Correspondence.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

LE COMBAT DU PÈRE ET DU FILS.

Je ne veux pas revenir sur le livre de M. Potter *Sohrab and Rustem* après le compte-rendu critique que M. Crooke en a donné ici-même (xiii., 444-447) ; mais je me permets de présenter, à ce propos, une remarque et deux additions. Cette légende m'avait intéressé depuis longtemps, parcequ'elle se rencontre dans la littérature gaelique d'Irlande et d'Écosse, comme combat de Cuchulainn et de Conlaoch : mes notes me fournissent peu de chose qui n'ait été relevé et mis en œuvre par M. Potter ; mais il me semble que dans les travaux d'histoire littéraire il faut tenir compte de l'apport de ses prédécesseurs et rendre hommage à leurs découvertes, alors même que par le progrès du temps et des études on peut pousser une question beaucoup plus loin qu'ils n'ont fait. C'est d'autant plus le lieu de le faire ici qu'il s'agit de rendre hommage à deux écrivains, aujourd'hui oubliés, de la Grande-Bretagne.

Lorsqu'en 1892 M. d'Arbois de Jubainville publia l'ouvrage collectif intitulé *L'Épopée Celtique en Irlande*, il y traduisit des versions toutes modernes de notre légende, et cela d'après Keating et Macpherson. À cette occasion son collaborateur M. Ferdinand Lot lui révéla le récit du *Shah-Nameh*. Ce rapprochement était-il donc nouveau ? M. d'Arbois de Jubainville ignorait qu'en 1862 un savant écossais, M. Thomas McLauchlan, avait publié une version redigée au commencement du xvi^e siècle (donc bien antérieure aux arrangements de Macpherson !). Et McLauchlan rapprochait aussitôt ce récit de celui du *Shah-Nameh* : il disait :

This poem is the Celtic edition of the Persian tale of Sohrab and Rustum. The incidents are so similar that the two tales must have had a common origin. Whether the Persians received the tale from the Celts, or the Celts from the Persians, or both from some other and older source, it is hard to say.¹

The Dean of Lismore's Book edited by Th. McLauchlan, Edinburgh, 1862, p. 50. À ce propos, disons que la synopsis la plus complète des versions gaeliques (irlandaises et écossaises) de la légende de ce combat a été donnée par M. L. Chr. Stern dans la *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, lili., 438, en rendant compte d'une étude de M. E. Ernault, laquelle manque dans la bibliographie de M. Potter.

Thomas McLauchlan avait fait là une importante découverte d'histoire littéraire. Elle fut relevée l'année suivante par R. G. Latham dans les *Trans. of the R. Soc. of Literature of the United Kingdom*, 2nd ser. vol. vii. (1863) pp. 474-481. Latham élargissait la question en citant le poème germanique sur le combat d'Hildebrand et d'Hadubrand, et il écrivait :

"Without examining the details of this opinion [c. à. d. le rapprochement fait par McLauchlan], the present writer simply compares the Gaelic poem with the well-known German (Frank or Saxon) one of *Hildebrand and Hadubrand*, making of course, *mutatis mutandis*, the same suggestion. The parts where the details are closest are in italics. No comment is added, the reader being left to form his own opinion as to both the amount of likeness and the cause of it."

Et Latham rapprochait ensuite les deux poèmes, gaelique et germanique, en accentuant la ressemblance des détails par des italiques.

Les trois versions les plus importantes de la légende, gaelique persane, et germanique, étaient donc déjà mises en parallèle des 1863. Il faut rendre à nos prédécesseurs l'honneur de cette découverte ; ce sont les celtistes surtout qui doivent cet hommage à Th. McLauchlan et Latham, au lieu de s'imaginer, et de donner à croire au public, que le monde devait les attendre pour cette découverte d'histoire littéraire.

Je donne maintenant, d'après mon dossier devenu désormais inutile, deux additions au livre de M. Potter. Ce livre, réunissant tous les matériaux jusqu'ici connus, doit servir de point d'attache à tout nouveau document.

L'épisode se trouve dans un roman populaire chez les Turcs de l'Asie Mineure, analysé par M. I. Kúnos dans la *Ungarische Revue* de Budapest (no. de mars 1892, p. 201 et suiv.). M. Kúnos ne dit pas de quel original il s'est servi, ouvrage imprimé ou manuscrit, ou tradition orale, et il présente ce roman, mêlé de prose et de vers, comme un des récits populaires chez les Turcs d'Anatolie. Le brigand Körölu, au cours d'une expédition, est devenu amoureux d'une belle fille, et il l'obtient en mariage. Il quitte son épouse au bout de quelques jours parcequ'il ne veut pas s'embourgeoiser et renoncer à sa vie d'aventures : mais pour l'enfant qui peut naître, et qui devra s'appeler Hassan, il laisse deux objets de reconnaissance : l'un d'eux est un collier. Plus tard, l'enfant, devenu homme, passe en chevauchant près du repaire

de Körölu ; celui-ci veut le cheval du jeune homme. Avant d'en venir aux armes, les deux héros échangent des tirades orgueilleuses en vers : Körölu se nomme ; son fils le reconnaissant à son nom, saute de cheval et les deux hommes s'embrassent. Ceci n'est qu'un incident du roman lequel continue par d'autres aventures.

Une chanson populaire allemande de la province de Brandebourg, *An der Weichsel gegen Osten*, développe ce thème d'une façon moderne et bien prussienne. Un soldat en faction tire sur son propre père, sans le savoir, parceque celui-ci a laissé trois appels sans réponse.¹ Peut-être le motif de cette chanson est-il indépendant de la tradition ; car les combinaisons de l'invention romanesque sont en nombre limité et l'imagination est partout créatrice.

H. GAIDOZ.

FETISH-WORSHIP IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

(*Ante*, pp. 2, 61.)

I have to hand the Editor's letter, per Mr. Lovett, with inquiries regarding my note on Fetish-Worship in Central Africa, which he read before the Folk-Lore Society [10th December, 1902]. I reply to these queries in their order.

1. [Are remote ancestors worshipped, or only the recently dead ?]

Worship is confined to recent ancestors almost entirely—generally to those of the generation immediately preceding. Among the Yaos and the Angoni, the chief or headman who has recently died, steps into the place occupied by his predecessor, and is worshipped in turn. The chief whose spirit hitherto was the object of worship is now for the most part neglected, and all homage is paid to the spirit of the man recently dead.

For example : there is on the top of Mount Soche, three miles from Blantyre, the grave of an old Mang'anja chief called Kan-komba. He was the chief of the country when the Yaos came into it in Livingstone's time and drove out the original Mang'anja

¹ Cité dans K. Reuschel, *Volkskundliche Streifzüge*, (Dresden, 1903), p. 161, d'après la *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, T. IV., p. 212.

owners. He died in his old village and was buried on the top of the hill where he lived. The incoming Yaos worshipped his spirit as the previous chief of the district. This they did till their own chief Kapeni died, when his successor left off making offerings to the old Kankomba and paid his worship to the recently dead Kapeni. This he will continue to do till he himself dies and becomes to his successor the next object of worship.

Occasionally, however, one finds that some old chief may be remembered for more than one generation. This is especially the case if he should belong to a family which continues to have influence in the country and whose members, instead of joining in the worship of the recently dead chief, prefer to continue their offerings to their own old ancestor. Sometimes a dead chief is believed to have influence in the spirit world, and has been successful in securing a copious supply of rain or other benefit to the country. His spirit will continue to receive offerings for a much longer period than his less influential neighbours in the spirit world.

This is the practice among the Yaos, the Angoni, the Mang'anja and the Anguru tribes who live in this part of Africa.

2. [Were "the ancestors of Chikusi, the last chief of the Angoni, supposed to be located in" a particular bull, or in bulls generally?]

When Chikusi's predecessor died, his spirit was located by Chikusi and his headmen in a bull, a particular bull, which was from that time set apart and thus considered sacred. The bull was chosen by the headmen and the spirit was by them enshrined in the animal. To this bull, or rather to the spirit that took up his abode in the bull, all the offerings of Chikusi and his headmen were made. If the bull died another was chosen and put into its place, and so on, till Chikusi himself died, when his spirit was located in an animal in the same way and the worship of his predecessor from that time forward ceased.

N.B.—The animal in whom the spirit takes up his abode is fixed on by the headmen and the chief, and the spirit of the dead man is asked to accept the animal as his abode.

3. [Are the spirits of all the members of a particular tribe or family "supposed to be located" in the same species of animal? Are the family named after it? and does the species receive any particular honour on that account?]

The chief Chikusi was honoured by being located in a bull.

But a headman or smaller chief would have to be content with a goat or a fowl. Still lesser spirits are consigned to a basket, or to a fetish doll such as the one that was exhibited by Mr. Lovett.

No respect is paid to the species of the animal in which the ancestral spirit is located, and the family never take its name. Even to the consecrated animal itself no special privileges are given, except that it is recognised as belonging to the spirits and is never killed for food.

4. [When you say that the spirits of the dead are the objects of *supreme worship*, do you mean that they are the principal objects of worship or that they form the natives' highest conception of Deity?]

Your last question I will try and answer as briefly as possible.

When I said that "among the Bantu tribes the spirits of the dead are the objects of supreme worship," I meant that offerings are made to no others save the spirits of the dead. And these offerings among the Yaos and the Angoni are never made to the spirits in general but only to *some individual spirit whose name is called during the ceremony*.

As to their belief in a Supreme Being, the subject is one for an article rather than a letter, and I fear I would only land myself and you in a mist if I tried to deal with it briefly.

But I will allow myself to say that I believe, at any rate among the Yaos, with whose system of thought I am most familiar, the *Spirit world in the aggregate* occupies the place of the Deity, and that apart from the ancestral spirits there is no Supreme Being.

But if this subject is of interest to you I may send you at another time a further note on it. For twenty years I have been trying to get inside the native mind on the matter and to see it as he sees it, and sometimes I feel I am as far from it as ever. Latterly I have set the natives themselves to fix their own original native beliefs on these points, and I think in this way there is greater chance of success.

ALEXANDER HETHERWICK.

The Blantyre Mission, British Central Africa.

March 4th, 1903.

[It is needless to say that the article Mr. Hetherwick kindly proposes to send us will be warmly welcomed.—ED.]

ORNAMENTAL PATTERNS AND REINCARNATION.

I think the following facts may be interesting to the readers of *Folk-Lore*; and I should be glad if any of them could give me further accounts of ornamental patterns connected with the doctrine of re-birth.

In J. Sibree's *Madagascar before the Conquest* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1895, p. 234) it is stated that the *dona* or *pily* (a half-mythical python) is "one of the fiercest of creatures; it is big and long, and its skin is striped, so that makers of *lamba* (a native cloth) take it as a pattern for striped cloth." This shows how mistaken are the majority of writers on Madagascar in speaking of the patterns on the Malagasy *lamba* as originally and exclusively geometrical. Geometrical they are, of course, just as much as the patterns on the python's skin are geometrical; if on *lamba* they are more, or only, geometrical, it is because both technique and the sense of symmetry led the Malagasy to geometrize the curved lines of the python's skin. Many learned authors, as Dr. Haddon, Mr. Grosse, &c., have shown how geometrical ornament is a mere degeneration from patterns taken directly from nature.

The following passage from the Père Abinal's *Vingt Ans à Madagascar* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1885, p. 243) shows the connection between the python-skin pattern and reincarnation. Among the Betsileo, he tells us, the soul of the heads of noble families goes into a *fanano* (or more correctly *fangany*), i.e., a larva that becomes a large serpent (boa or python). The corpse of the dead was wrapped in a *lamba* ornamented with coloured woven patterns or with coloured glass beads. As the boa grows, he comes back into the village where his children and relatives are living, to seek them and ask them for food: "Et la famille le reconnaîtra aux couleurs voyantes de sa robe, reproduction fidèle des perles colorées qu'on avait intercalées dans le tissu de son suaire."

Thus we have, so to speak, a circular process. The Betsileo choose python patterns for their *lamba*; and these patterns (or glass-bead ornamentation) are to be seen on pythons in which the soul of the dead is reincarnated. Can we conclude from this fragmentary report that the patterns chosen had a bad or lucky influence, and a religious and magical meaning?

A. VAN GENNEP.