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Tree and serpent worship

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Part II. - Eastern Asia.

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PART II.—EASTERN ASIA.

PERSIA.

THE Eastern branch of our subject has been even less investigated by European scholars than those divisions noticed in the previous pages. This has arisen partly from a less degree of familiarity with Eastern tradition, but more probably because until the very recent discoveries in Cambodia and at Amravati no very tangible data existed on which any satisfactory conclusions could be based. The subject is now, however, assuming a very different aspect, and before long it may be hoped that great light will be thrown on the Tree and Serpent Worship of the ancient world, from a study of those forms of that faith which we now know existed at one time in India.

With Persia the case is slightly different. We have no material remains of Snake Worship in that country, and very little native history. The Zend-Avesta is the work from which we might hope most, not only from its antiquity, but because of its doctrinal character. It is, however, of very little use for our present purposes, inasmuch as it, like the Vedas, embodies the religious belief only of the Aryan, or as they are called here, the Iranian branch of the Persian people, and it need hardly be repeated here that they are not, and never were, serpent worshippers anywhere. If, indeed, there is one point which comes out more clearly than another in the course of this investigation, it is that Serpent Worship is essentially that of a Turanian, or at least of a non-Aryan people. In the present state of the enquiry it would be too bold a generalization to assert that all Turanian races were Serpent Worshippers; and still less can it be affirmed that all who looked on the Serpent as a God belonged to that family of mankind. It is safe, however, to assume that the whole tendency of the facts hitherto brought to light, lies in that direction; and it seems probable that eventually the worship of the Serpent may become a valuable ethnographic test of the presence of Turanian blood in the veins of any people among whom it is found to prevail.

At the time when the Greeks became acquainted with Persia, the whole country, under the influence of the Achæmenian kings, had been brought to acknowledge Zoroasterism with its elemental Fire Worship as their principal form of faith. This religion in its purity,—if we know it in that state,—was the faith which the Iranians brought with them from their original seats when they separated from the Indian Aryans, and was practically their common faith both in India and in Persia. In the latter country, however, in the time of the Achæmenidæ, it was strangely mixed up with Magism, a religion of much more Semitic, or even, it may be suspected, Turanian form, and the two were at that time so blended, that in the accounts of the Greeks at least it is impossible to separate the one from the other.

At the time when the Greeks first make us practically acquainted with Persia, Tree and Serpent Worship had ceased to be regarded as the religion of any important body in the state, though the probability is that it may have been followed to a considerable extent by large classes of people in that vast empire. As, however,

the Persians despised, and the Greeks did not observe the Ophites, we are left almost entirely at the mercy of the Mahomedan historians and poets of the eleventh and following centuries for such faint glimmerings of truth as can be picked up, and anyone who has ever opened one of their books will know what blind guides they are in such an investigation. It is doubtful whether even the critical skill of European scholars will ever sift a substratum of tangible history out of the fables of Firdausi or Mirkhond. At present the task has hardly been attempted, and when it has, with only a small modicum of success.

By far the most important and most interesting person in ancient Persian history, for our present purposes at least, is Zohák. According to all accounts he came from Arabia, and took his title, Bivar-asp, from his body guard of 10,000 horsemen by whom he was always accompanied.* His genealogy from Tází or Táj, the eponymous of the Arabs, is given both in the Bundehesch and the Mojmil.† His father is represented as a simple possessor of flocks and herds, but he is said to have conquered Central Asia, and to have fixed his residence at Babel.‡ His reign, or rather that of his dynasty, is said to have lasted 1,000 years, when he was overthrown by Feridún, with the assistance of Gavah the blacksmith, by whom the original line of Jemshid was then restored.

Feridún has been identified almost without doubt with Thraëtaona of the Zend-Avesta, celebrated as the slayer of the three-headed Serpent Daháka, who was the creation of the evil power Angra Mainyus,§ or more popularly Ahriman.

Zohák is represented by all the Mahomedan historians as having two snakes growing at his back, one from each shoulder, and they add that it was necessary to appease these monsters by sacrificing daily two young men in order that their cravings might be satisfied with their brains.|| All this has hitherto been mysterious enough, but as we shall presently see, all women of the Nága race had one serpent between their shoulders, and all men—in India—one with three, five, or seven heads; the two of Zohák seem an earlier form, being the exact duplication of those of the females, and it is also probable that the *three* heads of the Zend-Avesta¶ include the human head between the two snakes. We shall be in a better position to judge of this presently, but whatever explanation we adopt, it seems only to be an earlier form of a myth with which we are now becoming familiar in India. The human sacrifices are only what we find so universally accompanying Serpent Worship all the world over.

The most startling novelty with regard to Zohák is the assertion that he came from Arabia, where we have no reason to suppose that Serpent Worship then pre-

* Justi Bundehesch, 1868, Glossary s. v. béwarásp. Handbuch der Zendsprache, 1866, Glossary s. v. Daháka.

† Windischmann, Zoroastrische Studien, pp. 30, 37, c. 39.

‡ Is it possible that this is the Arab dynasty which, according to Berossus, ruled in Babylon in the 13th century B.C.? Rawlinson's Ancient Monarchies, vol. I. p. 193.

§ Windischmann, quoting from the Yaçna, IX. 8, p. 29. See also Westergaard in Weber's Indische Studien, vol. III. p. 416.

|| Mojmil (156); Windischmann, 37; Sháh Náme, Atkinson's translation, p. 14.

¶ Tribus oribus præditum, tribus capitibus. Masaudi, III. p. 252, and the Mahomedans, on the contrary, always speak of "Two Serpents borne on the shoulders of Dahák."

(4799.)

ailed. Perhaps it only means right bank of the lower Euphrates, which to a man writing in Afghanistan, or the north-east of Persia, might be so described; the original seat of the empire being Babylon would bear that interpretation. Moses of Chorene* would try to persuade us that Zohák was identical with Astyages the Mede, but as his assertion seems to rest more on a verbal coincidence than on historical evidence, too much reliance must not be placed upon it. The Serpent dynasty most probably reigned in Media rather than in Persia proper, but they must have been extinct before the time of Cyrus, though all this requires more careful examination than it has yet met with.

One remnant of the race of Zohák seems to have survived in Cabul, and it would be especially interesting to us, if we knew more about it, as it seems the connecting link between the Persian and Indian Serpent Worship. According to the Mojmil, "When Táj, the primogenitor of the Arabs, was settled in Babel, one of his sons married a daughter of Feridún and settled in Cabul, and his son was Rustem's maternal grandfather."† We find further particulars of the family in the Sháh Náme. When Zál the son of Sám went to Cabul he found Mihráb, a descendant of Zohák, on the throne, and having fallen in love with his daughter, Rudabeh, he was forbidden by the Mubids to marry her, because the chief of Cabul was of the family of Zohák, the Serpent King. The father too from this circumstance dreaded the resentment of Manuchehr if he allowed the union, and not without reason, for the king ordered Sám to destroy Kábul by fire and sword, and especially the house of Mihráb, then ruler of the serpent race, and all his adherents were to be put to death.‡ Fortunately for the lovers the difficulty was got over, and the result was the birth of Rustem, the most wonderful hero of Eastern romance. The point of interest to us, however, is, that it is probably to the preservation of this race of Serpent worshippers that we owe that remarkable development of Buddhism, which distinguished the valley of the Cabul river between the decline of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom and the rise of the Mahomedan power in that quarter.

The last material trace of Serpent Worship that is found in Persia occurs in a bas-relief at Nakshi-Rustem, near Persepolis. It represents Ormuzd bestowing the circlet of royalty on Ardishir Babegán the first king of the Sassanian line (A.D. 226). Beneath the feet of the horse on which the god (?) is seated, lies Ardevan, the last of the Parthians, and round his head are twisted two writhing snakes,§ not such as probably adorned the shoulders of Zohák, but still sufficiently important to mark that the sculptor intended to represent the Parthian as of the hated race of Zohák, the follower of the accursed Ahriman, whom Ormuzd tramples under foot while bestowing the emblem of royalty on the Zoroastrian, Fire-Worshipping Sassanian.

The more closely it is looked at the more probable does it appear that not only in this instance, but throughout the whole ancient history of Persia, the so-called dualism is much more an ethnographical expression than the result of any theological

* History of Armenia, Postscript to Book I. "Les descendants d'Astyages établis en Arménie portoient encore le nom de Vischabazouni, ce qui signifie Race de dragon. Cette dénomination leur venait du nom du roi des Mèdes."—St. Martin, I. 285.

† Windischmann, 37.

‡ Atkinson's translation of Shah Nameh, p. 77 et seq.

§ Ker Porter, vol. I. plate xxiii. ; Flandin et Coste, Voyage en Perse, plate clxxxiii.

elaboration. It was the opposition of Turan to Iran, of Zohak to Zoroaster, of Ormuzd to Ahriman—an Aryan race, with their pure elemental worship, intruding into a country occupied by a serpent-worshipping people of Turanian origin, but instead of totally abolishing and ignoring the religion of the conquered, forcing it into an unnatural combination with their own. All this, however, was carried out in such a manner as to represent their own, as the source of all that is good and elevated, and that of the subject race as the origin of all that is evil and accursed.

The answer to the question whether Tree Worship did or did not prevail in Ancient Persia will mainly depend on the signification scholars may eventually agree to assign to the Homa or Soma worship, which forms so important a ceremonial observance both in the Vedas and the Zend-Avesta. If the Soma plant always was the *Asclepias acida* or *Sarcostema viminalis*, which is now used by the Brahmans for that purpose, it cannot be called Tree Worship in the sense in which the term is used throughout this essay. The *Asclepias* is a creeping shrub, almost without leaves, and only remarkable for a milky juice, to which the most important virtues are ascribed. It is now used as freshly expressed,* but in former times was fermented so as to produce intoxication.

On the other hand, Windischmann, who had probably rendered himself more familiar with the spirit of the Zend-Avesta than any other scholar, thus expresses himself on the subject. "Homa is the first of the trees planted by Ahura-Mazda in the fountain of life. He who drinks of its juice never dies. According to the Bundehesh, the Gogard or Gaokerena tree bears the Homa, which gives health and generative power, and imparts life at the resurrection. The Homa plant does not decay, bears no fruit, resembles the vine, is knotty, and has leaves like jessamin, yellow and white."†

In another place he says, "From this it appears that the White Homa or the Tree Gokard is the Tree of Life which grew in Paradise."

In Persian mythology the Homa was also personified as a god, and converses with Ahura-Mazda with regard to the origin of all things, as if he were co-equal in knowledge with the great god of the Persians himself. Whatever form, however, it may have taken, our author adds, the Soma was unquestionably the greatest and holiest offering of ancient Indian or Iranian worship.‡

It would require a much more intimate knowledge of the subject than can be obtained from such translations as have been made, or such books as have been published, to speak at all definitely regarding the Homa. From such data as are available it would appear that the Homa had its origin in the same myth as the Trees of Life and Knowledge which grew in Paradise, and that it passed through a stage of Bacchic mystery, though whether the vine or some other plant was then the Homa is by no means clear; and at last it sank into the present innocent Soma form, which, however, can hardly be regarded as anything but a reminiscence of its former greatness and importance.

* Haug Essays, p. 247 ff. Wilson, Introduction to the Rig-Veda-Samhitā, vol. I. p. xxxvi. et seq.
† Ueber den Somacultus der Arier. p. 131.

‡ Windischmann, Zoroastrische Studien, pp. 89, 167, 251.

We shall have frequent occasion to speak of the Bodhidruma or Tree of Knowledge of the Buddhists, in the sequel. It is the principal object of worship at Sanchi, and among the most important at Amravati. It will only be possible to ascertain what connexion may have existed between it and the Gaokerena of the Persians, or the Homa, when some competent scholar, familiar with both Zend and Sanskrit, looks through the original authorities with special reference to this inquiry.

Though sufficiently absurd, the following legend from the Sháh Náme is curious. Sikander, after the conquest of India, went to Mekka, and thence to a country where there were two trees, one male, one female. The first spoke during the day, the latter at night. Whoever had a wish went there to have his desires accomplished. Sikander longed for length of days. When he came under the tree a horrible sound arose and rung in his ears; and on his asking what it meant, the attendant priest replied that fourteen years of his life still remained. Again he asked, "Shall I see 'Rúm and my mother and children before I die?'" The answer was, "Thou wilt 'die at Karshán.'"

The oldest known authority for this legend is the Pseudo-Kallisthenes, who wrote apparently about the year 200 A.D.† As he relates it, there were two trees, one of the Sun, which spoke in the Indian language, and one of the Moon which spoke Greek.‡ In the Mediæval fables, the "leafless tree" was introduced between these two. This tree is mentioned by Marco Polo,§ and under the name of the "Arbre Sec" was one of the favourite myths of the Byzantine and of early Christian travellers, though it is even now by no means clear where it grew (my impression is that it was in Scistan, though others place it in Khorassan), nor what exact meaning the Mediævalists attached to the fable.

Unfortunately the classical authors afford us little or no assistance in regard to Tree Worship in the countries westward of India, except the incidental remark of Quintus Curtius, in speaking of the inhabitants on the banks of the Indus, "Arbores maxime colunt,"|| there is no passage bearing, so far as I know, directly on the subject.

The Chinese travellers are hardly more communicative; but Hiouen-Tsang does mention a great Pipal tree of Peshawar,¶ under whose shade the four preceding Buddhas had reposed, and under it the last had predicted the appearance of the great Kaniskha, who in consequence had erected alongside of it, about the Christian era, the largest and tallest of all the Stupas of which we have any record. This tree seems to have existed and been revered down to the time of Baber (in 1504), who mentions it as the great tree of Bekram.** The Gûrh Katri he describes as close to it was probably the remains of the Monastery of Kaniskha. Even its site cannot now be ascertained.

CASHMERE.

Although from its position on the map, Cashmere might fairly be considered as an integral part of India, still its circlet of mountains has been sufficient to keep it distinct and separate, and we consequently find there vestiges of the old faith better

* Atkinson, Translation, p. 507.

† Zacher, Pseudo-Kallisthenes. Halle, 1867, p. 102.

‡ Loc. p. 161.

§ Marsden, p. 109.

|| Hist. Alex. VIII. 9.

¶ Histoire de la Vie de Hiouen Tsang, I. p. 83.

** Leyden's translation of Memoirs of Baber, 157, 264.

preserved than in most places on the plains. Another circumstance which has tended also in the same direction is that the Aryans on entering India do not seem to have turned aside to conquer or at least permanently to occupy the valley. If they entered India by crossing the Indus at or near Attock,—and there seems no good reason for doubting that this was so,—this seems so strange that we feel almost inclined to believe that Cashmere was really then in the state described in the earliest legends, a great lake, or at least a valley so filled with water and so swampy as to be unfit for human habitation. Though this may not be quite true we are no doubt justified in assuming that 4,000 or 5,000 years ago a much larger portion of the valley was under water than is the case now, and the real snakes may then have been relatively more important than their Naga successors afterwards became.

Be this as it may, Cashmere has always been considered, in historical times, as one of the principal centres of Serpent Worship in India, and hitherto it has been principally from her legends that what little was known of the Nagas has been gathered.

Cashmere is also fortunate in possessing in the Râja Taranginî something more like a connected history than almost any other country of India, and from its pages, with the incidental notices by classical, Chinese, and Mahomedan authors, we are enabled to form a tolerably distinct view of the subject.

Although from the context there is a strong presumption that Snake Worship prevailed in the valley from a very early period, still we have no direct testimony to the fact till the century before the Christian era, when the King Dâmodara having, it is said, offended some Brahman was converted into a snake,* and still, it is said, haunts the spot. He was succeeded by three Tartar princes, known from history and from their coins to have been Buddhists, and to have reigned about the Christian era. In the reign of their successor Abhimanyu we are told that “in consequence of the disuse of the prescribed institutes, and the abolition of every form of sacrifice, and a departure from the lessons of the Nîla Purâna, the Nagas were particularly incensed, and visited the offences of the people with severe and unseasonable storms of rain and snow, and those especially perished who had adopted the Bauddha heresy.”† Gonerda III., who succeeded this king, prosecuted the reform which that prince had commenced.

The ancient ritual, according to the Nîla precepts,‡ was restored, and the worship of the Nagas and the offering of sacrifices re-established.§ During the following centuries we have several legends of Nagas, but the faith of the kings is seldom mentioned, and seems to have oscillated between Snake Worship, Buddhism, and Hinduism, but as our historian belonged to the latter faith his testimony is not always quite to be depended upon. When Hiouen Tshang entered the valley in 632,

* Wilson's Abstract of the Râja Taranginî in Vol. XV. Asiatic Researches, p. 22. All the future references to this work are derived from the same source, which seems better and more trustworthy than the translation by Troyer. The volume and the page will, therefore, only be quoted.

† A. S. XV. p. 24.

‡ A. S. XV. p. 25.

§ The Nîla Purâna has not hitherto been seen by any European, but I trust to being able to add an abstract of its contents in an Appendix to this work. At my request Mr. J. Muir, the well-known Sanscrit scholar, wrote out to Sir D. Macleod, the Chief Commissioner in the Punjab, and he procured two copies from Cashmere, which are now in the hands of Professor Cowell, who has kindly undertaken to make the required analysis.

in the reign of Báláditya the last king of the Gonerdiya race, he found the Buddhist religion still very prevalent in the valley, though he admits that the king only interested himself in the heretics and in the temples of their gods, and despised the faith of Buddha.* He repeats the usual story of the valley having been a lake, but adds, "50 years after the Nirvāna (B.C. 493?) a disciple of Ānanda converted the Naga "Raja, he quitted his tank, built 500 monasteries, and invited sages and saints to "come and dwell in them."†

It is not, however, only in the valley that our Chinese traveller repeats the Hindu legends about serpents and their power, but at every stage of his journey from Cabul to Cashmere, he everywhere finds some spot where a dragon king or Naga Raja resided, and played an important part in the legendary history of the land. These legends, as might be expected, were found in the seventh century very much altered from their more primitive forms, but they are interesting, in the first place, as showing how essentially the north-west corner of India was at one time the seat of Serpent Worship, and also, in what manner it was eventually—except perhaps in Cashmere—amalgamated with Buddhism.

Among these legends one of the most pertinent to our present purpose is that of a member of the family of Śākya—that of Buddha—who when travelling in Udayana—the Kamboja of the Hindus, lying northward from Peshawar—fell in love with a serpent king's daughter. He was eventually married to her, and by the advice and with the assistance of his father-in-law, killed the king of the country and obtained the sovereignty. Though his wife had obtained and was confirmed in the possession of a human body, a nine-headed snake occasionally appeared at the back of her neck, which on a certain occasion her husband cut off at a single blow while she was asleep. The result was blindness, of which she was afterwards cured by Śākya-muni himself, and her son Uttarasena was present at the distribution of his relics at Kuśinagara, where the great ascetic obtained Nirvāna.‡

An almost equally curious legend is told of a Buddhist priest (Bhikshu) who became a serpent, because he had killed the tree Elāpatra, and resided in a beautiful lake or spring near Takshaśilā (Taxila). In our traveller's day when the people of the country wanted fine weather or rain, they went to the spring accompanied by a priest (Śramaṇa) "and snapping their fingers, invoke the dragon, and immediately "obtain their wishes."§ In these legends the chief characteristic of the Serpents throughout the East in all ages seems to have been their power over the wind and rain, which they exert for either good or evil as their disposition prompts.||

A curious confirmation of the prevalence of Nagas in the north-west of India is obtained from the Buddhist account of the proceedings consequent on the Third

* Hiouen-Thsang, II. 180. † Voyage de Hiouen-Thsang, I. 168. ‡ Hiouen-Thsang, II. 141.

§ Hiouen-Thsang, II. 152. General Cunningham visited this spring at Hassan Abdul in 1863, and found it still revered. Other legends are told at pp. 49, 99, 133, &c.

|| This power over the weather, which is one of the leading characteristics of Nagas, has led to their being confounded with the Vedic Ahi. In their origin and purpose I believe the two to have been perfectly distinct, but in the process of time the one legend borrowed from the other till the two have become so mixed up together that it will now be extremely difficult to separate them again. My own impression is that the Vedic myth is an adaptation of a local superstition; borrowed in fact from the serpent-worshipping aborigines among whom the Aryans were settled.

Convocation held B.C. 253. Missionaries were then sent to all the neighbouring countries. Among others Majjhantiko was dispatched to Kashmîra and Gandhâra.* A Naga king of that country, named Aravâlo, endowed with supernatural powers, by causing a furious deluge to descend was submerging all the ripened crops in Kashmîra and Gandhâra. The Nagas and their king tried every means to terrify the missionary, but were subdued by his calmness and address; "whereupon the Théro propounded his doctrines, and the Naga king attained the salvation and state of piety in that faith." In like manner "in the Himawanta (Himalaya) regions, 84,000 Nagas were converted, and the Naga king placing the Théro on a gem-set throne respectfully stood by fanning him. On that day the inhabitants of Kashmîra and Gandhâra, who had come with offerings to appease the wrath of the Naga king, bowing down to the Théro (instead of the Naga king) stood reverentially by his side," &c. These extracts from the Mahawanso,† depict faithfully the Buddhist belief on the subject two centuries before Hiouen-Tsang's time, though not from personal observation. The account is further interesting, because these in the north-west were the only Nagas to whom missionaries were sent by Aśoka. Either it was that the others had been converted before, or that Cashmere and the mountain countries east and west of it, were the most prominent seats of the faith.

These accounts by native authorities are fully confirmed by such scanty notices as we glean from classical authorities; Onesicritus tells us that two ambassadors sent to the king of Cashmere by Alexander, brought back news that the king of the country cherished two large serpents of fabulous dimensions.‡ Maximinius of Tyre tells us, that when Alexander entered India, Taxilus (King of Taxila) showed him a serpent of enormous size which he nourished with great care and revered as the image of the god whom the Greek writers, from the similitude of his attributes, called Dionysus or Bacchus.§

The latest authority we have, is that of Abulfazl, who tells us that in the reign of Akbar (1556—1605) there were in Cashmere 45 places dedicated to the worship of Siva, 64 to Vishnu, 3 to Brahmâ, and 22 to Durgâ, but there were 700 places in the valley where there were carved images of snakes which the inhabitants worshipped.||

All this is fully confirmed by the architecture of the valley; with very few exceptions, all the ancient temples of Cashmere seem to have been devoted to Serpent Worship. They stand in square courts which were capable of being flooded and were crossed by light bridges of stone, some of which still remain. Even at the present day some of these temples are unapproachable without wading, in consequence of the water which surrounds them, and all might be rendered so by a slight repair to their waterworks. There are, of course, no images in the sanctuaries which long prevented antiquaries from perceiving the form of faith to which they were dedicated. But where the deity is a living god and mortal, when he and his worshippers pay the debt of nature, they leave no material trace to recall the memory of their past existence.

* In this wide sense Gandhâra seems to include all the countries westward of the Indus as far as Candabar. Relics of this missionary, as we shall presently see, were deposited in No. 3 Tope at Sanchi.

† Turnour, Translation, p. 72 and 73.

‡ Strabo, XV. 698.

§ Maxim. Tyr. Diss. XIII. ed. Lip. 140.

|| Ayeen Akbaree, Gladwin's Translation, p. 137.

CAMBODIA.

There is another country on the other side of the Bay of Bengal the study of whose antiquities is nearly as important to the elucidation of Serpent Worship in India, as those of Cashmere, though in a totally different sense. In the last-named country we look for the "incunabula" of the faith, in Cambodia for its fullest known development. The ruined cities of Cambodia have, however, been only so recently discovered, and are yet so little known, that it is extremely difficult to feel sure on many points connected with their history or purposes.* Whatever doubt may, however, exist on other points, it seems certain that the great Temple of Nakhon Vat was wholly dedicated to Serpent Worship. Every angle of every roof is adorned with a grim seven-headed serpent, with a magnificent crest of what is apparently intended for feathers, and every cornice of every entablature is adorned with a continuous row of these seven-headed deities, but without crests. The former may be counted by hundreds, the latter by thousands. But it is not only these; every balustrade, every ridge, almost every feature of the building bears the same impress. The arrangements too of the temple are such as are suitable for Serpent Worship, and that only. There is no image in the sanctuary, and no worship represented in the bas-reliefs. All the courts are tanks to contain water, and everything recalls the temples of Cashmere, but with ten-fold magnificence. Neither in India, nor so far as is known is there any other temple, displaying the same amount of patient labour devoted to the elaboration of appropriate ornament over so extended a surface as in this newly-discovered temple. It is 600 feet square at base, and rises to a height of 180 feet in the centre, while every part is covered with carvings in stone, generally beautiful in design, and always admirably adapted to their situation, and to tell the story they were meant to convey. The startling thing to us is, that simultaneously with the erection of the great cathedrals of York, Amiens, or Cologne, a larger and more magnificent temple than either of them was being erected in another part of the globe, in a style and dedicated to a religion of which the western builders knew nothing. What seems equally strange is that all memory of the people, and all knowledge of their buildings, should have so completely passed away that till within the last ten years no one in Europe suspected their existence.

We shall not know whether the other temples in the city of Nakhon Thom are equally dedicated to Serpent Worship till some one visits them who has some previous knowledge of the subject. They are so completely overgrown with jungle that photography will hardly help us in this instance. They were more extensive, and seem to have been as elaborately ornamented as the one temple of which we

* The temples were first discovered by M. Mouhot, a French naturalist, in 1858-60, but he did not pretend to any knowledge of their history. They were afterwards visited by Dr. Bastian, who has written voluminously regarding them, but either it is that he knows nothing about them, or for some reason he is afraid to commit himself to any statements regarding them. The greatest amount of information has been obtained from the photographs of Mr. J. Thomson, and his personal communications. From these sources a tolerably connected account is condensed in my *History of Architecture* (II. p. 713, et seq.), to which the reader is referred. Since it was published, Messrs. Edmiston and Douglas, of Edinburgh, have published a selection of Mr. Thomson's photographs, with explanatory text taken principally, with my consent and collaboration, from my work above referred to.

have some knowledge, but they seem rather to have been dedicated to some bastard form of Buddhism than to the worship of the Serpent in the form in which it is found at Nakhon Vat.

The question that principally interests us at this stage, is to ascertain how this marvellous development of Serpent Worship arose in Cambodia, and at what time.

The first impulse would be to assume that it was indigenous, but this certainly does not seem to be the case. The architecture of the temple is, if anything, classical—Roman Doric. The ornaments—bassi-relievi—are all subjects borrowed from the Rāmāyana or Mahābhārata, and fade gradually into the myths of the Hindu religion. The people are Indian. The natives, wherever they appear, are represented as an abject race, and are very cruelly treated by the superior race who were the builders of the temple, and the carvers of the bas-reliefs.

Another theory, which at first sight seemed plausible, was that the worship had reached Cambodia from the north. We know from Hiouen-Thsang that Serpent Worship was to be found in Koutche in the north of Thibet,* we know that the Strī Rājya, or Amazon kingdom, was in Thibet,† and we have so many traces of Serpent Worship all along the north of the Himalaya, Hindu Kush, and Caucasus, that it looks like a Scythian or northern form of faith, and may have leaked through the mountain ranges into both Cashmere and Cambodia, radiating from a common northern centre.

When more closely looked into, this theory seems as untenable as the last. The communication between Thibet and Cambodia is barred by ranges of mountains, which have hitherto proved practically impassable either as trade routes or for military operations. The southern country could only be reached through China, and Serpent Worship could hardly have passed through that country without leaving more traces of its passage, or bringing with it more evidences of Chinese civilization, than appears to be the case. We know so little, however, of the local superstitions of China that we must pause before expressing any decided opinion on this subject.

The only remaining hypothesis that suggests itself is that they came from India direct by sea. When we turn to their own traditions for any confirmation of this, the answer is distinct, "Our ancestors came from Myang Rom, or Romavisei, not far from Takçasila" (Taxila).‡ Startling as this may at first sight appear, there are many circumstances which not only take away from its strangeness, but seem to render it probable. In the first place Taxila, as just pointed out, was one of the great centres of Serpent Worship. The country they claim to have migrated from is, by the ancient Sanskrit authorities, called Kamboja.§ Their capital they call Inthapattapuri (Indraprastha), and that of Siam was Ayuthia (Ayodhyā), the two capitals of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, and almost all the other principal towns throughout the country bear Sanskrit names. If Halifax, Boston, and New York, are evidence of an English people having settled in America, the names of the Cambodian cities are equally conclusive in this respect.

* Mémoires, I. 4.

† Asiatic Researches, XV. 48.

‡ Bastian, Völker des Östlichen Asien, I. p. 393.

(4799.)

§ Wilford, A.R., VI. 516., VIII. 336; Muir, orig. Sanscrit Texts, II. 368. ff. &c.

Another argument which seems as important as any other, is the similarity of the style of architecture in the two countries. This is not only traceable in the arrangement of their temples, but in the details. The Cashmere pillars are curiously like those of the Grecian Doric order,* those of Cambodia are even more classical, but resemble Roman Doric. Nothing similar to either has yet been discovered between the two points, but there is an amount of classical influence apparent in the sculpture at Amravati which seems to supply a connecting link.

The improbability of such a migration is considerably lessened by the knowledge that an Indian colony did reach Java, by sea of course; did introduce there their own faith, and built those wonderful temples of Brambanan and Borobuddor, which in many respects resemble, though they do not rival, those of Cambodia. All this has been rendered more probable within the last year by the discovery of Serpent Worship existing to the extent it does at Amravati, near the mouth of the Kistnah, the very country whence navigators set sail who were about to cross the bay of Bengal going to the Gold Coast,† which we may almost certainly fix at Ligor, and this seems to point out the route which the Cambodians took on their migration.‡

Every day since my attention was turned to the sculptures at Amravati, fresh evidence of the prevalence of Serpent Worship in Central India has come to light, and it seems now tolerably clear, either that serpent races passed down the valley of the Indus, across Central India by the valley of the Godavery, and thence by sea to Cambodia; or that they passed from Tashasîlâ direct by land to Amravati, and thence to the Golden Chersonese. If a straight line is drawn on the map between these two first-named places it passes over Sanchi and other spots where Snake Worship once prevailed, and on the whole this route seems to be the one the emigrants would most probably have taken; but we are only yet on the threshold of the inquiry, and must wait for further information before deciding.

The time when this migration took place is not so easily fixed, but it appears to have first commenced in the fourth century, (after 318,) to have been continued in the fifth and sixth, and probably reached its height in the era of the religious disturbances and persecutions in India in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Cambodia was conquered by the Siamese between the years 1351-74, the capital destroyed, and depopulation set in. From that time Serpent Worship seems to have declined rapidly from its position of splendour and supremacy, and to have been succeeded by Buddhism, which is now the faith of all the civilized Indo-Chinese provinces.

The Cambodian legends which refer to the colonization of the country and the building of the city of Inthapattapuri, are all extremely similar to those related by Hiouen-Thsang, when speaking of the country whence they came, as noticed above. In all the dragon king's daughter is the principal personage, and from her the royal race claim to be descended. In the Cambodian legend it is related that the banished prince, Phra Thong, was driven, after a long sea voyage, on an island where grew a wonderful Talok tree, "Grewia inæqualis." He ascends its branches to look about him, but the tree grows faster than the celebrated beanstalk of Jack, and he

* Essay on the Arian order of Architecture as exhibited in the Temples of Kashmir, by Captain A. Cunningham, J.A.S.B., September 1848.

† Ptolemy, VII. 1.

‡ Jour. Asiat. Soc. Beng. XVII. 86.

fears he shall never see his mother earth again. In descending, however, he finds himself in a wonderful grotto in the hollow of the tree, where he meets with the dragon king's daughter, and marries her. The father consents to their union, and builds the city of Nakhon Thom for their residence, where he comes frequently to visit his beloved daughter; but the people complain of his presence, and his ungrateful children frighten him away by placing an image of the four-faced Brahma over the gate of the city.*

Another form of the legend is, that king Pathumma Surivong, while reposing under the wonderful tree, saw the dragon king's daughter bathing with her companions in a neighbouring lake, fell in love and married her, and went to the underground abode of his father-in-law, where he spent a fortnight. According to this legend he behaved much better to the old Serpent than Prince Phra Thong.

According to a third form, Indra had come down from heaven, but had neglected to bring any female attendants with him; feeling the loneliness of his situation, took up with the dragon king's daughter, who bore to him Ketumalea, the father of Pathumma Surivong, who seems really to have been the founder of the city.†

We have a date twice repeated, 957-8 A.D., for the accession of the last-named king, and if the names above quoted were really or closely connected with one another, as the legends would lead us to suppose, the migration and all the subsequent events down to the founding of the city really took place in the tenth century. If we were to draw our conclusions from the legends alone, this view must probably be adopted; but the context, and the indications from Indian experience, incline me to extend the time between the first migration and the building of the city to four or five centuries; but it is at present little more than guess work, in so far as the earlier dates are concerned. The circumstance that interests us most is the important part played in these legends by Nang Nakh, the Serpent King's daughter, and the description of her father and his kingdom. Foolish and legendary as all this may appear at first sight, it assumes considerable importance when we find it resulting in some of the most wonderful temples which the world ever saw, and in the most remarkable development of pure Serpent Worship anywhere to be found.

CHINA.

It is extremely difficult to ascertain anything that is at all satisfactory regarding the worship of the Serpent in China. No scholar, so far as I know, has investigated the subject, nor has any traveller devoted special attention to such indications of it as may exist in the country. We are consequently left to such stray passages as are scattered here and there in the various authors who treat of Chinese subjects, and

* The Serpent King was, it appears, a Sabbatharian, at least he devoted every seventh day to prayer. Bastian, I. 397. See also Trans. R.A.S., vol. II. p. 94, where Col. Low reports, "Every seventh day the mighty "Raja Naga issues forth from his palace, and having ascended a high mountain, pours forth his soul in ardent "devotion."

† All these legends are taken from Bastian's *Völker des Östlichen Asien*, pages 393 to 439. They are so mixed up together and with extraneous matter that it is impossible to quote separate pages, even if it were worth while.

without knowing exactly what reliance to place on the information so afforded. It is nevertheless impossible to observe the very important part the Dragon plays in the imagery and decoration of Chinese temples, on the dress and ornaments of the kings, or on the standards of the army, without feeling that some important symbolism is concealed beneath its almost universal employment. It is true that in modern times the dragon has been invested with wings, and teeth, and claws, and transformed into a monster more horrible than any nightmare that ever disturbed the sleep of a mediæval herald; still it is difficult to avoid the conviction that, if we could trace him far enough back, we should find that he was developed out of something much more nearly resembling "a beast of the field."

To take one instance among many, Kæmpfer* relates that two heaven-sent Serpents watched over the first washing of Confucius, for which a spring burst forth from the floor of the cave in which he was born. It would be interesting, for many reasons, to know when this tradition arose, and whether it is really Chinese or imported from India. Confucius was nearly contemporary with Buddha, and at a slightly subsequent time† was teaching doctrines so similar to those of the Indian philosopher, that now that they have got mixed up together in China, it is extremely difficult to discriminate what belongs to each. The connexion between Buddhism and Serpent Worship will be sufficiently apparent in the following pages. It would be curious if the same parentage could be traced for the Chinese philosophy.

The following is another example. "Father Martin, one of the Jesuits who obtained a settlement in China, says that the Chinese delight in mountains and high places, because there lives the dragon, upon whom their good fortune depends. They call him the father of happiness. To this dragon they erect temples, shaded with groves."‡ This is exactly what we would expect; but when we meet with such a passage as this we are forced to ask, If this be so, why has not everybody seen it, and why have others not told us the same story?

The most satisfactory evidence I have obtained regarding Serpent Worship in China is from a Chinese work, entitled "The Great Cloud Wheel Rain asking Sutra." It is an Imperial work, printed in its present form under the auspices of Keen Lung, A.D. 1783, and forms part of a great collection of Buddhist standard works. It is supposed to be spoken by Buddha in the "beautifully adorned Great Cloud Circle Hall of the Nāga-Rāja Nanda Upananda, and consists of a succession of Dhāraṇis imparted by Buddha to the dragons for the sake of those who in their worship desired rain."§

The most curious part of the book is the plates. These represent, first, a Naga temple, which very much resembles—though the likeness is, of course, accidental—the tabernacle of the Jews. The shrine is a tent, standing in a rectangular enclosure,

* Japan, 426. See also Life of Confucius, Chinese Classics, vol. I. p. 59.

† Confucius was 8 years old when Buddha died.

‡ The Rev. Bathurst Deane, quoting Cambray, Mémoires Celtiques, p. 163.

§ The work in question was lent to me by the Rev. S. Beal, a thoroughly competent Chinese scholar, who furnished the above particulars. His opinion is, that the work even in its present form is older than the 13th century, though the woodcuts may be more modern. See also J. R. A. S. XX. 170.

surrounded by canvas screens. The furniture consists of an altar and four lighted candles. Seven tables, or stands, are laden with cakes (shewbread), and as many with fruits; and seven lamps take the place of the seven-branched candlestick. There are four woodcuts representing the deities worshipped in the temple. One of these

No. 3.



NĀGA, FROM CHINESE SUTRA.

is reproduced in fac-simile in the annexed woodcut. It is a form of the Serpent God which was invented in India in the twelfth or thirteenth century, and with which we shall presently become familiar.* A human head and body, ending in a serpentine form from the waist downwards, but with the much more characteristic accompaniment of a degenerate serpent hood. In the first figure in this Chinese work, the Nāga has three serpents rising behind its head; in the second, five; in the third—that in the woodcut—seven; and the last, nine serpents. The lower extremities of the first and second are spotted like serpents. This one and the fourth have scales more like those of a fish. In India between the third century B.C. and the thirteenth A.D., we find serpent hoods ranging from three to seven heads, but never the human body terminating in a serpent downward, till after the last quoted date.

Although all this may have been derived from India, and in its present form probably was so, still it is interesting to find it practised in China so long after it has been forgotten there. At the same time, however, as hinted in speaking of Cambodia (p. 49), it is by no means clear that both India and China may not have borrowed their Serpent Worship from some common centre in Thibet. We are not yet, however, in a position to say whether it penetrated to China by the southern route it afterwards certainly took, or whether it may not have reached it by the north, or from a common centre in Tartary.

OCEANIA.

It has long been known that Serpent Worship prevailed to a considerable extent in some at least of the islands in the Pacific, but the notices of it that I have met with are singularly vague and unsatisfactory. No one with the requisite local knowledge has yet thought it worth while to collect and arrange the facts, so as to render them available as historical data; and till this is done, it is impossible to employ usefully even such information as we possess.

My own impression is that, wherever we find human sacrifices prevailing, or what—if we dare put such words together—we ought rather to designate as religious

* Vide infra, page 67.

cannibalism, there Serpent Worship will be found also. In the Feejee islands it certainly exists. Degei, one of their principal gods, is supposed to be enshrined or to exist in the form of a serpent, lying coiled up in a cave of Navata, a mountain on the coast of Viti Levu. Some traditions represent him with the head and part of the body of a serpent, the rest of him being of stone, emblematic of his everlasting and unchangeable nature.*

The savages of Australia, it is said, believe in the existence of a gigantic serpent, who created the world by a blow of his tail, and who is the cause of earthquakes. Nothing will induce them, however, to reveal to the white man the rites with which they worship the serpent, but which are reported to include human sacrifices and cannibalism.†

Traces of Serpent Worship are found at Suku and Kedal, and other places in Java, but there apparently not connected with Buddhism,‡ but as a local superstition of the natives; and other instances might be quoted, if it were worth while, or they could be depended upon. So little, however, is this the case, that the subject would hardly have been worth mentioning at all, were it not that one of the most interesting problems connected with the subject is the supposed connexion between the Serpent Worship of the Old World and that of Central America. Is it possible it could have migrated viâ the Feejee Islands and the Marquesas? There does not seem to be any other route which presents greater probabilities, if we are prepared to concede the previous question that America did borrow her Serpent Worship from the East; but as yet this is far from being settled.

CEYLON.

We must wait for further information before we can speak with anything like certainty, either regarding the extent to which Serpent Worship prevails in Ceylon, or with reference to any material evidences which may attest its existence in former days. Except Mr. Upham's,§ no work that I am aware of treats of the subject, and no drawings except his have been published which afford any information regarding it. Though far from being exhaustive, Mr. Upham's work is sufficient to show how imperfect the conversion of the natives to Buddhism has been, and to what an extent the worship of the Nāga still prevails. In Ceylon, however, it seems now to be mixed up with Demon Worship and the worst superstitions of the Hindu Pantheon to such an extent as to be barely recognizable, and it will require considerable labour to resolve all these superstitions into their component parts.

In addition to this, I have seen native drawings of mythological subjects, which show a greater admixture of Serpent Worship than would be found in similar representations on the continent of India; and I have also had access to original drawings by Europeans in which the three or seven-headed Naga is found adorning

* Seemann, Mission to Viti, p. 290.

† Manuscript information.

‡ Sir S. Raffles, Java, vol. ii. p. 47. Crawford's Dictionary of the Eastern Archipelago, sub vocibus.

§ History and Doctrine of Buddhism in Ceylon, by Ed. Upham. London, 1829.

almost every sacred spot in the country.* The difficulty is to judge from such imperfect materials of what is really old and what may have been added, and till the photographer reaches Ceylon this uncertainty must probably prevail in so far as people in Europe are concerned; but any competent antiquary on the spot could very easily tell us all we wish to know.

On the other hand, the testimony of the Buddhist scriptures seems to be as distinct as such evidence can be expected to be, that Ceylon was inhabited by a Naga race of serpent worshippers when converted to Buddhism, the legends say in the sixth, but more probably in the third, century, B.C. Whether Gorresio, the translator of the Rāmāyana, is correct in asserting that the Rākshasas whom Rāma encountered in that island were Nagas or not, is a question that must be left to Sanskrit scholars to decide. It does not appear that the passages are so understood by the modern Hindus. Snakes never appear as Rāma's opponents in any of the thousand and one representations of that famous war; but Gorresio may be correct nevertheless, and it would be interesting to know.†

The three Ceylonese historical works which have been translated—the Mahāwanso, the Ratnācari, and Rājāvali—all commence with an account, more or less detailed, of the conversion of the Nagas of Ceylon by Buddha himself.

The account in the Mahāwanso is to the following effect‡:—In the fifth year of his Buddhahood, the vanquisher of the five deadly sins perceiving that a conflict was in hand between the Nagas Mahodaro and Chūlodaro for possession of a gem-set throne, out of compassion to the Nagas visited Nāgadwīpo.§

At that time this Mahodaro was a Naga king of a Naga kingdom, 500 yojanas in extent, bounded by the ocean. His sister had been given in marriage to a Naga king of the Kanawaddhamāno mountain, and her son claimed the throne by inheritance, &c. “To them the vanquisher preached a sermon of reconciliation. Both parties rejoicing thereat, made an offering of the gem-set throne to the divine sage. The divine teacher alighting on the earth, seated himself on the throne, and was served by the Naga kings with celestial food and beverage. The lord of the universe procured for 80 koṭis of Nagas, dwelling on land and in the water, the salvation of the faith, and the state of piety” (p. 6).

The maternal uncle of Mahodaro, the Naga king of Kalyāṇi, who was preparing to join in the war is also converted, and at parting Buddha promises to return, meanwhile bestowing on the Naga king the gem-set throne, and having planted the Rājāyatana tree, at parting addressed them thus, “Oh, Naga kings! worship this my sanctified tree; unto you, my beloved, it will be a comfort and a consolation.”

The same story is told, with slight and unimportant variations, in the other

* Mr. Nicholl, the artist who made the drawings from which all the architectural subjects in Sir J. Emerson Tennent's work were engraved, recently showed me his original sketches. Everywhere at Anurādhapura, Pollonaruwa, Dambool, &c. the Naga appears prominent. The engraver, not knowing what it was, has converted it into a head-dress, which it requires a very practised eye to recognize as a seven-headed snake.

† When so good a Sanskrit scholar as Muir doubts, it would be presumptuous in me to advance an opinion. See Sanskrit Texts, II. 436.

‡ Mahāwanso translated by the Hon. G. Turnour, p. 4.

§ The translation limits the term Nāgadwīpo to the northern portion of Ceylon, but on what grounds does not appear. The context seems to imply the whole island.

two histories, and from that time forward the Mahawanso teems with Naga legends; they seem, however, all to refer to the continent of India rather than Ceylon, and will be alluded to when necessary hereafter. The conversion of the island seems to have been complete in the time of Asoka, B.C. 250,* and as the earliest of the scriptures we have were not reduced to writing in their present form before the fifth century after Christ, we must not expect from Buddhist authorities any admission of a faith adverse to Buddhism existing in the island at that date.

This, however, is just one of those cases in which the monuments are so useful to supplement the "litera scripta." If they were examined we should see how far the conversion was radical, and to what extent the people still adhered to their old faith. My impression is, that after more than 2000 years, their conversion is still far from being complete. Whenever any competent person will look below the surface, I am very much mistaken if the old Serpent Worship is not found still practised by the aboriginal races in all remote parts of the island; but it is useless speculating when real information can be so easily obtained.

Whatever may be the result of the investigation into the Serpent Worship of Ceylon, there is no doubt whatever about the prevalence and importance of Tree Worship in that island. The legend of the planting of the Rājāyatana Tree by Buddha has already been alluded to, but the history of the transference of a branch of the Bo Tree from Buddh-gyā to Anurādhapura is as authentic and as important as any event recorded in the Ceylonese annals. Sent by Aśoka (250 B.C.) it was received with the utmost reverence by Devanampiyatisso, and planted in a most conspicuous spot in the centre of his capital.† There it has been revered as the chief and most important "numen" of Ceylon for more than 2000 years, and it, or its lineal descendant sprung at least from the old root, is there worshipped at this hour. The city is in ruins; its great dagobas have fallen to decay; its monasteries have disappeared; but the great Bo Tree still flourishes according to the legend, "Ever green, never growing or decreasing, but living on for ever for the delight and worship of mankind." Annually thousands repair to the sacred precincts within which it stands to do it honour, and to offer up those prayers for health and prosperity which are more likely to be answered if uttered in its presence. There is probably no older idol in the world, certainly none more venerated.‡

INDIA.

In every essential respect the religious history of India is extremely similar to that of Persia, but with one curious accidental difference, which influenced to a considerable extent their outward aspect and ultimate fate. From the accession of the Achæmenidæ till the old religions were practically swept away by the Mahomedan invasion, all the countries of Central Asia were united under one sceptre, and subject

* Throughout this work the year 250, as a date easily remembered, is assumed as that of Asoka. It is probable that the true date of his accession is 270, and as he reigned 35 years, his death took place in 235 B.C.; 250 B.C. is therefore a fair mean, and has the merit of involving no hypothesis as to the chronology of the period.

† Mahawanso, chap. xviii.

‡ Sir Emerson Tennent, Col. Forbes Leslie, Chapman, and indeed everyone who has written about Ceylon, mention the fact. The drawings of it also are numerous.

to one code of laws. The consequence is, that the Turanian, the Semitic, and the Aryan races, which successively occupied those countries known as Persia in its widest sense, all became more or less amalgamated into a homogeneous people, and their religions were also fused into one great whole. The Aryan religion of Ormuzd was united in bonds of most unholy matrimony with the Turanian form of Ahriman, and the Magian religion acted as a flux to unite the two, at least to such an extent as probably to defy all the efforts of modern analysis to separate them again into their original elements.

The case of India was widely different. No native tradition represents India as ever united under one rule. When the Greeks visited it they found it divided into 122 different nations,* and the number probably was never less, it may have been more, till towards the end of the seventeenth century, when the Moguls under Aurangzebe nearly succeeded in rendering their sway paramount in India; but just as the house of cards was about to be completed, it fell to pieces from the inherent want of cohesion in the parts.

This circumstance renders the history of the religions of India very much more perplexed and more difficult to follow; but once the subject is mastered the Indian form becomes not only more instructive, but also very much more interesting to the student of comparative mythology.

No Semitic element apparently ever existed among the populations of India, but from the earliest historical times we find two well defined and perfectly distinct races. One, the Aryan, or Sanskrit-speaking race, who entered India, it is generally supposed, across the Upper Indus, and eventually spread themselves throughout the whole of the valley of the Ganges, and the countries between the Vindhya and the Himalaya mountains. The other a Turanian race, known as the Dravidians, and speaking Tamul, or languages closely allied to it, entered India probably earlier than the Aryans, but across the Lower Indus, and now occupy the whole of the southern part of the peninsula nearly up to the Vindhya mountains.†

There seems to be no difference of opinion among Indian ethnologists with regard to these two great divisions of the people, but it is not quite so clear whether there was not a third occupying the countries north of the Vindhya and between them and the Himalayas, of which they were dispossessed by the Aryans. The language of the superior race has so completely taken possession of every department of literature at the earliest period to which our knowledge extends, that we have no written record of the existence of this aboriginal people; and the blood of all has in modern times been so mixed by migration and colonization, that it seems impossible to dig back to the roots through the jumble of languages and races that now exists in the valley.

The mode in which the question presents itself as bearing on the present inquiry is this:—It may safely be asserted that no Aryan race, while existing in anything like purity, was ever converted to Buddhism, or could permanently adopt its doctrines. If we take, for instance, the three leading features of that faith, atheism, metempsychosis,

* Arrian, *Indica*, VII.

† *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian family of Languages*, by the Rev. R. Caldwell, B.A. London, 1856.
(4799.)

and absence of caste, they are essentially Turanian, and found everywhere among people of that race, but are distinctly opposed to the feelings of the Aryans wherever they are found. It is quite true that the Indian Aryans may, during their 2,000 years residence, have become so mixed with the native tribes, and so impure, that some of their families may have temporarily adopted the new faith. Even this, however, seems hardly probable, when we consider how they cling at the present day to their old sacred books, and how many germs of the old faith still survive even in the filth and corruption of doctrine in which they are now immersed.

On the other hand, it does not appear that the Dravidian races ever were essentially, or to any great extent, serpent worshippers, or ever were converted to Buddhism. It may be too bold a generalization, in the present state of our knowledge, to assert that no race ever permanently adopted Buddhism who had not previously been serpent worshippers—but, if not quite true, it is nearly so; and though Serpent Worship can be detected south of the Kistnah, it is not, nor does it ever appear to have been, the national faith. In like manner, though there were Buddhists in Drávida-deśa, there are no traces of Buddhist buildings or establishments now to be found south of Amravati.

If this should eventually prove to be the correct view of the case, it becomes necessary to assume the existence in the valley of the Ganges of a people differing from Dravidians and more closely allied to the Thibetans, the Burmese, and other Indo-Chinese races. Some kind of Buddhism probably existed beyond the Himalayas before Śákya-muni's time. It still flourishes there, and seems indelible in all these lands. In India it did attain great prevalence and power during a thousand years, but it does not seem to have existed before the time of Śákya-muni; and it is now so completely washed out, that there probably does not exist a single Buddhist, certainly not a Buddhist establishment, between the Himalayas and Cape Cormorin.*

Assuming this view of the matter to be correct, we shall of course look in vain, in the Vedas or any of the earlier writings in Sanskrit, for any trace of Serpent Worship. Not only was it repugnant to their own feelings, but they so utterly despised the Dasyus—or by whatever other name they chose to designate the aborigines—that they would not even condescend to notice their superstitions.†

The traditions from which the Rámáyana was compiled also represent a state of Aryan society so comparatively pure, that, except in cases above alluded to (p. 55), there is probably no mention of Nagas there. But the heroes of the Mahábhárata were much less pure a race. Their origin, their polyandry, and other peculiarities, all point to the Himalayas; and from this work, consequently, we may expect some light on Serpent Worship. The poem, however, was compiled—in its present form at least—by Brahmans long after the events it describes; and although many ancient fragments are enusted in its more modern form, little even of its narrative can be accepted as true history.

* In a recent statistical report on the population of Bombay, I see "Boodists" enumerated among the sects. Who are they?

† M. Vivien de St. Martin, in his "Géographie du Veda," pp. 103—4, states that the Aryans ascribed to the Dasyus the power of controlling the elements, and of granting or withholding rain at their pleasure. If this were so, it was not to the people themselves, but to their Serpent God, that this power should have been ascribed by the writers of the hymns of the Vedas. I confess, however, that my reading of the work in Wilson's translation does not bear out this attribution.

MAHĀBHĀRATA.

One of the most remarkable coincidences connected with the subject of Serpent Worship arises from the fact that this great epic poem, which may practically be considered as one of the books of the Hindu Bible, opens, like the Pentateuch, with a curse on the Serpent. What is even more curious is that in both instances the same "equivocal" as to the name exists: read carelessly or in a translation, the curse in the Mahābhārata is on the reptile, not on its worshippers, just as happens in the Bible, where, however, the conciseness of the narrative does not enable us to rectify the meaning from the context. In the Hindu epic, however, the story of the great sacrifice for the destruction of the Serpents is so mixed up with historical and human action that it is evident at once that the ambiguity* about the name is only seized upon by the Hindu poets as an excuse for introducing the supernatural into an ordinary human transaction, and to enable them to give rein to that exuberance of fancy which is the curse of their poetic effusions. It is not of course to be expected that anything like real history can ever be elaborated out of such a mass of fables, but if any competent Sanskrit scholars were to apply themselves to the task, they might at least recover as reasonable a narrative as it is now possible to frame out of such materials as are available for the history of Greece before the fall of Troy.

Passing over the first canto, which is a general introduction to the whole poem, the next three (ślokas 657 to 2197), are wholly occupied by the affairs of the Naga race, commencing with the marriage of the two sisters Kadrū and Vinatā with the Rishi Kasyapa, and the strange desires of the two with regard to their progeny. These led to Kadrū, the eldest, being the mother of 1,000 Nagas, who were the progenitors of the whole serpent race. The names of her principal descendants are then given,† some of which have already been quoted, others will frequently be referred to in the sequel; such, for instance, as Śesha, Vāsouki, Airāvata, Takshaka, Karkotaka, Kāliya, Aila or Elāpatra, Nīla and Anīla, Nahusha, and others. Her sister, on the other hand, became the mother of Garuḍa, who, in consequence of the trick played by Kadrū on her sister, became the all-powerful enemy of the Naga race, and hence also the mother's curse, from which such fatal consequences flowed.

When divested, however, of its poetic garb, and all its mythological rubbish, the story of the Mahābhārata, in so far at least as Serpent Worship is concerned, does not seem difficult to understand, and may be succinctly narrated.

The Lunar race, to which the heroes of the great war belonged, were a second great horde of the Aryan race, who seem to have entered India across the Upper Indus at least 1,000 years after the purer so-called Solar race. The first seat to which we can trace them back seems to be Takt-i-Bahai, north of Peshawar.‡ Thence, passing

* In the Ādi Parva the word used for serpent is almost invariably "Nāga." In the Vana Parva, where Bhīma gets into trouble with Nahusha in the form of a real serpent or boa, it is as usually "Sarpa."

† Ādi Parva 1551, et seq.

‡ Bellew, Report on the Yusufzais, p. 136. Some very curious sculptures have recently been discovered at this place, but they are all long subsequent to the age of Bhārata, and betray a Bactrian; or at least a Western influence, which give them a character very different from anything found in India. They are all Buddhist; but with a strong infusion of Græco-Bactrian feeling.

through the Punjáb, we find them settled at Hâstinapura, between the Jumna and Ganges, about the thirteenth century B.C., when the real action of the poem commences.

The first transaction in which the Nagas appear, is the burning of the forest of Khândava.* Simply, it seems, that when the family at Hâstinapura became too numerous, it was determined to found a second capital, and for this purpose the spot where Delhi now stands was cleared by burning the forest which then occupied its site, and dislodging the Nagas who occupied the spot. The Nagas were protected by the Buddhist deity Indra. But, attacked by the Vedic god Agni, the Brahman poet represents them as all perishing except their king Takshaka.

Subsequent to this the relations between the Pândus and the Nagas seem to have been of the most friendly description. Arjuna, in his first banishment, marries first Ulûpi,† the daughter of a Naga king at the foot of the Himalayas, near Hurdwar; and shortly afterwards he formed a still more important connexion, by marrying Chitrângadâ, daughter of Chitravâhana, the Naga king of Manipur, by whom he had a son, Bhabra-vâhana, who played so strange a part in a subsequent episode, when his father, in the performance of the Aśwamedha, or horse sacrifice, again visited Manipur.‡ From these and other minor particulars it would seem that the author of the Mahâbhârata wished to represent the Aryans of that day as cultivating friendly relations with the aborigines. The real quarrel took place some time after the great war was ended, and in this manner:—Parîkshit, the grandson of Arjuna, had succeeded to the throne; and one day, while hunting in the forest, incensed at the contumacious silence of a hermit,§ insulted him by hanging the dead body of a snake round his neck. His son and disciple cursed the king for the insult to his father, and invoked the aid of Takshaka, the king of serpents, to avenge it. The consequence was, that on the eighth day from that time Parîkshit was bitten|| by Takshaka, who is always represented as king of Takshaśilâ.¶ It was to avenge this assassination of his father, that Janamejaya undertook the great sacrifice for the destruction of the Nagas.** Thousands—myriads—had already perished, when the slaughter was stayed at the intervention of Astîka, a Brahman, though at the same time the nephew of Vâsuki, the serpent king of the eastern Nagas.†† It is probable the remnant either, like Astîka, became converts, or at least promised submission to the dominion of the Aryans. We consequently hear no more of them for three or four centuries, till at last, about the year 691 B.C., we find a Naga dynasty on the throne of Magadhâ;‡‡ and it was under Ajâtaśatru, the sixth king of this race, in the year 623, that Buddha was born, and the great regeneration of the subject races was inaugurated.

* Âdi Parva, Fauche's translation, 8050, et seq.

† Loc. 7788.

‡ Wheeler's History of India, vol. I, p. 404. Professor Goldstûcker informs me that the version of the Aśwamedha adopted by Mr. Wheeler is not really a part of the original Mahâbhârata, but the facts are the same in both versions. (See Westminster Review, April 1868.)

§ Âdi Parva, 1696, et seq.

|| Idem, 1801.

¶ Idem, 678, 830, et seq.

** Idem, 2073, et seq.

†† Idem, 1025, et seq.

‡‡ Wilson's Vishnu Purâna, p. 467. Lassen's Ind. Alt. I. (2d ed.) App. p. xxxviii. et seq.

If we knew more of the local ethnology of India, all this narrative might probably be authenticated to an extent which it is now impossible to attempt. It is curious to observe that in Manipur, the scene of Arjuna's marriage with Chitrāngadā, and his slaughter by her son, that at the present day the peculiar god of the Royal family is a species of snake, called Pa-kung-ba, from which the family claims descent. When it appears, it is coaxed on to a cushion by the priestess in attendance, who then performs certain ceremonies to please it. This snake appears sometimes, they say, of great size; when he does so, it is indicative of his being displeased with something. So long as he remains of a diminutive form, it is a sign he is in good humour.*

In the immediate neighbourhood of Manipur there are numerous tribes of aboriginal people, still called Nagas. From their name and locality it might be supposed they must be serpent worshippers; but no one has yet observed that form of faith among them. The subject must, therefore, be remitted for further inquiries.

The locality of Janamejaya's sacrifice is said in the Mahābhārata to have been the Kurukshetra, the famous battle-field of the Pāṇḍus and Kurus, north-west of Delhi, but another and more probable site is still pointed out at Agrahaut, in Orissa.† There, within the precincts of a very old and remote, but now ruined, temple, may be seen numerous small models of temples, said to have been there placed by Janamejaya, to represent those princes who could not be present on the occasion. They are probably not so old; but it is strange to find the traditions of the Mahābhārata still clinging to these spots, and Serpent Worship still prevailing there. At least, not far from this—at Sumbulpore—in 1766, Mr. Motte and another‡ went to visit a great snake that had been worshipped there since the world began! They saw him emerge from his cave, which he does every seventh day,§ and accept the offering of a goat which his worshippers had provided. After devouring it, he took a bath in a canal that surrounded his dwelling place; and from the mark he left in the mud at the edge, Mr. Motte estimated his diameter to have been about two feet. He does not even guess his length, but it must have been considerable. When Major Kittoe visited Sumbulpore in 1836 he was still alive,|| and probably is so still; and I have no doubt but that numerous other deities of the same sort could easily be found if only looked for; but attention has never hitherto been directed to the subject.

RISE OF BUDDHISM.

As has been frequently suggested in other works,¶ the great characteristic of the ancient as well as of the modern history of India is the constant recurrence of one typical phenomenon which controlled the destiny of the nation in all ages to which our knowledge extends. From the earliest dawn of tradition to the present

* Account of the Valley of Munipur, by Major Maculloch: Records of Government of India, No. XXVII. 1859.

† Asiatic Researches, XV. 257.

‡ Asiatic Register, vol. I. p. 82.

§ Vide ante, note, p. 51. Is it possible that the

period of creation in Genesis being limited to seven days is a part of the primeval Ophite faith?

|| J. A. S. B. vol. VIII. p. 478.

¶ History of Architecture, by the Author, vol. II., p. 446, et seqq. &c.

day the great underlying stratum of the population of India seems to have been of Turanian race, very unwarlike, and incapable of any rise in civilization, except through admixture of blood. These consequently easily fell a prey to the hardier and more warlike races bred in the countries now known as Bokhara and Afghanistan, and the result has been that at periods of from five to ten centuries horde after horde has crossed the Indus; and settled in the fertile plains of India. For awhile these retained their freshness and vigour, but by degrees, partly from the enervating effects of the climate, but more from intermixture with the aboriginal races, they sunk to the lower level of the indigenous inhabitants, and in their turn became a prey to the next horde that followed the steps of their forefathers across the Indus.

For our present purpose it is not necessary to inquire when the first great immigration of the Aryans or Dravidians took place, or when they first settled in the north and south of India respectively. It is sufficient that we are able to state that the less pure horde of the Aryans known as the Lunar race probably reached the Ganges about the thirteenth or fourteenth century B.C. From that time till the third or fourth century, or for more than one thousand years, no horde of any race, so far as we know, crossed the Indus. This may, in a great measure, be owing to the existence of the powerful empires of Assyria and Persia on the other side of the river, which may have kept the barbarians in check, or to local causes we cannot now detect. Be that as it may, the fact that interests us here is, that during this long period the blood of the Aryans had become so mixed and so impure that the Veda was no longer possible as a rule of faith, and when Śākya-muni attempted to revive the religion of the aboriginal Turanians his call was responded to in a manner which led to the most important consequences, in a religious point of view, not only in India, but to all the Turanian families of mankind.

So far as we can now see, Buddhism was little more than a revival of the coarser superstitions of the aboriginal races, purified and refined by the application of Aryan morality, and elevated by doctrines borrowed from the intellectual superiority of the Aryan races. Buddha himself was undoubtedly of purely Aryan race, being the descendant of a junior branch of the Solar kings of Ayodhyā. Burmese traditions represent his son Rahula as assuming the garb of a priest;* but the Hindus, with more probability, record his succeeding to the throne of his grandfather, and we gather from them, that the dynasty retained its Brahminical faith till its extinction shortly afterwards.† The dissemination of the Buddhist religion is wholly due to the accident of its having been adopted by the low caste kings of Magadhā, and to its having been elevated by one of them to the rank of the religion of the State.

As a part of the reform which he introduced, ancestral worship was abolished, and the sepulchral tumulus became the depository of relics of saints, Serpent Worship was repressed, and its sister faith of Tree Worship elevated to the first rank.‡ Absolute negation of sensual enjoyment, which to the Turanian in all ages

* Bigandet, *Life and Legend of Guadama*, p. 229.

† Wilson's *Vishnu Purana*, p. 463.

‡ When in 1866 I wrote the second volume of my *History of Architecture*, I, after hazarding the assertion "that before the Aryans reached India, the inhabitants of the valley of the Ganges seem to have been Tree and Serpent Worshippers," then added, in speaking of the Buddhist reform (p. 448): "Serpent Worship was utterly rejected, but Tree Worship was adopted as an important part of the new faith." When in the following

is as the breath of life, was elevated into a crucial test of faith, and asceticism became ultimately the one path to salvation. There is every reason to believe that human sacrifices were common in ancient India. War was the normal state of its kingdoms, and persecution is too essentially a characteristic of the Aryan races not to have flourished there. On the other hand, the Buddhist expanded the Jewish commandment "Thou shalt do no murder" into "Thou shalt not kill," and extended it to the meanest of created beings. No war was ever waged by Buddhists, as such, and toleration of the faith of others was one of the most marked characteristics of the new religion. No faith was ever so essentially propagated by persuasion as that of Buddha, and though the Buddhists were too frequently persecuted even to destruction, there is no instance on record of any attempt to spread their faith by force in any quarter of the globe.

The Turanian of course had no caste, so that institution was put aside only to be revived when a second upheaval of local superstition under Aryan influence on the decay of Buddhism brought Śivaism and Vishnuism to the surface, together with all the monstrosities of the modern Hindu pantheon.

Although doubts have been expressed as to the exact date of Buddha's birth to the extent of about 60 years, the usual chronology,* which is that adopted throughout this work, represents him as born at Kapilavastu, a small principality on the north of the Ganges, in the year 623 B.C., and he died at Kuśinagara, not far from the place of his birth, 543 B.C., in the eighth or eighteenth year† of the reign of Ajātasatru, the sixth king of the Naga dynasty of Magadha, who was then the lord paramount of Northern India.

The name of Śīśunāga is applied by the Brahmins to the first king of this dynasty; the Buddhists give it to the tenth, and add the following legend:—On a certain occasion one of the chief of the courtezans bore a child to one of the Licchhawi Rajas, but the child proving an abortion was put into a basket, and at night thrown on a dungheap. A certain Nāgarāja, the tutelary of the city, observing it, encircled it with its folds, and sheltered it with its hood. The people who congregated there made a noise, "Śu, Śu," to frighten the snake, and on examining the basket found the abortion matured into a male child with every mark of greatness on it. In consequence of this incident he received the name Śīśunāga, and in time ascended the throne of Magadha.‡ The second convocation was held 100 years after the death of Buddha, during the reign of his son Kāśāsoka, and we gather, though somewhat indistinctly, that his successors, including the nine Nandas, till

spring I discovered* the Amravati sculptures in the coach house at Fife House, I hastened to add as an erratum on the last page a recantation or at least modification of this assertion. Further investigations now incline me to go back to my old faith. The serpent, I believe, was rejected by Buddha and his earlier followers, but cropped up again among other mediæval corruptions, and, as we shall presently see, became an important element in Buddhist mythology.

* I have myself no doubts as to the correctness of the usually received date, and propose as soon as this work is published to submit my reasons for this belief to the Royal Asiatic Society. Meanwhile the conclusions I have arrived at in my chronological researches will be found in the table at the end of this volume. The reasoning on which they are founded must be reserved for the journal of that society, but the results have meanwhile been adopted as data throughout this work.

† Turnour, *Mahawanso*, XLVII, LII.

‡ Turnour's Introduction to the *Mahawanso*, XXXVII. See also Bigandet, *Life of Gaudama*, p. 362, et seq.

the accession of the celebrated Chandragupta (B.C. 325), were Nagas or serpent worshippers pure and simple.* They certainly were considered as of very low caste and hated by the Brahmans, and were not loved by the Buddhists.

With the Mauryan kings Buddhism seems to have entered on a new phase; at least in Aśoka's inscriptions we have no trace of the worship of either Buddha himself, nor of Trees nor Serpents. Pure abstract morality seems to have been the form it then took or was intended to take.† But in the Mahāwanso, one of the great events of Aśoka's reign, is the despatch of a branch of the Bo Tree of Buddha Gyā to Ceylon,‡ showing that form of faith to be then prevalent; and in the Caves of Orissa, which probably are anterior to the Christian era, we find both Tree and Serpent Worship prevailing. There are, however, few periods of Indian history during which such scanty materials exist for settling any point, either historical or mythological, as during the two centuries and a half before the Christian era. We know nothing that happened during that period, and we hardly see where light is to come from to illumine those dark ages.

Immediately preceding the Christian era a great revolution took place in Buddhism under the influence of Nāgārjuna,§ one of the most important names connected with the history of the religion. Although we cannot fix the date of this patriarch with absolute certainty, we can within very narrow limits. The quotation from the Thibetan Tāranātha in Vassilief's work|| places him between 14 years B.C. and 28 A.D., both dates reconcileable with a not very long life. But we have another means of ascertaining it even more satisfactorily. Nāgārjuna was the ruling spirit in the great council or convocation held under Kanishka, the Tartar king of Cashmere and Northern India. In a tope erected by this king at Manikyāla a number of Roman consular coins were found around the principal deposit. These date from 73 to 33 B.C.,¶ and as we cannot suppose they were deposited there till some time after the year in which they were coined, the building of the tope by Kanishka must be placed within the thirty years that preceded the Christian era.

At that time the Buddhists were divided into eighteen sects, grouped into four great divisions,** a circumstance from which we may infer that Buddhism was torn by internal dissensions, and might have perished without the impulse given by this fresh importation of Tartar blood from the north. At the same time also we learn that Milinda, king of Eastern Panjāb, had silenced the Buddhist priests in argument, and driven them from the country across the Himalaya to Rakshita Tal and Manasarovara.†† At this critical juncture the youthful Nāgārjuna appeared. He was then a monk in the celebrated monastery of Nālanda in Behar‡‡—the Monte

* Mahā Padma and Nanda, the only two of their names we know with certainty, are both names of serpents. Their coins I believe to be those depicted, J. A. S. B., vol. VII., pl. LX., No. 1 to 9. On all these the serpent is the principal symbol.

† J. A. S. B., VII. p. 219; J. R. A. S., XII. 153.

‡ Vide ante, p. 56.

§ His name is singularly suggestive, being compounded of "Nāga," a serpent, and a tree, "Arjuna," under which he was born. Vassilief, &c. *Bouddhisme*, 213.

|| *Le Bouddhisme*, 201.

¶ Cunningham, *Bhilsa Topes*, 130.

** *Asiatic Researches*, XX. 92, 297.

†† Cunningham, *Bhilsa Topes*, 130.

‡‡ This monastery took its name and probably owed its original sanctity to a dragon or Nāga called Nālanda, who resided in a pool close by. General Cunningham saw in 1861-62 the tank in which he resided. Report to Government for those years, p. 12.

Cassino of India,—and proclaimed himself the restorer of the old faith. According to this prophet the words uttered by Śākya Muni during his life-time had been heard and noted down by the Nagas, who had kept them to themselves in their own abode, till such time as mankind should become worthy to receive them. Nāgārjuna gave out that he had received these documents from the Nagas and was commissioned to proclaim them to the world.* This gave rise to an entirely new school of Buddhism known as Mahāyāna, or as M. Julien translates it†, the “Grand Véhicule,” as opposed to Hīnayāna or the “Petit Véhicule;” the distinction between the two being in almost every respect identical with that which exists between Evangelical and Mediæval Christianity.

This is another of those curious historical coincidences that exist between Christianity and Buddhism, and there are few so startling. In the first three centuries after the death of its founder, Buddhism was a struggling sect, sometimes petted, sometimes persecuted, but in spite of all we are told, in subsequent legends, never spread to any great extent among the people. Three hundred years after Buddha, Aśoka did for Buddhism exactly what Constantine did for Christianity. He adopted it, made it the religion of the state, and with all the zeal of a convert, used every exertion to assist in its propagation. Six hundred years after Buddha, Nāgārjuna and Kamishka did for the eastern faith what St. Benedict and Gregory the Great did for the western, they created a church with a Hierarchy and Doctrine. We must go on further still for four centuries more, to Buddhaghosa (A.D. 410) and to Hildebrand, before we find our Mediæval churches quite complete, and the priesthood quite segregated from the laity, and the system perfected in all its parts. In the sixteenth century after Christ came the reformation, and with it the restoration of Evangelical Christianity. In the sixteenth century after Buddha came a reformation, but it was one of extermination of the faith, in so far as India was concerned. Śankara Āchārya was the Indian Luther, but his aim was widely different. Whatever may have been the abuses and corruptions that had crept into Buddhism in the eighth and tenth centuries of our era, they were replaced by a faith much less pure, and far fuller of idolatrous absurdities than that which it superseded. What the western reformers aimed at, was to restore the Christian Hīnayāna. In the east this was not thought of, hence the different fate of the two faiths. In Europe Christianity was invigorated by the struggle, in India Buddhism perished altogether.

The consequence of all this is, that we are now very much in the position of a foreign investigator who might have entered some great conventual establishment in Europe in the fourteenth or fifteenth century to study Christianity. Worse than even this; it is as if the monasteries of the middle ages had lasted for four or five centuries longer without any reform or light from without, and that then an attempt should have been made to ascertain within their walls what primitive Christianity originally may have been. The explorer would have found lives and legends of saints in abundance; miracles and divine communications without end; ponderous tomes of scholastic divinity, and a marvellously falsified history. Instead of the Bible, he would have been referred to that mass of beautiful but purely legendary fictions which, in the course of centuries, had attached themselves to the name of the Virgin

* Vassilief, *Bouddhisme*, 119.
(4799.)

† *Voyages de Hiouen-Thsang, passim.*
I

Mary, and to all the members of the Holy family. All this, too, he would have found mixed up with stories from the Old Testament, and from the lives of Mediæval saints in most marvellous confusion. If among all these works he chanced to light on the Bible, it certainly would not be pointed out to him as the one true Life of Christ, or as the basis of the Christian faith. We would, no doubt, appreciate the Gospels of Buddhism if we found them; but all that has yet been disinterred from the monasteries of Thibet, or the libraries of China or Ceylon, is subsequent to Buddhaghosa; more than one thousand years after the death of the founder of the religion, and long after the Naga revelation had superseded the original faith. We are thus precisely in the position of the student of Christianity who had only the library of some Mediæval monastery at his command. In so far as books are concerned, we depend almost wholly for our knowledge of the Life of Buddha on the *Lalita Vistara*,* and other works of the same age and class. The *Lalita Vistara*, however, was reduced to its present form in the fourteenth century of Buddha, and is the exact counterpart in purpose and authenticity to the *Legenda Aurea*, and similar works of the Christian middle ages. It is true all these Buddhist books profess to be founded on earlier works, and no doubt this to some extent is true; but as these earlier works have not yet been discovered, we are left very much to our own powers of critical discrimination to say what is original and what may have been added to suit the tastes and feelings of an age long subsequent to the events.†

Looking at what has been done within the last twenty years, it is not impossible that we may recover even the original Sûtras, the Vinaya and the Abhidharma, as they are said to have been compiled by Upâli, Ânanda, and Kâśyapa immediately on the death of Śākya Muni,‡ or at all events we may hope that the keen criticism of modern scholars may be able, at least to some extent, to separate the wheat from the chaff, and restore to us a tolerably correct picture of primitive Buddhism as it existed before the Christian era. Notwithstanding all the difficulties of the task, considerable progress has already been achieved in this direction. Burnouf's contributions are invaluable,§ while the works of Barthélemy St. Hilaire,|| of Bigandet,¶ and Vassilief,** are most useful résumés of what is known. The Germans also and our own scholars have collected a mass of materials, and discussed and dissected a number of problems which will clear the way for a correct understanding of many questions whenever a serious attempt is made to combine the whole into a consecutive history.

In the meanwhile it is of the utmost importance that everything should be gathered together and published that can throw any light on Buddhism anterior to the time when the books we now possess were reduced to their present form. The

* Translated from the Thibetan by Foucaux. Paris, 4to., 1847.

† If anyone would wish perfectly to realize the position of Buddhist scholars at the present day, let him read carefully any one of the many versions of "L'histoire du Noble et Vaillant roy Alexandre le Grand," as compiled in the middle ages, and compare it with the narrative of the life of the same monarch as related by classical authors. Having done this, he will appreciate the difficulty in which Oriental scholars are now placed as regards the early history of Buddhism in the life of the founder of that religion.

‡ J. A. S. B., vol. I. p. 6; Asiatic Researches, XX. 42, &c.

§ Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien. Lotus de la bonne loi, &c.

|| Le Bouddha et sa Religion. Paris, 1860.

¶ The Life or Legend of Gaudama. Rangoon, 1866.

** Le Bouddhisme, ses Dogmes, son Histoire, et sa Littérature, traduit du Russe par La Comme. Paris, 1865.

only written documents which certainly belong to the earlier epoch are the edicts of Aśoka, engraved on the *lāts* at Delhi, Allahabad, and elsewhere; and on rocks at five or six places in India, extending from the shores of the Bay of Bengal to Guzerat, and to the Himalayas and Peshawar on the north. Except that at Bhabra,* these are neither doctrinal nor historical. They are dry moral precepts, and so unlike the Buddhism "quæ nunc est," that, but for collateral secondary evidence, it might very well be doubted whether they belonged to that religion at all, or it might be disputed, as was done by the late Professor Wilson, whether they were written by Aśoka. The Bhabra inscription and further investigations have set these questions at rest. But the picture these inscriptions afford us of Buddhism 250 B.C. is a wonderful contrast to what we find in the *Lalita Vistara* of Thibet,† as compiled in the eighth or ninth century of our era, or any other written records of the religion which we possess.

Next in importance to these inscriptions are the sculptures of the two Topes, illustrated in this work. The gateways at Sanchi were erected, as nearly as can be ascertained, in the first half of the first century of our era, and, therefore, nearly contemporary with Nāgārjuna. They are not pure, but they are purer than anything else of their kind now known to exist. Buddha never appears in them as an object of worship. The Dagoba, the Chakra or wheel, the Tree, and other such emblems are revered. The Serpent does appear but rarely, and we have very little of the absurd supernatural fables which afterwards form the stock of the legends. At Amravati, three centuries afterwards, we find a state of affairs much more in accordance with modern notions. Buddha is worshipped, but the Naga is his co-equal. The Dagoba, the Tree, the Chakra, are all revered; and almost all the legends of modern times may probably be traced in its sculptures, though in a purer form than in the books. The first may be taken as the nearest approach we possess to an illustrated Bible of the Hīnayāna period, five hundred years before the oldest Buddhist book we possess; and Amravati as a pictorial illustration of the Mahāyāna three centuries after its promulgation, and just before Fa-Hian‡ visited the country and gave us the earliest description we have of the faith by any outsider, since at least the very meagre and unsatisfactory accounts of the Greeks.

In the frescoes that cover the walls of the Caves at Ajanta is found a third picture, three centuries later than the sculptures at Amravati, this time representing the state of Buddhist belief just before its decline. Owing to the unfortunate fire at the Crystal Palace these are not now available for purposes of illustration, but they may become so hereafter. Even, however, if we possessed drawings or photographs of them, they could never be so important for the history of the faith as the sculptures of the two Topes of Sanchi and Amravati, which represent it before the existence, in their present form, of any of the books we now possess. Our regret, however, at the loss of these copies, is very much lessened, in so far as our present purposes are concerned, by the knowledge that there were no traces of Serpent Worship in the paintings. The only representations of the Naga found at Ajanta are among

* J. R. A. S., XVI. p. 367.

† These inscriptions will be found reprinted, in so far as it is necessary for present purposes, in Appendix B.

‡ *Foë-Kouë-Ki*, translated by Rémusat, &c., 4to., Paris, 1836.

the sculptured decorations of the doorways or in detached bas-reliefs outside the caves,* where they may be considered as accessory or subordinate to the principal form of worship. For a history of Buddhism, the paintings are of great interest; as illustrating either Tree or Serpent Worship, they are comparatively unimportant.

The same remark applies to the frescoes in the Caves at Baugh, and generally to the western Caves. The tendency of the migration from Takshasilâ seems to have been southward, and towards the East, and never to have descended the Ghauts or penetrated into the Concan. On the other hand, the most recent example I am acquainted with of any great Naga sculptures belonging to the classical age of Indian art, is the well-known bas-relief at Mahavellipore,† on the eastern shore, about forty miles south of Madras, and executed apparently in the thirteenth century. This is carved on two great masses of granite rock, and extends about 90 feet north and south, by 30 or 35 feet in height. On the northern or right-hand portion, a group of elephants, beautifully executed, is advancing towards the centre, and above them some thirty figures, interspersed with lions and other animals, are all turning in the same direction. On the left-hand rock the lower part was evidently intended to contain the representations of the rest of the animal kingdom, but is only commenced. The upper portion has a number of human figures, equal to that of the other half of the bas-reliefs, and all equally turning towards the centre. The artist has utilized the edge of the northern rock, so as to give his principal figures a higher relief than could be obtained in the flat portions, and also to heighten their effect by having a shadow behind them. But unfortunately from this cause they were so exposed that the upper portion has been broken away. When Mr. Babington drew them, in 1827, only the lower part of the great Naga was remaining, but his wife below him was quite perfect, and presents us with a form not found either at Sanchi, Amravati, or Ajanta. The Nagas here, both male and female, are represented as Serpents at full length, but human from the waist upwards. They still, however, generally have the Snake hood of three or five heads canopying their own; in the same manner as in the Chinese woodcut, No. 3, introduced on page 53, where this more modern form of the Naga has been adopted.

This form is found among the sculptures at Hullabeed and in the Caves at Iwullee, both certainly of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, and the form continues down to modern times; but this example at Mahavellipore is, so far as I



SHIVA WITH NAGAS FROM HULLABEED,
ABOUT 1300 A.D.
[From a Photograph.]

* I possess some hundreds of *sculptured* representations of the Naga. I never saw or heard of a *painted* Naga anywhere.

† This bas-relief was described by Bishop Heber and Mrs. Graham. A notice of it by Mr. Goldingham appeared in the *Asiatic Researches*, vol. v. A view of it was published by Daniell; but the best is that by Messrs. Babington and Hulston, in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. ii. plates I. and II. I have two photographs of it by Dr. Hunter, of Madras, lying before me.

know, among the earliest examples of the form.* In other respects the grouping there of the figures around the Naga is so similar to what we find at Sanchi, that it is at first sight difficult to believe that twelve or thirteen centuries had elapsed between the execution of the two sets of sculptures. Such, however, appears undoubtedly to have been the case; and this great southern bas-relief worthily closes a series of Takshac sculptures, which for the present we must be content to commence with Sanchi, though there is little doubt but that earlier examples will hereafter be found;† but whether that is the case or not, many intermediate illustrations will certainly be discovered when looked for, and so enable us to complete as curious a picture as anywhere exists of the latest form of the primæval worship of the world.

HINDU RELIGION.

It might have sufficed for our present purposes to have stopped when we had brought the history of Serpent Worship in India to the point when the Buddhist scriptures were rescued from the keeping of the Nagas and revealed to mankind. As this happens to be also the time when the Gateways were added to the tope at Sanchi, we might have left the sculptures to tell their own tale, and continue the history of Naga worship from that point. It will add, however, very much to the clearness of what follows if we anticipate still further, and describe briefly what took place afterwards.

Speaking broadly, the modern religions of India may be divided into two great groups or classes, that of Śiva and that of Viṣṇu. It is extremely difficult to offer even a plausible conjecture as to the origin of the former, or to guess when it first came into vogue. It has been attempted to identify Śiva with the Rudra of the Vedas, and it may be so, but it is certainly a local, not an Aryan form of faith, and seems originally to belong rather to the south than to the north of India. It may have existed there as a native local superstition for any length of time, but it only rose to eminence on the decline of Buddhism. Its principal teacher if not its founder, in its present form, seems to have been Śankara Āchārya, who may have lived in the eighth or ninth century.‡

There does not seem to be a trace of Tree Worship mixed up with it, nor any real connexion with Serpent Worship. It is true Śiva is occasionally represented holding a cobra or other venomous snake in his hand; serpents are also sometimes twisted round his neck or entwined with his hair; but in all these instances the serpent is a weapon, an implement of terror, not an object of worship. As the

* When I published, in 1845, my description of the Rock Temples of India, I fixed the date of the excavation of Mahavellipore within the limits of the thirteenth century (pp. 58, 59). I have since seen no reason to alter this description.

† There are, I believe, older Naga sculptures in Cuttack, but whether this is so or not, it is interesting to find the three principal seats of Naga worship at three nearly equidistant points on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, Cuttack, Amravati, and Mahavellipore; exactly opposite to Cambodia, which as above explained was its principal seat in modern times. Sanchi seems to have been a sort of half-way house between these places and the North, for all their traditions point to Takshasilā as the original seat whence this form of faith was disseminated, and the Yavanas as the people by whom it was propagated.

‡ Asiatic Researches, XVII. 139.

destroyer everything that can add to the terrible was represented with him. In his hands the serpent is as a sword or trident, and, as his chaplet of skulls, merely meant to overawe and impress the beholder. It never is many-headed, and never seems the guardian god. It is only the earthly serpent taught to do the will of its master.

Occasionally the serpent does appear in a more religious aspect in connexion with this form of faith. He is sometimes represented as entwined round the Lingam, and in some southern temples two serpents are sometimes seen erect with their heads above the Lingam, on either side as if worshipping it. In all these instances, however, the serpent is subordinate. It seems nothing more than we would expect to find in a country where Serpent Worship was at one time so prevalent that the apostles of the new faith should represent the older as doing homage to the new god. In so far as the materials available enable an opinion to be formed, the amount and nature of the Serpent Worship we find mixed up with Śivaism is just what we might expect when a new form of faith superseded an old one. Much of the more ancient worship passes into the new, partly because the priests desire to conciliate the votaries of the old, partly in order to exhibit the triumph of the new god, but more perhaps because nothing is so difficult to kill as an old superstition, and the more unreasonable it is the harder it dies.

When we turn to the Vaishnava group of religions, we find a very different state of things. This religion is descended from a group of faiths in which the Serpent always played an important part. The eldest branch of the family was the Naga worship, pure and simple; out of that arose Buddhism, as frequently hinted above, and on its decline two faiths—at first very similar* to one another—rose from its ashes, the Jaina and the Vaishnava. The first named was the purest and most direct descendant of Buddhism, retaining more of its doctrinal purity, and less of the local element, and consequently less Serpent Worship than the other. Still the Naga is almost always to be found in Jaina temples, and placed where it evidently was intended as an object of worship, but subordinate to the saint to whom the temple was dedicated.

The Vaishnava faith, on the other hand, arose contemporaneously with the Śivite, on the ruins of Buddhism, but with much less of the appearance of being a local indigenous superstition; on the contrary, it bears many marks of being a foreign introduction, as if imported at some remote period by some of the immigrant races, and after rotting and fermenting for ages in the fertile soil of India, at last found the means of coming to the surface between the eighth and the tenth centuries. Garuḍa, Vishṇu's Vāhana, the enemy of the Nagas, is almost certainly the hawk-headed deity of Assyria; and in all the avatars of Vishṇu we find more traces of western superstition than in anything Śivite; but what interests us most here is, that the Naga appears everywhere in Vaishnava tradition. There is no more common representation of Vishṇu than reposing on the Śesha, as the seven-headed snake is called by the Brahmans, contemplating the creation of the world. It was by his assistance that the ocean was churned and Amrita produced. He everywhere

* Asiatic Researches, IX. 270., and XVII. 285.

spreads his protecting hood over the god, or his avatars, and in all instances it is the seven-headed heavenly Naga, not the earthly cobra of Śiva.*

The worship of the Tulsi plant, which is one of the commonest forms of Vaishṇava adoration, is another of those indications which point to a common origin for the two religions. It would of course be absurd to designate as Tree Worship the adoration of such a plant as Sweet Basil, but the descent from the "Ficus religiosa" to "Ocimum Sanctum" is just such a change as might be expected to take place when a dogma is transferred from an older and higher faith to one of a less elevated character. Both symbolize the worship of the vegetable kingdom, and are a part of that curious association of men with animals and plants which is so marked a characteristic of both the Buddhist and Vaishṇava forms of faith.

The strongest evidence, however, of the connexion between the worship of Vishṇu and that of Buddha is found in the fact, that the Hindus, even to the present day, recognize Buddha as the ninth avatar of Vishṇu. From a historical point of view they are no doubt correct in this; all the eight preceding avatars refer to events that certainly preceded the time of Śakya-muni, and when we understand them they may point to a long chain of tradition out of which Buddhism arose, and into which Buddhism fell, which, when philosophically examined, may throw a flood of light on the origin of Buddhism and of Indian religions generally.†

At present it must suffice to point out that the group to which Buddhism belongs comprises Tree and Serpent Worship as the base, combined with the association of men with animals, especially monkeys, either in consequence of the doctrine of metempsychosis, or as the origin of that belief. These grew into Buddhism, and then bifurcated into the Jainism and Vishnuism of modern times.

It is extremely difficult in the present state of our knowledge, to say to what particular section of the Indian population this group of religions belongs. We know that they were anti-Aryan, yet they do not appear to belong to the Dravidian group. The peculiar deity of the latter I fancy must have been Śiva, and his worship is antagonistic in every essential to those religions composing this family. We must pause till we know more of the ethnology of India before we can decide this question in anything like a satisfactory manner.

Meanwhile, however, the similarity of this family of religions points to an identity of race which can hardly be mistaken. For the present, Scythian is a term that might

* Nothing is more common than to connect the worship of the Lingam with the impurities with which the Hindu religion is only too justly reproached. This, however, is a mistake. The worship of Śiva is too severe, too stern, for the softer emotions of love, and all his temples are quite free from any allusion to it. The contrary is the case with the Vaishṇavas, who adore the Lingam. Love pervades all their myths, and their temples are full of sexual feelings generally expressed in the grossest terms. The existence of any such representation in a temple at once fixes it as originally dedicated to the worship of Vishṇu, or some of his Avatars.

† The 10th or coming Avatar of Vishṇu is Kalki, or the Horse, of which we shall have several opportunities of speaking when we come to describe the sculptures of the Amravati Tope, where the horse frequently appears as an important character, but with a rôle not easily understood. The Chakra or Wheel, which occupies the principal place among Buddhist emblems both at Sanchi and Amravati, afterwards becomes one of the principal emblems of Vishṇu. But perhaps the most striking coincidence is to be found at Puri. The Temple there occupies the site where the tooth relic of Buddha was long enshrined, and the worship of Vishṇu under the name of Jaganath, as there practised, is little else than very corrupt Buddhism.

possibly be applied with advantage. It is sufficiently vague, but perhaps it would be wiser to wait for more definite knowledge before applying any terms.*

The subject is only mentioned here because it will recur again and again in the following pages, and unless these generalizations are borne in mind, the sequel will hardly be intelligible. The sculptures at Sanchi and Amravati may not suffice to settle these questions, but if I am not mistaken they throw as much or more light upon them than any other documents that have yet been brought to light.

MODERN WORSHIP OF TREES AND SERPENTS IN INDIA.

Few probably have read the preceding pages without it occurring to them to ask the question, Does Serpent Worship exist in India at the present day, and if so, to what extent? If the inquiry were addressed to even our best-informed Indian authorities, the reply would probably be negative. We have actually possessed India now for more than a century. The Asiatic Society was established in 1784. Since then, with the branch societies in Madras and Bombay, and the Asiatic Societies of England, France, and Germany, some hundreds of volumes have been published, containing some thousands of papers. As not one of these is devoted to Serpent Worship, or even describes it as existing, it may well be argued that it cannot possibly now be found there.

To this line of argument the answer is plain. None of these thousand and one papers are devoted to the ancient worship of the Serpent, nor do any of them contain anything beyond the haziest allusions to the Naga or his previous influence. Yet, if I mistake not, before this work is concluded, it will appear that the Serpent did play an important part in the mythology of India, and that his worship not only prevailed, but considerably influenced forms of faith where we would least suspect his presence.

The truth of the matter seems to be that attention has not hitherto been specially directed to the subject, and till this is the case, the most obvious evidences might be passed by without being noticed.

As an instance of this, I may perhaps be allowed to quote against myself what occurred at Ajanta. I spent a considerable time in exploring these caves, but my mind was full of architecture. I measured everything, drew every detail, and familiarized myself with every architectural affinity. But neither then nor subsequently† did I note the presence of any Nagas. Now that my attention is turned to it, I find in drawings and photographs twelve or fifteen sculptured representations of the seven-headed Naga, and there may be many more. I now also recollect seeing Nagas in all the Jaina temples at Abu, at Sadree, and elsewhere, but I then passed them over. Now I cannot take up a photograph of any temple belonging to the group of religions which include the Buddhist, Jaina, or Vaishṇava faiths, without seeing snakes everywhere, but in places where neither I nor anyone else detected them before.

* It would take a volume to discuss, and an unlimited number of references to establish these conclusions. At present I will only refer to two inscriptions; that at Buddh Gyā, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. I. p. 284, and that of Belgola, vol. XVII. p. 270.

† I have twice published on the subject of these caves; first, on the Rock-cut temples of India, folio, 1845, and subsequently, a volume on the same subject in 1864, illustrated by photographs by Major Gill.

The same I believe to be the case with the living worship. In Forbes' Oriental Memoirs,* in Bishop Heber's Travels, and in fifty other places, allusions are made to the feelings of respect and reverence paid by the natives of India to snakes, and no one can reside long in the country without perceiving it; yet, except in Miss Frere's charming little volume, entitled "Old Deccan Days," I hardly know a book in which snakes, and especially seven-headed snakes,† play an important part, or which reflects the feelings of the natives regarding them. The stories of serpents there related are only an accidental selection out of thousands of similar legends, all which might easily be localized or traced to their source, and many of which will no doubt be investigated so soon as attention is really directed to the subject.‡

Two instances of Serpent Worship, at Munnipore and Sumbulpore, have already been mentioned (page 61). Two others are still more remarkable. In the great temple at Madura the three principal images in the Tosak Khâna are a golden (?) image of Hanumân, another of Garuða, the Vâhana of Vishnu, but the terrible enemy of the snakes. Between these two stands an image of the seven-headed Naga, richly jewelled, and under a splendid canopy. In the great temple at Seringham, likewise, the principal images are two golden statues of the seven-headed Naga, larger apparently than that at Madura, and even more richly jewelled;§ and I have no doubt that many other such might be found, but they have not yet been looked for.

In the meanwhile the following two paragraphs, introduced incidentally in two works published in London during the present season, may serve to indicate the class of illustrations which will no doubt be found everywhere when looked for. "At the Nág Kûán or Serpent Well, in the city of Benares," says Mr. Sherring, "the Nág or Serpent is worshipped. In a niche in the wall of one of the stairs is a figure representing three Serpents (query, a three-headed Serpent), and on the floor is an emblem of Mahâdeva in stone, and a snake crawling up it. The well

* Vol. II. pp. 329, 384, &c.

† In the narrator's narrative (p. xxvii.), the following singularly naive and interesting passage occurs:—"All the cobras in my grandmother's stories were seven-headed. This puzzled us children, and we would say to her, 'Granny, are there any seven-headed cobras now, for all the cobras we see that the conjurers bring round have only one head each.' To which she used to answer, 'No, of course there are no seven-headed cobras now. That world is gone, but you see each cobra has a hood of skin, that is the remains of another head.' Although we often looked for seven-headed cobras we never could find any of them." Had they not been converted to Christianity they might have believed in them, even if they had not seen them.

‡ No one at all familiar with the subject, who reads these tales, can fail to be struck with the similarity that exists between them and many of those collected by the brothers Grimm and others from German and Scandinavian sources, and also with some of the more ancient Grecian myths. The usual mode of accounting for this identity, which can hardly be accidental, is to assume that the tales were originally invented by Aryan nurses beside the cradles of the race in Balkh and Bokhara, and that they were carried east and west by their Alumni when they set out on their travels some 4,000 or 5,000 years ago. The results of my reading have led me to conclusions widely different from this fashionable hypothesis. My belief is that all the serpents and dragons, all the dwarfs and magicians of these tales, all the fairy mythology, in fact, of the east and west, belongs to the Turanian races. These, as I have frequently had occasion to mention, underlie the Aryan races everywhere in Europe as in Asia, and occasionally crop up here and there through the upper crust, often when least expected. So far as I understand the idiosyncrasy of the two races, nothing can be more antagonistic to the tastes and feelings of the Aryans than these wild imaginings; while few things, on the contrary, could be more congenial to the comparatively infantile intellect of the Turanian race.

§ Both these groups were photographed by Captain Tripe, and published by him for Government with other views of the temples in which they are found. I had hoped to have obtained more information regarding them before publishing, but have been unsuccessful.

“ is visited for religious purposes only once a year, namely, on the 24th and 25th days of the month of Sáwan, when immense numbers of persons come to it from all parts of the city. The women come on the first day, the men on the second; they offer sacrifices both to the well and to Nágeswar, or the Serpent God.” *

The other relates to Tree Worship. “ In Beerbhoom once a year the whole capital repairs to a shrine in the jungle, and makes simple offerings to a ghost who dwells in a Bela Tree.” “ The shrine consists of three trees—a Bela Tree on the left, in which the ghost resides, and which is marked at the foot with blood; in the middle is a Kachmula Tree; and on the right a Saura Tree.” “ In spite of the trees being at the most 70 years old, the common people claim the greatest antiquity for the shrine, and tradition says that the three trees that now mark the spot neither grow thicker nor increase in height, but remain the same for ever.” †

There is no doubt whatever with regard to the worship of Trees in modern times, and numerous instances might be adduced if necessary. The Bo Tree at Buddh Gyá is worshipped now as it was in the days of Aśoka, ‡ and the Tree at Anurádhapura is, as mentioned above, the principal object of worship in Ceylon at the present day. And all over India there are numerous examples which we may hope some day to see registered. §

Since this work was commenced I have made every effort to obtain from India information regarding the present existence of Serpent Worship, but though not so successful as I could have wished, I have been able to obtain several documents on the subject of considerable interest. One of these is by Dr. C. E. Balfour, of Secunderabad, whose long study of native manners and customs especially qualify him to speak on the subject. The other is from Colonel Meadows Taylor, so well known for his various literary works connected with India, and who likewise is especially competent, by long residence and intimate knowledge of the natives, to speak regarding their forms of worship. Both these documents, with several others of more or less importance, will be found printed in the Appendix. They are satisfactory as far as they go; but we shall never know exactly what we are to believe regarding the present position of Serpent Worship, till some qualified persons make a special study of it on the spot.

From these documents, as well as from such information as I have been able to gather from other sources that were available, my impression is that successive immigrations of non-worshipping races have nearly obliterated the religion of the Serpent from the valleys of the Ganges and Indus. I believe it still exists in Cashmere

* The Sacred City of the Hindus, by the Rev. M. A. Sherring. London, 1868, p. 89.

† Annals of Rural Bengal, by W. W. Hunter, B.C.S. London, 1868, p. 131.

‡ Buchanan Hamilton, in Martin's Eastern India, I. p. 76.

§ The following instance of Tree Worship which I myself witnessed is amusing, even if not instructive. While residing in Jessore I observed at one time considerable crowds passing near the factory I then had charge of. As it might be merely an ordinary fair they were going to attend, I took no notice; but as the crowd grew daily larger, and assumed a more religious character, I inquired, and was told that a God had appeared in a Tree at a place about six miles off.

Next morning I rode over, and found a large space cleared in a village I knew well, in the centre of which stood an old decayed Date tree, hung with garlands and offerings. Around it houses were erected for the attendant Brahmins, and a great deal of business was going on in offerings and Pôjá. On my inquiring how the God manifested

and Nepaul, and in the hills generally, but not in the plains. Though I have no proof of it, I cannot help suspecting its existence also in the hills north of Sylhet. I feel nearly certain it will be found throughout the valleys of the Nerbudda and Tapti, and among the hill tribes perhaps as far East as Burdwan. It probably is also more or less prevalent all along the western Ghauts down as far as Travancore, and sporadically over the whole of the Madras Presidency. Its existence in any particular spot now must not be taken as a proof either of its presence or absence at an earlier period. Its presence may show either that a Serpent-worshipping tribe have not been disturbed or may have migrated to that spot, and its absence may equally be taken to prove either that it never existed there, or that it has been obliterated by other forms. All this will require much care and study before it can be satisfactorily mapped out; but the subject is one of great interest, as bearing on one of the oldest forms of faith that the world knows, and would amply repay any pains that might be bestowed on its investigation.

NOTE.

The annexed woodcut—which ought to have been inserted on page 42—is interesting, not only as showing the Tree and Serpent in juxtaposition, and honoured on a Babylonian cylinder, but because the Tree is of a form with which we are familiar* on the earliest types of Indian coinage, as will be explained hereafter.

The cylinder from which the representation is taken is in the collection of Mr. Stuart, and is engraved in Lajard's *Culte de Mithra*, Plate VI., Fig. 4., but without any indication by which its age could be determined. My impression is, that many of these cylinders, and this among the number, are more modern than is generally supposed, and may come down to Achæmenian times. In itself this representation is perhaps not of much importance, but it may be well to quote it, in order that those who are familiar with similar objects may turn their attention to them as sources from which information may be obtained regarding Tree or Serpent Worship. This is certainly not a solitary example.



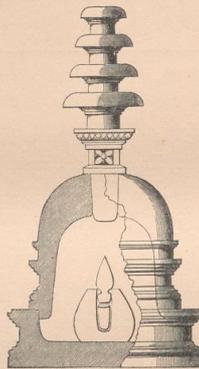
CYLINDER, WITH TREE AND SERPENT.
From Lajard.

his presence, I was informed that soon after the sun rose in the morning the Tree raised its head to welcome him, and bowed it down again when he departed. As this was a miracle easily tested, I returned at noon and found it was so!

After a little study and investigation, the mystery did not seem difficult of explanation. The Tree had originally grown across the principal pathway through the village, but at last hung so low, that in order to enable people to pass under it, it had been turned aside and fastened parallel to the road. In the operation the bundle of fibres which composed the root had become twisted like the strands of a rope. When the morning sun struck on the upper surface of these, they contracted in drying, and hence a tendency to untwist, which raised the head of the Tree. With the evening dews they relaxed, and the head of the Tree declined, thus proving to the man of science, as to the credulous Hindu, that it was due to the direct action of the Sun God.

* J. A. S. B., vol. VII., Plate XXXII.

No. 6.



RELIC CASKET, FROM MANIKYALA,
In the possession of General Cunningham.
No. 6.