rain and may assure the successful issue of a war. The myths relate that the First Smith — sometimes considered to be the Son of the Supreme God — was sent by god to complete creation and teach men the secret of the crafts (30). In the belief of the Yorubas the First Smith, Ogun, forged the first weapons, taught the secrets of the chase, and founded the secret society of the Ogboni (Tegnaeus, pp. 82 et seq.) Nzeanzo, the Civilising Hero of the Mboulas, was a Smith, medicine-man and teacher: he taught all useful arts and set up the confraternities of smiths (ibid, p. 102). Among the Tchambas, Dakas, Durrans and other neighbouring tribes the mythology of the Smith-Civilising Hero, is very rich. The first smith revealed to them not only fire and how to cook food, but also the art of building houses, the sexual relations for begetting children, the art of midwifery, circumcision, burial rites, etc. (ibid, p. 104). In short, among the Durrans and other tribes the part played by the smith in social and religious matters is more important than that of the king (ibid, p. 105). The myths of the Kikuyus tell of three brothers, all of them Civilising Heroes. The first taught how to domesticate animals, the second agriculture, and the third the craft of smelting and forging metals (ibid, pp. 142 et seq.). In closing this rapid survey of African tribes we will note that the first king of Angola was, according to tradition, the Smith King (Tegnaeus, p. 172).

The whole area of paleo-negritic culture bears witness to the religious complex of the smith, whose ideological foundations are found in the myth of the Celestial Smith, Cultural Hero par excellence. It would however

be a mistake to seek the explanation of the ritual importance of the smith solely from the fact that he makes agricultural implements. Agricultural civilisations do not necessarily exalt the smith and iron. An essentially agricultural civilisation like that of the Slavs only uses iron for *apotropaic* purpose. Although the two most ancient world centres of metallurgy (the Tauric and the Yenisseen) were near, the Slavs have a culture in which metals play no part (31).

We must therefore turn to mythologies and religious ideologies to understand the position of the smith. Now, as we have just seen, the Celestial Smith is the son, the messenger or the collaborator of the Supreme God: he completes the god's work and in most cases does so in his name. The « civilisation » brought by the Celestial Smith is not limited to the organisation of the world, an organisation which might be said to be almost a cosmogony; it is also of a spiritual kind: the Smith as Master continues and completes the work of God by making man capable of understanding the mysteries. Hence the part played by the smith in the initiation rites of puberty and in those of secret societies, and his importance in the religious life of the community. Even his relations with Chiefs and Sovereigns with whom in some regions he merges, are of a religious nature.

In considering the despised position of the smith among the Massais and other Hamitic peoples, account should be taken not only of the fact that they are not agricultural peoples, but also of the magical-religious powers of iron. Like all other sacred objects, metal is both dangerous and beneficial. The ambivalent attitude towards metals and towards smiths is a fact almost universally attested.

Smiths, Warriors, Masters of Initiation.

We shall only glance at another group of myths in which the relations between the divine smiths and the gods are placed on a different plane. We have here the well-known myth of the fight between the Celestial God (more precisely the God of the Hurricane) and the Dragon of the Waters. The stake at issue is world sovereignty; but it is always of cosmic range. When the monster is vanquished the God draws out the world from its body (the mythical motif of Marduk and Tiamat) or, in other versions, organises the world,

placing it on solid foundations, by « binding » the monster, who is cast into underground depths. Now, in most versions of this myth it is from a divine smith that the God of the Hurricane receives the marvellous weapons that assure his victory. In the Canaanite text, *The Poem of Baal*, the god Kôshar-wa-Hasis (literally « Adroit and Cunning ») forges for Baal the two bludgeons with which he will fell Yam, Lord of the Seas and of underground waters (37). In Ugaritic mythology Kôshar is the divine smith. According to the tradition transmitted by Sankoniaton, Chusôr was the first to discover iron (Gaster, *Thespis*, p. 154, commentary). In an Egyptian version of the same mythical motif, Ptah (the potter-god) forges the weapons that enable Horus to defeat Set. Likewise, the divine smith, Tvashtri, forges the weapons of Indra for his fight with the Dragon Vrtra. Hephaistos forges the thunderbolt which enables Zeus to triumph over Typhon; Thor crushes the serpent Midhgadshormr with his hammer Mjöl-nir, forged by the dwarfs, Scandinavian counterparts of the Cyclops.

But the cooperation between the divine smith and the gods is not restricted to the assistance given in the great struggle for sovereignty over the world. The smith is likewise the architect and the craftsman of the gods. Kôshar fashions the bows of the gods, directs the building of the palace of Baal, and equips the sanctuaries of the other divinities. Theodor Gaster also notes that this smith-god has relations with music and song. Sankoniaton says that Chusôr also invented the art of eloquence and that of making spells and songs. In the Ugaritic texts, singers are called *Kotarât*. The close connexion between the smith's craft and song is clearly noted in the semitic vocabulary: the Arab *q-y-n*, « to forge, to be a smith », is related to the Hebrew, Syrian and Ethiopian terms designating the action of « singing, entoning a dirge » (33). It is unnecessary to recall the etymology of the word « poet » from the Greek « *poietes* », « maker », and the semantic vicinity of « artisan » to « artist ». The Sanskrit *taks*, « to make », is utilised to express the composition of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* (I, 62, 13; V, 2, 11). The old Scandinavian *lotha-smithr*, « song-smith » and the modern Rheinisch *reimschmied* « poetaster », point still more clearly to the close ties between the craft of smith and the art of the poet or musician (Gaster, *ibid.*). Like relations have been

noted in the case of the Turco-Tatars and the Mongols by whom the smith is associated with heroes, musicians, healers and fortune-tellers. The name the gypsies give themselves is, in Europe, *Rom*, in Armenia *Lom*, in Persia *Dom*, in Syria *Dom* or *Dum*. « Now », writes Jules Bloch, « *dom* is in India the name of a tribe or rather of an agglomeration of tribes who are widespread and known from of old » (34). In the Sanskrit texts they are associated to musicians, and untouchables, but they are known above all as smiths and musicians. It is not without interest to note that relations exist between smelters and Asûr smiths and the *doms*. Prior to the present dynasty, a *Dom* dynasty reigned over the Asur, who had perhaps come from the North (35).

It would therefore seem that there exists, at different cultural levels (an indication of great antiquity) a close tie between the *art of the smith, occult sciences* (Shamanism, Magic, healing, etc.) and the *arts of song, dance, and poetry*. It would also seem that these allied arts were transmitted in an atmosphere steeped in the sacred and the mysterious, implying for initiation, specific rites, « craft secrets ». We are far from having penetrated all the points and all the aspects of this ritual complex and some of them will doubtless remain for ever closed to us. The few groups of myths and metallurgic rites that we have reviewed suffice to give us an idea of their extreme complexity, and suggest to us the varied conceptions of the world that they imply. One element is however constant, it is that of the sacred nature of metals and therefore of the ambivalent and mysterious character of the work of the miner and metal-worker. Some mythological themes of the former stone ages have been embodied in the mythologies of the metal ages. Special significance attaches to the fact that the symbolism of the « thunder stone », which assimilates stone missiles to thunderbolts, was greatly developed in the mythologies of the metal ages. The weapons forged by the god-smiths or the divine smiths for the Uranian Gods are thunder and lightning. This is so, for instance, in the case of the arms presented by Tvashtri to Indra. The clubs of Ninurta are called « world-crusher » and « world-pounder », and are assimilated to thunder and lightning. So again thunder and lightning are the « weapons » of Zeus, and the hammer (*mjöl-nir*) of Thor is the thunderbolt. The clubs « spring » from the hand of Baal, for

Kôshar has forged him weapons which can be hurled to a great distance (Gaster, op. cit. p. 158). Zeus hurls afar his thunderbolts.

One grasps the interlocking of images: thunder, « the thunder stone », (a mythical memory of the stone age), the magic weapon which strikes from afar; (sometimes returning, like a boomerang, to the hand of its master; cf. Thor's hammer). We can here decipher some traces of a mythology of the *homo faber*, we can guess the magic aura of the tool forged, the exceptional prestige of the craftsman and worker and, above all, in the metal age, of the smith. It is anyhow significant that unlike the pre-agricultural and pre-metal mythologies, in which the celestial god possesses as his natural prerogatives the thunder and all the other meteorological manifestations, in the mythologies of historical peoples (Egypt, the Near East, Indo-Europeans), the storm god receives his weapons — thunder and lightning — from a divine smith. One cannot but see in this the mythologised victory of *Homo faber*, a victory that already announces the supremacy he will enjoy in future industrial ages.

In all these myths of smiths who help the « supreme » Gods to assure their supremacy, what we note is the extraordinary importance attributed to the forging of a tool. This forging preserves, of course, for a long time its magic or divine character; for all creation, all construction cannot but be a super-human work. Finally, we should mention a last aspect of this mythology of the maker of tools: the craftsman strives to imitate his divine models. The smiths of the gods forge weapons assimilated to thunder and lightning (« weapons » with which the celestial deities of pre-metal mythologies were provided by nature); in their turn, the human smiths imitate their super-human masters. But it should be noted that, on the mythological plane, mere imitation of the divine models makes way for a new theme, that of the importance of the work of making in itself, the demiurgic abilities of the worker; in short, the apotheosis of the *faber*, the creator of objects.

One is tempted to seek in this category of primordial experiences the source of all the mythic-ritual complexes in which the divine or semi-divine smith and craftsman are at the same time architects, dancers, musicians and witch doctors. Each of these qualities throws light on a different aspect of the great mythology of the « knowledge of how to make »

i.e. the possession of the occult secret of « making », « constructing ». The words of a song possess considerable creative power. One « creates » objects by « chanting » the necessary words. Väinämöinen « chants » a boat, *i.e.* builds it by chanting a song composed of magic words; and as he does not know the last three words he goes to enquire for them to a famous magician, Antero Vipunen. « To make » something means that you know the magic formula which will enable you to « invent » it, or make it appear spontaneously. The craftsman is therefore one who knows secrets, he is a magician. And so all crafts require initiation and are handed down by an occult tradition. He who « makes » efficiently is he who *knows* the secrets by which they are made.

This also explains to a large extent the function of the mythical African smith as Cultural Hero. He has been charged by god to complete creation, to organise the world, and also to train men by revealing to them the art of cultivation. We must stress above all the role of the African smith in the initiatory rites of puberty and of secret societies. In both cases he reveals mysteries, in other words he imparts knowledge of ultimate realities. We can feel in the religious part played by the smith a replica of the mission of Civilising Hero performed by the celestial smith. He collaborates in the spiritual « formation » of the youths, he is a sort of teacher, the terrestrial match of the First Teacher who descended from heaven « in the old days ».

It has been noted that in ancient Greece, some groups of mythical character — Telkines, Kabeiroi, Couretes, Dactyloi — were both secret confraternities, in touch with the mysteries, and also guilds of metal-workers. Several traditions represent the Telkines as the first iron and bronze workers, the Idean Dactyloi discovered how to smelt iron and the Couretes how to work bronze. They were also famed for the special dances which they performed by clashing together their weapons. The Kabeiroi like the Couretes are called « masters of the furnaces », « powerful over fire » and their cult spread all over the Eastern Mediterranean (36). The Dactyloi were the priests of Cybele, a mountain Divinity, but also of mines and caves, dwelling within mountains (37).

According to a tradition handed down by Clement of Alexandria (*Protreptic.* II, 20), the Corybantes, known here also by the name

of Kabeiroi, were three brothers one of whom was killed by the other two who buried his head at the foot of Mount Olympus. This legend on the origin of the mysteries is linked to a myth on the origin of metals.

Now, these groups of mythical metal workers are acquainted with magic (the Dactyloi, the Telkines, etc.), with dance (the Corybantes, the Couretes), with mysteries (Kabeiroi, etc.), and the initiation of young boys (Couretes) (38). We thus have in these myths traces of remote conditions in which the confraternities of smiths played a part in mysteries and initiation rites.

H. Jeanmaire has rightly stressed the function of « teachers » that pertained to the Couretes in the ceremonies of initiation relating to age groups. As educators and masters of initiation the Couretes have some features in common with the mission of the smiths — the Civilising Heroes of the Africans. Now it is a significant fact that at this later and much more complex stage of culture, the duties of the smith and the blacksmith as masters of initiation rites still survive in a definite form. The blacksmith has part both in the magic charms of the smith and in the symbols that have crystallised around the horse. Not the draft horse, harnessed to the war charriot, but the saddle horse, a discovery made by the nomadic horsemen of Central Asia. It is in this connexion that the horse has been the centre of many myths. The horse and the horseman occupy an important place in the ideologies and ritual of the « societies of men » (*Männerbünde*), and it is here that we meet the blacksmith: the phantom-horse came sometimes to the smithy with Odhin, or the troop of the « Mad Hunt » (*Wüttende Heer*) to be shoed (37). In some parts of Germany and Scandinavia the blacksmith took part, until a comparatively recent period, in initiation pageants of the type of the *Männerbünde*. In Steinermark, he shoes the « courser » (i.e. the dummy horse) killing it to resuscitate it again (Höfler, p. 54); in Scandinavia and North Germany, shoeing a horse is a rite performed at initiation into a secret society, but it is also a marriage rite (ibidem, pp. 54-55). As Otto Höfler has shown (p. 54), the ritual of shoeing the horse, killing it at a wedding and bringing it back to life (with or without the horseman) marks both the departure of the bridegroom from the group of bachelors and his entry into that of married men.

The smith and the blacksmith play a similar

part in the ritual of the Japanese « societies of men » (40). The smith god is called *Ame no ma-hitotsu no kami* ». « The one-eyed divinity of heaven ». Japanese mythology offers us a certain number of one-eyed and one-legged divinities, inseparable from the *Männerbünde*. They are either gods of thunder and of the mountains, or cannibal demons (Slawik, p. 698). Now, Odhin was also represented as an old one-eyed man, or one of feeble sight, when he was not blind (41). The phantom-horse who came to the blacksmith's smithy, was one-eyed. We have here a mythical-ritualistic motive that is very complex and which we cannot undertake to study. What we are concerned with here is the pageant of the *Männerbünde* in which the one-eyed, one-legged and other cripples are probably reminiscent of the initiatic mutilations or else describe the appearance of the master-initiators (small people, dwarfs, etc.). The divinities who were crippled were associated with « strangers », the « men of the mountains », the « underground dwarfs » i.e. with the mysterious mountain peoples, redoubtable metal-workers. In Nordic mythologies dwarfs were reputed to be excellent smiths; some fairies enjoyed like reputation (42). The tradition of a people of small size who were all engaged in working metals and who lived in the depths of the earth is also found elsewhere. In the belief of the Dogons, the first mythical inhabitants of the region were Negrillos who have now disappeared into the bowels of the earth; they are indefatigable smiths and the blows of their hammers can still be heard (43). The societies of warrior men, both in Europe and in central and North Asia (Japan) had initiatory rites in which the smith and the blacksmith played a part. It is known that after the conversion of North Europe to Christianity, Odhin and the « mad hunt » were assimilated to the Devil and the hordes of the damned. A long step was thus taken towards identifying the smith and the blacksmith with the Devil (44). The « mastery of the fire », a quality common to magicians, shamans, and smiths, was considered in Christian folklore as diabolical. One of the most frequent of folklore images of the Devil represents him as spitting fire. This may have been the last mythological transformation of the archetypal image of the « Fire Master ».

Odhin-Wotan was the master of the *wut*, the *furor religiosus*, («Wotan, that is madness», wrote Adam von Bremen). Now the *wut*, like

some other terms of the Indo-European religious vocabulary (*furor*, *ferg*, *ménos*), expresses « anger » and « extreme heat » caused by an excessive ingestion of the sacred power. The warrior « heats himself » during his combat of initiation, he gives out a heat which is reminiscent of the « magic heat » produced by Shamans and Yogis. From this point of view the warrior resembles the other « masters of fire » — magicians, shamans, yogis, smiths. New light may be thrown on the relations, described above between the fighting gods (Baal, Indra, etc.), and the Divine Smiths (Kôshar, Tvashtri, etc.). The Divine Smith works with fire, the warrior god by his *furor* magically produces fire in his own body. It is intimacy, familiarity with fire that leads such widely different magical-religious experiences to converge, to blend, and which brings together such dissimilar vocations as those of the shaman, the smith, the warrior and the mystic.

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NOTES

- (1) *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris, 1951), pp. 233-237 sq., 412 sq.
- (2) *Le Chamanisme*, p. 408.
- (3) A. Popov, « Consecration ritual for a blacksmith novice among the Yakuts » (*Journal of American Folklore*, 46, 1933, 257-271), p. 257.
- (4) A. Popov, *ibid.* p. 258; Eliade, *Le Chamanisme*, p. 409.
- (5) A. Popov, pp. 260-261; Eliade, *op. cit.* p. 409.
- (6) W. I. Jochelson, The Yakut (*Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, 33, 1931, 37-225), pp. 172 sq.
- (7) Jochelson, *ibid.* according to J. Sarubin.
- (8) Eliade, *Le Chamanisme*, p. 409-410, according to Sandschejew.
- (9) Eliade, *Le Chamanisme*, pp. 48 sq. according to G. W. Ksenofontov and A. Popov.
- (10) They are not necessarily primitive relations, for among other forms of shamanism (Oceanian, American) iron plays no important part.
- (11) F. Altheim, *Attila* (Fr. transl. Paris, 1952), p. 33.
- (12) F. Altheim, *ibid.* p. 128, according to d'Ohsson et Sandschejew.
- (13) Altheim, *ibid.* The Avestic word *kavay* means also « wise »; *ib.* p. 126.
- (14) R. J. Forbes, *Metallurgy in Antiquity*, (Leyden, 1950), pp. 79-80, according to W. H. Rassers.
- (15) Forbes, *op. cit.* p. 65, according to R. Goris and P. de Kat Angelino. Most of the smiths of Bali arrived there in the 15th century from Java.
- (16) Karl Meuli, Scythica, (*Hermes*, 70, 1935, 121-176), pag. 175.
- (17) Cf. R. Eisler, Das Qainzeichen und die Queniter (*Le Monde Oriental*, 29, 1929, 48-112), p. 111.
- (18) R. Andree, *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche. Neue Folge* (Leipzig, 1889), p. 153; *id.*, *Die Metalle bei den Naturvölkern* (Leipzig, 1884), pp. 42 sq.

- (19) R. Andree, *Die Metalle bei den Naturvölkern*, pp. 136 sq.
- (20) R. Andree, *Die Metalle*, p. 9, 42.
- (21) Walter Cline, *Mining and Metallurgy in Negro Africa* (Paris, 1937), p. 22.
- (22) H. Baumann et D. Westermann, *Les peuples et les civilisations de l'Afrique* (transl. by L. Homburger, Paris, 1948).
- (23) Cline, *op. cit.* p. 115, apud B. Guttman, Der Schmied und seine Kunst im animistischen Denken (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 44, 1912, 81-93), p. 89.
- (24) B. Guttman, *op. cit.* pp. 83 sq.
- (25) Note the symmetry between this myth and the Mundas and Bouriat myths about the first celestial smiths.
- (26) For the several versions of the myth see Marcel Griaule, *Masques Dogons* (Paris, 1938) p. 48; *id.*, *Dieu d'eau* (Paris, 1949), pp. 52 sq.; *id.*, Descente du troisième verbe (*Psyché*, 13-14, 1947, pp. 1333-1341), pp. 1336 sq.; G. Dieterlen et S. de Ganay, Le Génie des Eaux chez les Dogons (*Miscellanea Africana Lebandy*, V, Paris, 1942), pp. 6 sq.; Harry Tegnaeus, *Le Héros Civilisateur. Contribution à l'étude ethnologique de la religion et de la sociologie africaines* (Uppsala, 1950), pp. 16 sq.
- (27) Griaule, *Masques Dogons*, p. 49; *id.*, *Descente du troisième verbe*, pp. 1335 sq.; Dieterlen and de Ganay, *Le Génie des Eaux*, p. 7; H. Tegnaeus, pp. 18 sq.
- (28) Griaule, *Masques Dogons*, p. 157; *id.*, *Dieu d'eau* pp. 130 sq.; H. Tegnaeus, pp. 20 sq.
- (29) Tegnaeus, p. 47; L. Tauxier, *Histoire des Bambara* (Paris, 1942), pp. 276 sq.; G. Dieterlen, *Essai sur la religion des Bambara* (Paris, 1951), pp. 143 sq.
- (30) There are a great number of myths containing some unavoidable variants, more especially between the traditions of the Western Ewes and the Eastern ones. We have summed up the essential parts from Tegnaeus, *Le Héros Civilisateur*, pp. 61-63.
- (31) Evel Gasparini, *L'Ergologia degli Slavi* (Venezia, 1951), pp. 172 sq., 179.
- (32) See the text translated and fully commented by Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis, Ritual, Myth and Drama in the ancient Near East* (New York, 1950) pp. 154 et seq.
- (33) Ginsberg, quoted by Th. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, p. 155.
- (34) Jules Bloch, *Les Tsiganes* (Paris, 1953) p. 28.
- (35) W. Ruben, *Eisenschmiede und Dämonen in Indien* (Leiden 1939), p. 9; Jules Bloch, *Les Tsiganes*, p. 30.
- (36) J. de Morgan, *La Préhistoire Orientale*, III (Paris, 1927) pp. 173 et seq. For all this see the respective articles in the *Real Encyklopaedie* by Pauly and Wissowa. There is a full account of the textual and epigraphic sources in the volume by Bengt Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*, Uppsala, 1950).
- (37) Cf. Radet, *La Lydie et le monde grec au temps des Mernnades* (Paris, 1892), p. 269, etc.; Hugo Gressmann, *Die orientalischen Religionen in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1939), p. 59; Bengt Hemberg, Die idaiischen Daktylen (*Eranos*, 50, 1952, 41-59), passim. On the relations between the Daktyles and the Mediteranean Goddess, see U. Pestalozza, *Religione Mediterranea*, (Milano, 1951), pp. 188 sq., 202 sq. On the obstetrical functions of the Daktyles, *ibid.* p. 204.
- (38) Cf. H. Jeammaire, *Courois et Courètes* (Lille, 1939); R. Pettazzoni, *I Misteri* (Bologna, 1924), pp. 71 sq.
- (39) Otto Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (Frankfurt a. M., 1934), pp. 53 sq.
- (40) Alexander Slawik, Kultische Geheimbünde der Japaner und Germanen (*Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV, 1936, 675-764), pp. 697 sq.
- (41) Otto Höfler, *op. cit.* p. 181, note 56.
- (42) Cf. the references brought together by Stith Thompson *Subject Index of Folk-literature* (FF Communications, Helsinki, 1932 et sq.), Vol. III p. 87 (dwarf-smiths), III p. 39 (fairly metalworkers).
- (43) H. Tegnaeus, *Le Héros Civilisateur*, p. 16.
- (44) Cf. Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, s. v. Schmied, Teufel; Hedwig von Beit, *Symbolik des Märchens*, I (Bern, 1952), pp. 118 sq.