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BULL-BAITING, BULL-RACING, BULL-FIGHTS.

BY W. CROOKE.

(*Read before the Society, 15th November, 1916.*)

IN a beehive tomb of the Mycenaean age, at Vaphio, near Sparta, which was excavated in 1889, the most remarkable discovery was that of two gold cups, probably made in Crete, perhaps the finest achievement of Minoan art. On one of these cups we see a bull caught in a net, which is fastened at each end to a tree. The beast is thrown on his forequarters on the ground, and is lifting up his head and bellowing in distress. To the right is seen another bull, which has apparently just cleared the toils at a bound and is galloping away. To the left a third bull is charging in the opposite direction. Two men, apparently unarmed, the huntsmen no doubt who had laid the toils, have attempted to bar his way; but the bull has knocked one of them down, and is in the act of tossing the other on his left horn.¹

On two gems from Crete, now in the British Museum, we find possibly another part of the same incident. In the first we see a bull walking to the right, guarded by a man who stands on the further side of the animal, and holds a cord in both hands which is fastened to the bull's horns.² On the second gem we see a bull led by two men, one at its side, the other apparently on its back, but probably meant to be on the further side of the animal.³

¹ C. Schuchhardt, *Schliemann's Excavations*, 350 (with an illustration); Sir J. Frazer, *Pausanias*, iii. 135 *et seq.*

² *Journal Hellenic Society*, xvii. (1897) 67.

³ *Ibid.* 70.

In a relief on a slab found in Egypt, and now in the Louvre, a bull is goring a man who lies on the ground ; the other huntsman seems to have been tossed by the bull.⁴

Again, one of the finest frescoes discovered by Schliemann in the citadel of Tiryns represents a mighty bull galloping at full speed to the left. Its body is painted a yellowish colour with many red spots. The short head with big round eyes carries a pair of powerful horns, curved to the front. A man balances himself on its back, just touching the animal with his right knee and the tip of his toe, while he throws his other leg high up in the air, and holds on to the bull's horn with his right hand.⁵ On some Greek coins from Catana in Sicily we see a man-headed bull with a figure remarkably like the acrobat of Tiryns, on his back.⁶

In the palace at Knossos, again, Sir A. Evans discovered what has been called "The Toreador Fresco," that decorated a wall on the east side of the building. It shows a boy and two girls in male attire, performing with bulls. One of the girls is about to leap over the bull by clutching its horns, or to be tossed by the furious beast. The other girl stands with outstretched arms, ready to catch a youth who is successfully performing the dangerous leap. The composition, a whole, is admittedly a triumph of ancient art, as any one may judge from the copy now in the Ashmolean Museum.⁷

Needless to say, these fine works of art have given rise to speculation, and the incidents depicted have formed the subject of controversy. Some authorities are disposed to

⁴ Frazer, *op. cit.* lii. 136.

⁵ Schuchhardt, *op. cit.* 119 *et seq.* (with an illustration) ; Frazer, *op. cit.* lii. 229. Ivory figures of bull-fighters from Cnossos, *Report British School Athens*, viii. plates ii. lii. p. 72 *seq.* ; Schliemann, *Tiryns*, plate xiii.

⁶ Schuchhardt, 120.

⁷ C. H. and H. B. Hawes, *Crete the Forerunner of Greece*, 120 ; *Annual British School at Athens*, vii. 94, viii. 94 ; *Journal Hellenic Society*, xx. (1900) 170, xlii. (1902) 382.

regard the scenes depicted on the cup and on the fresco as merely incidents of sport and amusements. Thus, Sir James Frazer, writing of the Tiryns fresco, remarks that since the discovery of the Vaphio cup, "archaeologists have come to the conclusion that the wall-painting in question represents nothing more than a man catching a bull."⁸ Schuchhardt writes regarding the same fresco, that up to now the man has been explained as an acrobat, such as Homer describes, leaping on the back of horses in full career.⁹

It has, however, been urged that the bull was a sacred animal in Minoan times, and that it is improbable that in the period when this feeling prevailed the holy beast should have been exposed to violence, unless it was for a ritual purpose, or that he should have been used merely for purposes of amusement. The bull, as the prime object of sacrifice, was offered to the Mother goddess, whose fostering care embraced all living creatures and followed them into the underworld. "He was," to use the words of two careful Cretan archaeologists, "royal and sacred, the most useful of animals, and chief object of the hunt. His horns, both the actual trophies and copies in clay, were set up on altars, shrines and palaces, and libations of his blood were poured through rhytons [or drinking horns] made of various materials in the shape of his head, just as in the early Chinese ritual the blood was offered in a bronze vessel made in the shape of the animal that was sacrificed."¹⁰ The same writers tell us that in the west court at Knossos was found "the spirited life-size figure of a bull, a conspicuous representation of the royal, sacred and heraldic beast, as significant to a Minoan populace as is the White Elephant to the Siamese."¹¹

It is again urged that it is no answer to this view to

⁸ *Op. cit.* iii. 228.

⁹ *Iliad.* xv. 679.

¹⁰ G. B. E. Williams, *Gournia*, 52. Quoted by Messrs. Hawes, *op. cit.* 140 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 66 et seq.

contend that the violent capture or treatment of such an animal disproves its sanctity. Sir James Frazer has shown that the Corn Spirit is often conceived to take animal form, and such animals, like the boar, which is sacred to the Rajputs, are killed at an annual ceremonial hunt.¹² The buffalo is the sacred animal of the Todas, and yet Dr. Rivers remarks that the sport which is practised by the tribe with the greatest zest is the catching of buffaloes, which are intended to be sacrificed at the funeral rites. In the olden days he supposes that this observance must have been largely of a sportive character. "Even now it is evident that the catching of the buffaloes is much enjoyed by all in spite of the sad event which has led to its taking place. The Todas have, however, pure games, though it is doubtful whether some of them have not acquired to a certain degree a ceremonial character."¹³

Conscious of the difficulty of treating the Minoan treatment of the bull as merely a form of sport, Dr. F. Marx, with reference to the Catana coin already described, contends that the bull must be a river god, and the man who chases it is probably one of the Sileni, who, as personifications of streams and springs, often appear in the train of river deities. Dr. Schuchhardt, however, thinks that recent discoveries have led us back to the original belief that the man is merely an acrobat.¹⁴ I am not aware of any good evidence which suggests that the Minoan sport or religious-magical performance was connected with the worship of river deities.

Dr. Reichel,¹⁵ again, supporting the view that the scene represents an acrobatic performance, assumes that the primitive custom of bull-baiting passed through three stages of evolution: first, the earliest form, the capture of a bull by one or more unarmed men, who cling tenaciously

¹² *The Golden Bough*, part v. vol. I. 270 et seqq.

¹³ *The Todas*, 396.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* 120 et seq.

¹⁵ Quoted by A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, I. 497 et seq.

to its horns ; secondly, out of this developed the favourite Minoan display, of which the most popular form was that of an athlete running at a charging bull, grasping it by its horns, and when he let go his hands, being shot over its back into safety ; thirdly, many centuries later, came the Taurokathapsia, or Thessalian bull-baiting, somewhat analogous to the modern Spanish form, in which a torcador on horseback pursued a bull till it was exhausted, and then leaping upon it, twisted its horns and broke its neck, instead of stabbing the animal, as the Spaniard of our day does.

No one is more conscious than I am of the difficulty of drawing the line between what is a form of religious or magical ritual and what is only a form of sport or amusement. We know that many games are the worn-down survivals of some primitive custom or ritual. Lady Gomme, for instance, has, I think, with considerable probability shown that this is the case with some of the games now played by British children. What is originally a mere game, again, may be taken over and used as an incident in some form of ritual. Thus, discussing one phase of the subject on which we are now engaged, Dr. Farnell writes of the Taurokathapsia or Thessalian form of bull-baiting : "The chase of the wild bull by mounted riders on the Thessalian plains was no doubt at first merely a secular amusement or serious practical occupation. But that it should be taken over into divine worship was quite in accordance with the Hellenic tendency to consecrate all things of secular life. And Poseidon was the natural god to appropriate it ; for the bull even more than the horse was his sacrificial animal, and was closely associated with him by the Minyan and Ionic peoples." ¹⁶

The question has recently been examined by Mr. A. B. Cook in his learned monograph on the cults of Zeus. The conclusion at which he has arrived will be stated later on.

¹⁶ *Cults of the Greek States*, iv. 25 et seq.

There are various difficulties in accepting the view of this able scholar. But he seems not to have been aware of some curious parallels, which he would possibly accept in confirmation of his views, and it is the main purpose of this paper to describe them.

I need hardly say that we must bear in mind the risk of explaining any custom or ritual by comparison with those current in distant regions, the peoples of which are not connected in any way. Mr. Cook himself admits he is not always satisfied that similarity of performance implies similarity of purpose.¹⁷

With this preliminary caution, we may examine some customs of bull-baiting or bull-driving in India and elsewhere.

Indian ceremonial bull-baiting or bull-driving assumes various forms. The first and most interesting for our present purpose is that popularly known as the Jellicut (properly Tamil *Jallikattu*, "the tying of ornaments"), the ornament being a piece of cloth attached to the horns of the animal. Among the Maravans of the Madura District in the Madras Presidency, according to one account, the people collect in an open space. The owners of the plough-bullocks in the village bring their animals, brag about their strength and speed, and challenge all and sundry to catch and hold them. A beast is brought out, and a new piece of cloth, the prize of the captor, is made fast round its horns. He is led into the arena, where, excited by the shouts of the bystanders, he charges viciously. He is pursued by the more active and courageous youths of the village, who avoid his charges by dropping on the ground. The game goes on till somebody succeeds in catching him. In this way some two or three hundred animals are "run" in the course of the day. Fatal results to the pursuers are said not to be common, but the sport is by some regarded as so dangerous that the authorities

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* i. preface, xiii.

discourage it as far as possible. One writer, however, remarks: "Seeing that no one need run any risk unless he chooses, existing official opinion inclines to the view that it is a pity to discourage a manly amusement which is not really more dangerous than foot-ball, steeple-chasing, or fox-hunting." ¹⁸

In dealing with a custom like this the date of the performance is of vital importance. In this case it is practised on the Mattu-pongāl day, the day after the Pongāl festival which is held on the Tamil New Year's Day, approximately on 12th January. This is a season at which we might naturally expect that rites for the promotion of fertility would take place. This is confirmed by the connexion of the rite of bull-baiting with marriage.

Among the Tamils in ancient times the Ayar or cowherd caste observed the custom of selecting husbands for their girls by the result of a form of bull-fight. Ferocious bulls were brought into an enclosure surrounded by palisades. The girls watched the proceedings from a platform, while the youths prayed to images of the gods placed under sacred trees or at watering-places, and decked themselves with red and purple flowers. "At a signal given by beating of drums, the youths leap into the enclosure and try to seize the bulls, which, frightened by the noise of the drums, are now ready to charge any one who approaches them. Each youth approaches a bull which he chooses to capture. But the bulls rush furiously with tails raised, heads bent down, and horns levelled at their assailants. Some of the youths face the bulls boldly and take hold of their tails. The now wary young men avoid the horns, and clasping the neck, cling to the animals till they force them to fall on the ground. Many a luckless youth is now thrown down. Some escape without a scratch, while others are trampled on or gored by the bulls. Some, though wounded

¹⁸ E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 43 *et seq.* (with a photograph of the bull bearing the cloth on his horns).

and bleeding, again spring on the bulls. A few who succeed in capturing the animals are declared the victors of that day's fight. The wounded are carried out of the enclosure and attended to immediately ; while the victors and the brides-elect repair to an adjoining grove, and there, forming into groups, dance joyously before preparing for the marriage." ¹⁹

This account, taken from ancient Tamil literature, agrees with the custom practised at the present day. " In the villages, especially in villages inhabited by the Kalla or robber tribes," a good native authority states that " the maiden chooses as her husband him who has safely untied and brought to her the cloth tied to the horns of the fiercest bull. The bullocks are let loose with their horns carrying valuables, amid the din of tom-toms and harsh music which terrify and bewilder them. They run madly about, and are purposely excited by the crowd. A young Kalla will declare that he will run after such and such a bullock—a risky pursuit—and recover the valuables tied to its horn, and he does so often in a dexterous manner. These *tamashas* [shows] take place on a grand scale in villages about Madura and Tinnevely, where Kallas live in large numbers. Accidents are very common, but they are not allowed to interfere with the festivities. Besides, the Kalla considers it a great disgrace to be injured while chasing a bull." ²⁰

This may be one of the tests, common in folklore, in which the bride is allotted to the suitor who performs some special act of gallantry, such as slaying a dragon and the like. But the selection of a bull-baiting contest and the date at which it is performed seem to imply some special connexion with fertility rites.

There are other indications leading to the same conclusion. Thus, in a contest of a similar kind among the

¹⁹ V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, 57 et seq.

²⁰ Pandit S. M. Natesa Sastri, *Hindu Feasts, Fasts and Ceremonies*, 20 et seq.

Bants of Kanara "the proceedings commence with a procession, which is not infrequently headed by a couple of painted dolls in an attitude suggestive of reproductiveness, which the races really give thanks for."²¹ Among the Parayans of Cochin, buffaloes belonging to different owners are made to run in competition in an open space round a temple. The contest, we are told, is intended to gain the favour of the Mother goddess, Bhagavati, the giver of fertility to men, animals and crops, and to keep the animals strong and healthy. This is the national festival in Malabar, known as Pothu-ottal, or "Buffalo Race."²² So in Kanara, on the day of the Diwali, or feast of lights, at which the family ghosts revisit their houses and a rite of expulsion of evil is performed, the Halvakki Vakkals, a cultivating caste, eat a hearty breakfast, make an image of Balindra, god of cattle, and place it in the cowshed with some rice and a coconut tied round its neck. The fiercest bull and heifer of the village are decorated with garlands, and are driven through the streets, followed by a crowd of boys. The boy who succeeds in snatching a garland from the bull or heifer as they rush along, is loudly applauded, and is thought to be a fit match for the best girl in the neighbourhood.²³

A parallel to this method of bull-baiting comes from Nigeria. Here the bull's horns are not protected in any way, nor is the animal let loose, as in the Portuguese form of bull-baiting. "Two men hold a rope tied to a hind foot, and one, the catcher, holds another rope fastened to the neck or to the horns. The animal, after having been maddened by tugging at the rope, drumming and shouting, is allowed to dash about, being brought up at will by a pull on one rope or on the other. After a time the catcher begins shortening his rope, and in consequence advancing

²¹ Thurston, *op. cit.* i. 160.

²² L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *Cochin Tribes and Castes*, i. 84.

²³ *Bombay Gazetteer*, xv. part i. 207.

towards the bull, care being taken that the hind rope is quite taut, so that no sudden rush can be made, and when close up the bull tries to gore, and the man is tossed exactly as in Portugal, holding on in a similar fashion till extricated. Sometimes the man will get astride the animal's neck, using the horns like parallel bars. But as the horns are not protected in these games there is always great risk." Major Tremearne,²⁴ who gives this account, further describes the sport in Portugal, where, when the bull charges, the catcher grasps the animal by the neck, holding on till his comrades, by distracting the attention of the beast, enable him to extricate himself.

I consulted my friend, Major Tremearne, by whose recent death in action anthropology and folklore have sustained a grievous loss, on the question whether the sport has any religious or magical significance. In the last letter which I received from him ²⁵ he replied: "The actual bull-baiting which I saw in Northern Nigeria did not seem to have any religious significance for the on-looker. But I have little doubt that it was once part of a fertility rite. The animal is always, or, at any rate, nearly always, killed after the performance at the present day, and the bull is the proper offering for rain in Tripoli and Tunis." ²⁶

Further accounts from Greece and the coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean seem to indicate that a form of bull-baiting, or the seizure and carrying away of the victims, formed a preliminary of rites of sacrifice.

Thus, Pausanias tells us: "What is most worthy of note [among the Cynacthaens] is that there is a sanctuary of Dionysus here, and that they hold a festival in winter, at which men, their bodies greased with oil, pick out a bull from a herd, (whichever bull the god puts it into their minds to take), lift it up and carry it to the sanctuary.

²⁴ *The Tailed Head-Hunters of Nigeria*, 295 et seqq. (with illustrations).

²⁵ Dated 20th January, 1915.

²⁶ See *Idem*, *The Dan of the Bori*, 185 et seqq.

Such is their mode of sacrifice." ²⁷ Again, "in the sanctuary [at Argos] is the throne of Danaus, and there is a statue of Biton, representing a man carrying a bull on his shoulders. According to the poet Lyceas, when the Argives were driving beasts to Nemea to sacrifice to Zeus, Biton, by reason of his vigour and strength, took up a bull and carried it." ²⁸ Strabo ²⁹ informs us that "a yearly festival is held at Acharaka . . . on which occasion about the hour of noon the young men from the gymnasium, stripped and anointed with oil, take up a bull and carry it with speed to the Cave; it advances a little way, falls down and dies." This may be taken to suggest that the scene depicted on the Vaphio cup and on the gems may possibly be a piece of ritual.

Some form of bull-fight, again, accompanied local cults. Thus, at the Haloa festival at Athens, "the epheboi offered bulls at Eleusis, and, it would appear, engaged in some sort of 'bull-fight,' but this must have been in honour either of Dionysos or of Poseidon, who preceded him; the *vehicle* of both these divinities was the bull." ³⁰ From the facts already adduced it may be suggested that the custom had a wider provenance. Strabo, ³¹ too, tells us that in Egypt the shrine of the bull-god Apis stood beside the large and wealthy temple of Hephaistos [Ptah], in which stood a colossus made of a single block of stone. Here bulls, bred for the purpose, were pitted against each other, a prize being rewarded to the victorious bull—doubtless not a mere exhibition, but some ritual, religious or magical, connected with the local cultus.

We may return to India for some examples of cattle being scared or chased as a form of ritual.

²⁷ viii. 19, 2, Sir J. Frazer's trans. i. 397; Cook, *op. cit.* i. 503.

²⁸ *Pausanias*, ii. 19, 5; Sir J. Frazer's trans. i. 99; Cook, *op. cit.* 553, n. 1.

²⁹ 650; Cook, *op. cit.* i. 504.

³⁰ Miss J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 147 *et seq.*

³¹ 507; Cook, *op. cit.* i. 433.

The Ahirs, cattle-graziers in the Central Provinces, at the Diwali festival, go to the cattle-shed and wake up the cattle, crying: "Poraiya, god of the door, watchman of the window! Open the door, Nand Gopal is coming!" Nand, the Gopal or cattle-protecting god, was the foster-father of Krishna, himself a god who watches over cattle. Then they drive the cattle out and with branches tied to their sticks chase them as far as the grazing-ground. The meaning of this custom, says Mr. R. V. Russell,³² who reports the rite, is obscure; but it is said to preserve the cattle from disease during the coming year. I would venture to suggest that it may be a method of stimulating their vigour, and the beating of them with the branches tied to the herdsmen's sticks may be a prophylactic rite intended to disperse evil influences. We are not told that these branches are taken from some sacred tree, but this is probably the case, because it was a Vedic custom to drive the cows from their calves by striking them with a branch of the *palasa* tree (*butea frondosa*), which is well known to possess prophylactic qualities.³³

I have already noticed the Toda custom of chasing the sacred buffaloes intended for sacrifice at the funeral rites. But some further facts supplied by Dr. Rivers are of interest in connexion with the rites under consideration.

As soon as the herd from which the victim is to be selected appears, "the appointed men drop their cloaks and race to meet the buffaloes. The buffaloes are driven on from behind in a more vigorous manner than that to which they are accustomed, are more or less infuriated, and often rush wildly about to avoid the racing Todas, one of whom succeeds in catching the appointed animal, seizing it by the horns, and then hangs round its neck with one hand and seizes the cartilage of the nose with the other. Another of the men seizes a horn and also hangs round the

³² *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, ii. 33.

³³ *Sacred Books of the East*, xii. 183.

neck of the animal, and both men put their whole weight on the neck of the buffalo and bear it to the ground. Often they are carried many yards before they succeed in getting the infuriated animal under control, and when catching the horns they are sometimes severely gored, though this rarely happens now, and I could hear of no case in which there had been fatal consequences."³⁴ Again, when the second funeral ceremony "was prolonged over two days, the proceedings of the first day opened with the capture of the buffaloes, which were put in the pen, and then followed a scene in which the Todas entered the pen, flourishing heavy clubs. The animals were belaboured and driven round and round the pen, and at intervals several men would catch and hold down a buffalo. . . . On the second day the proceedings began again with a repetition of the driving and catching in the pen. In the afternoon, after the earth-throwing ceremony, the buffaloes, now wearied and subdued, were dragged from the pen and killed."³⁵

Of course, it may be said that this is merely a way of reducing the semi-savage beasts to subjection, and Dr. Rivers, with characteristic caution, does not imply that the violence used had any ritualistic significance. Still, when we compare it with the cases already quoted, we may, with some probability, infer that these holy animals are not ill-treated without some good reason. We know that the animals sacrificed at the death rites are intended to accompany the spirits to Amnor or deathland.³⁶ Possibly

³⁴ *The Todas*, 350 *et seq.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* 384.

³⁶ Amnor is the name used by Dr. Rivers and Lieut.-Col. Marshall to designate the spirit-land of the Todas. It may be well to state that the name seems to be based on a misunderstanding. Mr. Lewis Rice, a good authority, points out that the word is evidently the honorific plural, Ammanavaru, of Amma, Māriamma, or Māramma, the Mother goddess, and cannot mean a place, answering to heaven. Whether the misunderstanding is due to European writers, or to the Todas themselves, I cannot say (B. L. Rice, *Mysore Gazetteer*, ed. 1897, I. 456).

as in the case of cattle-driving by the Ahirs, the object may be to stimulate and strengthen them, and thus fit them to be of use in the land of spirits.

A custom of driving cattle among the Bhils of Western India presents some features of special interest. At the Diwali festival, which seems to be the appropriate time for these practices connected with cattle, the ground in front of the shed is cleaned, and a small circle is marked out with grains of rice. In this circle a lighted lamp and seven balls of cooked rice or maize are placed on leaves. A fire is set alight and some butter is thrown upon it. A man, generally the house-master, lays his hand on five chickens—seven and five being sacred numbers—throws water over them and offers them to the god Indra, saying: "O Dharma Indra! This sacrifice we offer to thee. During the coming year keep our cattle free from disease, do not afflict them with sickness, increase them, and be kindly!" At the same time a second man cuts the throats of the chickens, and a third sprinkles spirits on the ground, saying: "O Dharma Indra! We pour this liquor to thee!" Then the cattle, cows and oxen, are released from the shed, that of the headman being the first to be opened. When all the cattle are collected they are driven over the body of a Bhil, who lies at full length on the ground, with his face downwards. In consideration of his running the risk of being injured by the herd, he receives from the headman a gift of a sheet or a turban.³⁷

The object of this rite is obscure, and in the account from which I have quoted the people themselves give no explanation. It possibly may represent the commutation of a human sacrifice. In a case quoted by Sir James Frazer, which Mr. Sidney Hartland has kindly examined in the original authority, a newborn child in Madagascar is placed at the entrance of a cattle shed, and the herd is driven over it to ascertain whether they will trample it or

³⁷ *Bombay Gazetteer*, 12. part i. 306.

not ; in other words, if it lives in spite of the cattle passing over it, its destiny (*vintana*) is considered to be overcome, and it is brought up. It is thus a form of augury to determine the fate of an individual child, and in this respect it presents no analogy to the Bhil case. This Madagascar custom may be, as Sir James Frazer suggests, a kinship test.³⁸ The Bishop of Madras reports a complex rite, or series of rites, intended to propitiate Peddamma, possibly a chthonic deity, who controls cholera and small-pox. At one stage of the proceedings "first a lamb is sacrificed before the goddess, and its blood is mixed with some cooked rice, and at the same time a pig is buried up to the neck in a pit at the entrance of the village, with its head projecting above the earth. The villagers go in procession to the spot, while one of the Madigas carries the rice, soaked in the blood of the lamb, in a basket. All the cattle of the village are then brought to the place and driven over the head of the unhappy pig, who is, of course, trampled to death, and, as they pass over the pig, the blood and rice are sprinkled upon them to preserve them from disease."³⁹ This rite, as Mr. Hartland suggests to me, is apparently intended to mollify the goddess towards the people of the village performing the sacrifice, and to induce her to transfer her wrath to the next village. There may possibly be an element of magical consecration of the village by the burial of the pig, and, as a sacrifice involves an augury, there may also be a method of ascertaining the acceptance of the sacrifice by the goddess.

Other cases of the same kind are reported from India. Mr. Thurston⁴⁰ states that in former times the Lambadis, a class of Banjara carriers and traders, before setting out on a journey, used to procure a little child, and bury it in the

³⁸ *Totemism and Exogamy*, i. 21, quoting Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, i. 157.

³⁹ *Bulletin Madras Museum*, v. No. 3, 133.

⁴⁰ *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, 507, quoting Rev. J. Cain, *Indian Antiquary*, 1879.

ground up to its shoulders, and then drive their leading bullocks over the unfortunate victim. In proportion as the bullocks thoroughly trampled the child to death, their belief in a successful journey increased. This seems to be a case of augury, not of human sacrifice. Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. Marshall discussed the question of infanticide with a member of the Toda tribe. The latter replied : " Those tell lies who say we laid it [the child] before the opening of the buffalo pen, so that it might be run over and killed by the animals ! We never did such things ! and it is all nonsense that we drowned it in buffalo's milk ! " Marshall quotes an official letter addressed by the Collector of Coimbatore to the Secretary to the Government of Fort St. George in 1856, in which he stated : " The mode of destroying the infant, if a female, is by exposing it the next morning [? after the birth] at the door of the cattle kraal ; when first opened, the whole herd, half wild, rush over and annihilate the wretched infant—the Todas never lifting their own hand against it." ⁴¹

This is probably the story to which the Bishop of Madras refers : " I have been told that among the Todas of the Nilgiri hills it was formerly the custom to place female children, whom it was desired to rear, on the ground at the entrance of the mand, and drive buffaloes over them. If they survived this ordeal, they were allowed to live." ⁴² This differs from the account quoted by Marshall, which represents it as a method of infanticide, and the Toda who repudiated the practice, described in a very matter-of-fact way how female infants were killed by closing the nostrils, ears and mouth with a cloth. Neither Dr. Rivers nor Mr. Thurston seems to corroborate the existence of the custom of killing infants by allowing them to be trampled by cattle, and it appears to be based on some misapprehension.

⁴¹ W. E. Marshall, *A Phrenologist amongst the Todas*, 195.

⁴² *Op. cit.* 137.

The Hatkars of the Central Provinces practise a rite of the same character, the purport of which is equally obscure. On the day of the Diwali festival they worship the cow, tying a piece of wool to its forehead and putting rice on it. Then they make a mud image of Govardhan, the mountain which Krishna, the cattle-god, held over his people to protect them from the rain sent by Indra, and then they let the cattle trample the image in pieces with their hoofs.⁴³ We may perhaps conjecture that the object is that the cattle may acquire *mana* by contact with the image of their patron god.

Another remarkable form of cattle-driving appears among the Bants, a cultivating caste in Kanara, to which reference has already been made. Every man of wealth keeps racing buffaloes, which, except for an occasional turn of ploughing at the beginning of the season, are kept for racing. The competition is between pairs of these animals, which drag a plank in succession through the mud of the rice fields. The winners are selected for pace and style, and, most important of all, for the height and breadth of the splash which they make, this being sometimes measured by an instrument like a gallows erected in the field. The indecency and devil-dancing which accompany this observance show, as I have already pointed out, that the rite is intended to promote fertility and disperse evil influence. If the rite be omitted, we are told, the local field demons are displeased and injure the crops. On the day after this ceremony the rice seedlings are transplanted.⁴⁴

We may suspect that we have here a form of sympathetic or imitative magic. The higher the mud is splashed the better will the field be soaked in the rainy season, just as during the rainy season in the Central Provinces, boys walk through the fields on stilts: the higher they can walk

⁴³ Russell, *op. cit.* iii. 206.

⁴⁴ E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, i. 157 *et seqq.* (with photographs).

the heavier will be the rainfall, the more rapidly will the crops grow.⁴⁵

In another form of the custom, the Kunbi cultivators in the Central Provinces observe the Pola or "Bull" festival in the middle of the rainy season. An old bullock goes first, heading the procession of the cattle. On his horns is tied the *makhar*, a wooden frame with pegs to which torches are fixed. They make a rope of mango-leaves stretched between two posts, and the *makhar* bullock is forced to break this and stampede back to the village, followed by the other cattle. It is said that the animal which bears the *makhar* will die within three years.⁴⁶ From this it would seem that he is regarded as a sort of scape animal, carrying with him the ill-luck of the village. But with this rite we may also compare the widespread custom of carrying torches round the fields to disperse evil, produce fertility and sunshine.⁴⁷

At the close of a long paper it is impossible to consider the question of bull-baiting in Great Britain. The materials are extensive, and we must await the new edition of Brand's *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, now in preparation by the Society, before they become available for study.

I would only call attention to the remarks of Miss Mabel Peacock on the custom of Shrovetide football played in the bull-ring at Sedgefield, in a paper contributed to the Society in 1896, which are relevant to the present discussion. She wrote: "The connection of the game with a ring to which bulls were formerly attached for baiting is very curious. Although, as far as I am aware, the fact has never been pointed out by any one discussing the origin of

⁴⁵ R. V. Russell, *Nagpur Gazetteer*, i. 95.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, *Castes and Tribes of the Central Provinces*, iv. 40; *Ethnographic Survey Central Provinces*, part ix. 63 et seq.

⁴⁷ W. W. Fowler, *Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, 77 et seq.; Sir J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. part v. vol. i. 57 n., 297 n. 5; part vi. 316 et seqq.

the sport, bull-baiting seems to have sprung from a form of nature-worship. That is to say, indications which suggest its association with the cult of water are not wanting. In the Stamford bull-running, for instance, the great object was to 'bridge the bull,' which meant to tumble him by main force over the bridge which spans the Welland into the river beneath. At Tutbury, if the minstrels could succeed in cutting off a piece of the bull's skin before he crossed the river Dove into Derbyshire, he became the property of the King of Music : but if not, he was returned to the Prior of Tutbury, who had provided the festival : and according to *Notes and Queries* (5th ser. vol. xii. p. 456) the last bull-baiting in Rochdale (Lancashire) took place in 1819, when some persons were killed in consequence of the falling in of the river wall. The baiting was performed in the bed of a shallow river (the Roche) in the centre of the town."⁴⁸ We thus come back to the Catana coin to which I have referred and the theory of the water bull.

At one time the idea suggested itself to me—and I now find that the same theory occurred independently to Miss C. S. Burne—that the annual baiting of a bull in this country was connected with rites of fertility in this way. It would naturally be the desire of a cattle-breeding community that the bull, the master or lord of the herd, should possess the strongest vital power : and it may have been the custom to slay the bull at the close of the year and replace him by a more vigorous successor. We may have a survival of such a custom in the annual bull-baiting. But I have failed to find any good evidence of a custom such as this. It is possible that, by calling attention to the subject, some evidence of this kind may be forthcoming. At present it remains a suggestion and nothing more.

We may now attempt to suggest, as a working hypothesis, an explanation of the scene depicted on the Vaphio cup and the frescoes with which I began this paper. We

⁴⁸ *Folk-Lore*, vii. 346 *et seq.* ; xv. 199 *et seqq.*

possibly see in them two phases of a custom which may be regarded as magical or religious, or a compound of both. The scene on the cup may represent the capture of the sacred bulls by unarmed hunters for the purpose of sacrifice. As we have seen in the case of the Todas and among certain peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean, the use of some amount of violence to such holy beasts seems to be not an uncommon prelude to their being selected as victims, the rough usage to which they are subjected being possibly intended to stimulate their energies and render them an acceptable offering to the gods or fitted to accompany the spirits of the dead to the underworld.

The next stage is the appearance of the bulls in the arena. The suggestion of Mr. Cook, to which the evidence now adduced from Nigeria and India may seem to lend some additional support is that the essential feature of the Minoan performance is the grasping of the horn or horns of the sacred animals, by which the performer, who may be the delegate of the community, obtains by contact a share of the divine power or *mana* of the holy beast.⁴⁹ We may conjecture that the bull, from his strength and virility, came to be regarded the great dispenser of *mana*, and hence he is worshipped by pastoral and agricultural tribes. Mr. Cook points out that the goat, another horned animal, was used in cults like those of the bull. We also know that contact with a sacred bull was believed to cause fertility. In the well-known case of the bull kept before the Reformation at the shrine of St. Edmund at Bury St. Edmunds, married women who desired offspring used to touch his milk-white sides and pendant dewlaps as he was led in procession through the streets of the town, and then paid their vows at the shrine of the saint.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Zeus*, l. 499 *et seqq.*

⁵⁰ *County Folk-Lore, Suffolk*, 124. Mr. Sidney Hartland quotes other cases of the same kind in *Primitive Paternity*, l. 131 *et seqq.*; also see *Notes and Queries*, 1st ser. viii. 1.

The Indian custom in which a cloth or so-called "ornament" is tied to the horns of the animal, and the successful seizing of them from the head of a charging bull entitles the victorious youth to claim in marriage "the best girl in the neighbourhood," as is stated in one account of the observance, does bear a superficial resemblance to the rite of seizing the bull's horns for a magical purpose on which Mr. Cook lays stress. But, as far as I can judge, from the evidence there is nothing to show that the cloth or "ornament" is anything more than the ordinary prize of victory. The successful grasping of the garlands tied to the animal in another Indian case has probably the same meaning. I cannot see that there is anything magical or religious about the transaction, save that in some of the Indian cases the time selected for these exhibitions and other circumstances connected with them do seem to indicate that they are in some way connected with a fertility rite. It may also be observed that the seizure of the horns of the animal need not bear any special esoteric significance. An acrobat bounding over a bull's back in a circus would naturally try to support himself or secure his escape from the animal as it charges by grasping the horns: he would seize the horns, to use Major Tremcarne's phrase, as a boy in the gymnasium seizes the parallel bars.

It has also been suggested that in the Spanish bull-fight, particularly in the killing of the horses, some magical or religious idea underlies the observances. The only theory of this kind which I have noticed is that of Richard Ford, who has given one of the best accounts of these exhibitions.⁵¹ He writes: "Our boxing, baiting term *bull-fight*, is a very lay and low translation of the time-honoured Castilian title, *Fiestas de Toros*, the feasts, festivals of bulls. The gods and goddesses of antiquity were conciliated by the sacrifice of hecatombs: the lowing tickled their divine ears, and the purple blood fed their eyes, no less than the

⁵¹ *Gatherings from Spain*, Everyman's Library, p. 310 *et seq.*

roasted sirloins fattened the priests, while the grand spectacle and death delighted their dinnerless congregations . . . So at the *taurobolia* of antiquity, those who were sprinkled with bull blood were absolved from sin." It would be interesting to connect the *taurobolia* with the modern bull-fight, but I am not aware that the connexion has been established by historical evidence.

This is not the time to attempt a full discussion of the interesting suggestion of Mr. Cook. We must first be certain that the scene on the Vaphio cup and the Tiryns and Knossos frescoes do represent a religious or magical performance, and not merely an incident of sport or an acrobatic exhibition. All we can say with any degree of certainty is that in India and in Nigeria bull-baiting and bull-driving are possibly connected with rites of fertility. In, I think, the last paper which he read before our Society,⁵² Mr. Andrew Lang successfully disposed of the popular belief that boys and girls were sent from Athens to Crete to be devoured by a Bull-god, and he pointed out that the legend was probably a reminiscence of the sports in the arena at Knossos, such as that represented on the frescoes. It would be satisfactory to believe, with Mr. Cook, that they were used for the pleasant object of drawing *mana* from the sacred bulls. But is this not too good to be true?

The discussion supplies a good illustration of the difficulties and dangers which a science like folklore is obliged to encounter. We are charged—and the accusation is often only too true—with being immersed in the quest of survivals. As Professor Gilbert Murray writes, we "search antiquity eagerly for traces of primitive man, for totems, cannibalism, human sacrifice, and the like. The traces which they discover are of the greatest value. But I think that they have often mistaken the reverberation of an extinct barbarity for the actual barbarity itself."⁵³

⁵² *Folk-Lore*, xxi. (1910) 132 *et seqq.*

⁵³ *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 10 *et seq.*

Again, we are charged with adopting unscientific methods by comparing, for the purpose of explaining difficulties, facts drawn from un-related cultures. This criticism may be fairly urged against my attempt to quote facts from India and Nigeria to interpret a custom or ritual in the Hellenic or Aegean societies. At the same time, an advancing science like ours must always be starting hares, always suggesting new interpretations. If such suggestions prove to be of no scientific value beyond attracting attention to a problem and encouraging further research and the collection of new material, they may serve some useful purpose.

W. CROOKE.