

Professor Ridgeway concludes<sup>1</sup> by finding in the removal of the control of the Areiopagos the cause of the sudden blooming of ancient comedy in Athens, and, though he admires ancient comedy in the hands of Aristophanes, he is at pains to prove that neither he nor Kratinos nor Eupolis was a real product of democracy, a form of government which he finds ruinous to a country. Apart, however, from the amusing parallel found to exist between British democrats and Athenian democrats, which is hardly a serious contribution to human knowledge, the whole basis of this theory is founded on the two hypotheses, both of them doubtless wrong, that credence is to be given to that remarkable political tract which masquerades under the name of Aristotle, the *Athenaion Politeia*, and that Aischylos was a supporter of the Areiopagos, who in his *Eumenides* sought to save the last remnant of the power of that body, and who was so disliked by the Athenian democracy that he was banished from Athens.<sup>2</sup>

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#### THE UNLUCKY NUMBER 13

The origin of the unlucky character of the number 13 is still open to question. The traditional view is, of course, that it is due to the fact of the connexion of that number with the Last Supper: so skilled an authority as M. S. Reinach until quite lately<sup>3</sup> held that view. His present opinion<sup>4</sup> is, however, different: "En ce qui concerne le chiffre 13, si l'on ne trouve pas d'exemples de ce *tabou* dans la littérature grecque et latine, on decouvre dans la littérature hindoue de la basse époque la trace que ce chiffre 13 était de mauvais augure: c'est donc plus ancien que la Cène." To this statement made

<sup>1</sup> pp. 414-22.

<sup>2</sup> See JRAS. 1912, p. 428.

<sup>3</sup> *Cultes, Mythes, et Religions*, i, 7; ii, 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* iv, 464.

in 1909 he adds in 1912 the note: "13 est le premier chiffre de la seconde dodécade (*tabou* des prémices ?)."

It would be interesting, in the first place, to know to what evidence of Indian belief M. Reinach refers. It is clear that, unless the evidence can be assigned to a comparatively early period, it cannot be said to be decisive of the origin of the unlucky character of 13 as an independent Indian discovery. In the early period no such use of the number 13 is known to me, nor does any seem to have been adduced. Even from the later period no instance is cited by Böklen in his treatise, *Die Unglückszahl Dreizehn*, who, indeed, in the very scanty material which he has collected from Indian evidence, cites one case<sup>1</sup> in which the 13th turns out to be a lucky number, and the erroneous view<sup>2</sup> that the gods were counted as 13 and not, as is the truth, 30 (*tridaśa*). It is, indeed, somewhat curious that 13 did not develop an unlucky character in India: the 13th month is already known in the *Rgveda*, and its elusive character, which is expressly asserted by the names given to it, might have created a prejudice against it. But that this ever happened is not so far shown.

It is also significant that there is no clear evidence of the superstition in Greece or Rome before the Christian era. The only example of the belief cited by Böklen is a passage in Diodorus Siculus,<sup>3</sup> according to which Philip of Macedon had his own statue carried round in solemn procession with those of the 12 gods in order to show that he was comparable to them in his power, and that shortly afterwards he was murdered in the theatre. But this argument has absolutely no value as a proof of any superstitious feeling attached to the number 13: the

<sup>1</sup> From the *Lalita Vistara* referring to the Buddha's birth.

<sup>2</sup> Bopp, *Glossarium comparativum*<sup>3</sup>, p. 167, is interpreted in this sense by Böklen.

<sup>3</sup> xvi, 92 seq.

impiety consisted in the king in some degree assimilating himself to the gods, and it is recorded<sup>1</sup> that at Athens Eleos was made by the Athenians a 13th god, a fact which shows that there was no idea of lack of luck attached to the number, though Herakles refused to be accepted as a god among the 12, since that would in his opinion involve the exclusion of some other god to make room for him.<sup>2</sup>

Böklen himself seeks to prove that the number 13 and the number 12, with which it is of course closely associated, are essentially connected in religion and in folklore with the phases of the moon, rejecting the more simple idea that the number 12 is connected with the months of the year. His direct proofs<sup>3</sup> of the connexion of 12 with the phases of the moon may briefly be noted: he insists that *R̥gveda*, i, 25. 8, is to be referred to the phases and not to the 12 months and the intercalary month as is normally held, that the same reference is to be seen in i, 164. 11, and that the crux in iv, 33. 7 is to be explained as referring to the dark half of the month during which the *R̥bhū*s sleep, but still are productive, producing the bright half of the month. The four *camasas* created by the *R̥bhū*s are the four forms of the moon, as sickle, half moon, full moon, and a phase between the last two. None of these passages will bear the meaning put upon it by Böklen. The first is obviously concerned with the 13 months of the year; the second contains in its immediate proximity reference to 360 days and nights, a fact which Böklen can only call an "Einschiebung". In the last passage he recognizes the contamination of two quite distinct legends, one of the creation of the *camasas* and another of the making of fields, streams, etc. *Varuṇa* and *Agohya* are, of course, found to be moon gods. Böklen finds it, naturally enough, very easy to fit any number into the moon

<sup>1</sup> Philostratos, *Ep.* 39.    <sup>2</sup> Diodorus Siculus, iv, 39.    <sup>3</sup> pp. 19-26.

phases, regarded in different aspects, but the mere fact that this can be done is in reality a fatal drawback to taking his theory seriously. An obvious explanation of the special character of 12 is given by the number of months, which is as much Vedic as Babylonian, and 13 is undoubtedly to be looked at in the main as merely 12 plus 1, the normal number with a person who in some way, like "Captain 13",<sup>1</sup> is differentiated from the other 12, whether for good or for evil. The many instances where the 13th is the lucky person suggest the obvious explanation that if you tell a story about one person who is distinguished from the others he will be a number superior by one to the popular number, and the popularity of 12 is very great throughout religion and folklore. An obvious and early instance is that of Odysseus, who has 12 companions, of whom he loses 6, who has 12 ships, 12 handmaidens, and so on. It is a further question to what extent this use of 13 may not have been derived from 12 by the process of inclusive counting. This theory has been put forward in another connexion by Professor Hopkins<sup>2</sup> as an explanation of the number 30 ascribed to the gods in India: he suggests that the number 33 ( $3 \times 11$ ), which is of course the number recognized in the earlier literature, is really born of 30 ( $3 \times 10$ ) by the process of manufacturing 11 out of 10 by inclusive counting. There is some evidence of such inclusive reckoning: it explains best a phrase like 101 in *Rgveda*, x, 130. 1, where 100 is simply extended by one, and confusions of inclusive and exclusive calculation are certainly to be found. But the positive evidence for a set of 10 gods is wholly negligible: the 10 of the *Atharvaveda* (xi, 8. 3 and 10) are clearly pure theosophy, and the idea that the Daśagvas are a hint of these ancient gods is not plausible. The further support derived from the theory that two of the Greek 12 gods may be Semitic

<sup>1</sup> Böklen, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Oriental Studies*, pp. 150-4.

and that two of the Scandinavian are late is not to be taken seriously: the Greek 12 show no trace of ever being 10, and Semitic origins of Greek gods are now out of date: the 12 of the Scandinavian mythology are a very late and a poor importation of the Greek and Roman 12.<sup>1</sup> Professor Hopkins' theory must therefore remain theoretical.

The suggestion of M. Reinach that the origin of the fear of 13 is a "*tabou des prémices*" is interesting, but it can hardly be considered very seriously. The question of the use of the numeration by 12 in place of 10 is interesting, and what has been so far written on the subject is not altogether convincing. The facts in favour of the existence of a secondary reckoning by 12, the primary reckoning being by 10, is that in Gothic the formation of 11, 12, and of the series after 60, i.e. 70, etc., is different from that which would be normal with a system of 10, and that after 60 in Greek, and perhaps also in Latin, a new system for constructing the decades appears. The usage is normally declared to be due to Babylonian influence, namely, the Babylonian year of 360 days divided into 12 months, and as the numbers in India and Iran show no signs of this peculiarity, Hirt<sup>2</sup> concludes that the mode of enumeration came across the Mediterranean area to the northern nations after the breaking up of Aryan unity. Hirt, however, thinks that the Babylonian influence was aided by the Aryan conception of 12 nights at the winter solstice, which he attributes to Germany and to India, though he recognizes more clearly than do most writers the wholly—it may be added wildly<sup>3</sup>—conjectural nature of this assimilation. It must, however, be remembered that the months as 12 and the days of the year as 360 are ideas which are found in the *Rgveda*, and it is perhaps bold to assert that the

<sup>1</sup> Golther, *German. Myth.* p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Indogermanen*, pp. 532 seqq.

<sup>3</sup> JRAS. 1915, pp. 131-3.

system of reckoning by 12 is necessarily Babylonian. It does not seem difficult to suppose that the Vedic Indians independently arrived at the year of 12 months and 360 days, a result based on the synodic month of approximately  $29\frac{1}{2}$  days.

Apart, however, from the complicated question of the sexagesimal<sup>1</sup> system of reckoning, it is very doubtful if any value can be laid on the theory of the "tabou des prémices" in this case, though of course a taboo, e.g. of firstfruits, is well known.<sup>2</sup> But the explanation would only be valid if we had any really widespread belief in the unlucky character of the number 13, and of that there is really no evidence. In modern Europe, in which the best attested cases of the superstition occur, it is hardly doubtful that the influence of the tradition of the Last Supper has been important. Böklen,<sup>3</sup> indeed, tries to establish that the tradition of the presence of the full body of disciples at that meal is recorded because of the existence of the superstition, but that clearly is a *tour de force*. The real problem is whether there can be produced any tolerable evidence which shows that the superstition was merely reinforced in Europe by the untoward events of that meal: so far this has not been done, and the chance of it being done is perhaps small. The further and independent question will then arise whether there is any proof of such a superstition in the East independently of any probability of borrowing, and it may be hoped that this subject may receive further illustration and investigation, as Böklen's citations are wholly without importance in this regard. A. BERRIEDALE KEITH.

<sup>1</sup> Moulton (*Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 242) is in error in saying that Hirt has proved the variant system to be duodecimal, not sexagesimal; Hirt expressly admits, in his notes, that the system is rather sexagesimal, as shown by the Latin use of *sexaginta* and *sescenti* as indefinite numbers (op. cit. p. 747).

<sup>2</sup> Sir J. Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 5; *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, ii, 82 seqq.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. p. 2, comparing Mark xiv, 17 with xiv, 13.