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SOME MAGICAL APPLICATIONS OF BROOMS IN JAPAN.¹

BY W. L. HILDBURGH.

(Read before the Society, March 19th, 1919.)

IN many parts of the world there exist beliefs as to the supernatural powers inherent in the broom, for man, in his contests with the personified unseen, has often, and in many ways, made use of the broom either as a weapon of defence (or, less frequently, one of offence) or as an instrument of control. An examination of some of the magical applications of the broom in Japan, and of some of the beliefs attached to it there, should consequently prove instructive not only in the study of Japanese popular beliefs, but also in the explaining of certain practices or beliefs, into which the broom enters, amongst European and other peoples. Two collections, each of considerable size, of material concerning the superstitions attached to brooms and to sweeping, but dealing almost exclusively with the peoples of Central Europe, came to my notice after I had originally prepared the present paper. One

¹ Three kinds of brooms are used in the ordinary Japanese household: (1) a broom made of rice-straw, so that it will not injure the somewhat delicate surface of the floor-mats, which is commonly used in the house; (2) a stronger broom, made from a plant of a kind of small bamboo, whose thin pliant branches are bent towards each other and tied so as to form the brush, which is used for sweeping surfaces, such as those of woodwork, which will not be injured by it; and (3) a coarse broom, made from a bundle of twigs bound together and to a handle, which is used for sweeping paths, cleaning stones, and the like.

of these is embodied in Ernst Samter's *Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod* (Leipsic and Berlin, 1911), in which work the author, drawing his deductions almost entirely from the practices of European peoples, arrives at conclusions, as to the origins of a number of those practices, which in large part coincide with those I had independently arrived at mainly through the study of Far Eastern material. This general coincidence in many results is peculiarly striking in view of the various other theories which have been put forward to explain European broom superstitions, connecting them, for example, with the worship of agricultural divinities or with the practising of human fertility rites. The second collection, which forms a considerable portion of Friedrich Kunze's "*Der Birkenbesen ein Symbol des Donar*,"¹ is based largely on an attempt to marshal material indicating that the broom has derived its virtues as a magical implement among European peoples from the birch-tree whose twigs are often used to form it. That this attempt has been ill-founded appears to me to be indicated not only by the existence in many parts of the world of beliefs identical or almost identical with those he cites, but associated with brooms made of many kinds of plants, but also by the fact that—as he himself sometimes recognizes—his conclusions, drawn along lines to support the thesis he sets out to maintain, do not always explain even the examples he brings forward. In my attempt to elucidate the Japanese applications of brooms in what we consider superstitious practices I purpose in general to confine myself to the use of explanatory material drawn from either Japan or China. I shall, however, briefly call attention, for the most part in footnotes, to certain parallels—some of them of peculiar interest because, in spite of their respective bases seeming to lie in complex conceptions,

¹In *Internat. Archiv für Ethnographie*, vol. xiii. (Leyden, 1900), pp. 81-97 and 125-162 *inc.*

the two sides are so alike—to those applications among European and some other peoples.¹

We need, I think, hardly doubt that the main basis of the Japanese employment of the broom as a magical implement lies in its power for cleansing. By means of a broom there may be swept away all manner of small physical impurities, which, powerless to escape it, are pushed out of its way or become entangled within its almost innumerable arms. What then should be more natural than that the broom be believed to be efficacious in the clearing away or the rendering powerless of spectral or of psychical impurities, both such as dwell in or normally hover near to the physical objects of the broom's activities, and such as—whether personified as supernatural beings or regarded merely as vaguely defined causes of evil—are looked upon as being wholly disembodied? However tenuous and impalpable it may be, how can spirit or ghost or demon hope to pass unharmed through the intricate thicket of rods forming the operative portion of a broom? The thoughtful believer in invisible supernatural beings can observe smoke or mist, subtile as the air itself, clinging about the brush of a broom or entangled among its parts; how, if his education does not permit him to conceive of anything more tenuous than the air about him, can he then fail to believe that supernatural beings must beware and flee, lest they find themselves in its path, to be caught and perchance injured by the twigs or stalks of which the brush is composed? The employment in Japan of the broom as a means for supernatural cleansings seems as if based upon conceptions similar to those underlying the very ancient Japanese practice of washing as a means of ritual purification,² and as if in some degree similar to the

¹ When referring to practices cited by Samter or by Kunze I shall not, excepting in a very few cases, name the respective sources from which they quote.

² Cf. footnote 2, p. 175, *infra*.

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conceptions underlying the use of the *nademono*, certain prepared papers which are rubbed over the body in order to remove with themselves all psychically impure influences. That very definite supernatural influences (whether they be personified ones or mere undefined impurities) are believed to be pushed—either by themselves or because they are clinging to the particles of dirt displaced—or driven before a broom in action, seems to be shown by the belief that if a person stand directly in front of the sweeping he will be unfortunate in his undertakings [Yokohama¹]
i.e. he will have become subject to the influence of the evil supernatural beings to whom the occurrences of misfortune are ascribed—or he will become stupid.²

Towards the middle of the last month of the year the Japanese house undergoes a thorough cleaning, the *susu-harai* ("soot-sweeping"), in part of a practical, in part of a ceremonial character. "Orthodox chroniclers state that the custom of new year's dusting in the [12th month, now taken as the] month of December was already in vogue in the 'Age of the Gods,' more than thirty centuries ago, and to prove this point we are directed to certain passages in the 'Kojiki.'" The date fixed for this operation varied in different epochs, but in recent times it was the 13th day of the last month, "when in Yedo and elsewhere furniture was removed, mats carried out of doors and beaten, and floors, galleries, pillars, and so forth were polished bright with scrubbing-cloth, and ceilings and cornices and projections were thoroughly swept of soot,

¹ Place-names given thus identify the localities in which I recorded the respective beliefs or practices cited, or those where they had been observed by my Japanese informants.

² P. Ehman, "Volksthümliche Vorstellungen in Japan," in *Mittheilungen der deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, vol. vi. p. 338. Compare with these beliefs the Silesian notion that if sweepings are sent over a person's feet he will get some evil ("unheil") at his throat (Samter, *op. cit.* p. 38, footnote 1); and the Transylvanian idea that stepping over (see p. 201, *infra*) heaped-up sweepings may lead to death (Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 157).

dust, and cob-webs with a sweeping pole specially made of a certain flexible kind of bamboo."¹ In China, whence have been derived many Japanese magical and religious practices, we find that in Fuh-kien province, in the 12th month, "On some fortunate day, it is the practice of most families, except those in mourning for the loss of parents, to 'sweep the house' as an omen of good luck. The instrument employed is not the common limber broom, but a broom made out of the branches of the bamboo. Not only is the floor of the house thoroughly swept, but the sides of the rooms, and the posts, etc."² The interdiction of this sweeping "to those who are in deep mourning" seems to me evidence of what its effect on supernatural beings is supposed to be, for other Chinese practices, I think, entitle us to look upon the interdiction as probably due to a fear of disturbing the spirits of the beloved and respected dead, still hovering near their old homes.³

The close relationship existing between Japanese beliefs and those of China suffices to cause any information concerning the magical employments of brooms among the Chinese to be of especial interest to us. We learn that in China "Exorcising instruments of special repute are bundles of reeds⁴ or twigs, because their use against evil is mentioned in the Classics. . . . [They] probably were tied together as a broom, if . . . we may adopt the opinion

¹ *Customs and Amusements on the Japanese New Year*, Tôkyô (*Japan Times*), pp. 1, 2. In passing, we may observe that Dyak priestesses sometimes "sweep misfortune out of the house with brooms made of the leaves of certain plants. . . ." (Sir J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. part vi. p. 5).

² J. Dolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, New York, 1867, vol. ii. pp. 77, 78.

³ Compare with this the Congo Negroes' refraining from sweeping a house for a year after a death has taken place in it; and the Tonkinese avoidance of cleaning a house during a certain festival when the spirits of the dead return to their old homes (Samter, *op. cit.* p. 33, footnote 6). Also, the converse, the sweeping out of souls after they have been fed, in Borneo (*ibid.* p. 32) and among the Old Prussians (*ibid.*; and Frazer, *op. cit.* part ii. p. 238).

⁴ Compare W. G. Aston, *Shinto*, p. 301.

of Ching Khang-ch'ing [a commentator of the second century], who said . . . that 'with brooms ["bundles of reeds"] obnoxious things may be swept away.' . . . I have not heard or read of the use of twigs or brooms [as protections] at visits of condolence in later times; but the hanging out of brooms at doors about New Year's time is mentioned frequently in books. Many families are in the habit of performing a kind of pretence sweeping with a broom on the last day of the year, rather intending the removal of evil than that of filth. A broom with a basket to receive the sweepings is sometimes fastened to the top of a bamboo pole on the roof of a house, . . . [lest] the house may become a prey to sié. . . . Small brooms are often suspended by careful mothers to the bed-curtains of their babies. . . . I have seen in South Fuhkien people who had swooned being beaten with brooms to expel the devil that held the soul in his grip." ¹ We shall have occasion to observe some examples of other Chinese employments of brooms, in magic, in connection with our further examinations of Japanese practices.

In Japan, when the year-end sweeping ceremonies were carried out at the Shogun's Court, the broom used had its functions extended beyond the mere dispersal of evil influences, for two aged court-officials "proceeded through all the apartments, flourishing the sweeping pole in a certain way, for they had to write, merely by imitative motions, the Chinese ideograph for 'water' upon the ceiling, so that the calamity of fire might not overtake the buildings." ² A very similar idea occurs in the use of roof-tiles, marked at their exposed and decorative ends with the "water" character, for the purpose of securing protection against conflagration; and in that of the same character deeply cut in the straw at the end of the thatch of a

¹ J. J. M. de Groot, *Religious System of China*, vol. vi. book ii. pp. 971, 972.

² *Customs . . . Japanese New Year*, p. 2.

roof and then blackened.¹ But at the court-ceremony the production of the protective ideograph by the use of the magic-working broom was doubtless thought to add something to the ideograph's efficacy.

There is a practice of scatteringsalt about a room, after the removal from it of a corpse, and then sweeping the salt out, for the purpose of rendering the room ritually clean [Yokohama]. While the employment of the salt² seems to be the essential feature of this proceeding, I think that the sweeping is undoubtedly intended not merely as a means for removing the salt after use, but as in itself having a purificatory effect, for a quotation cited *infra* (p. 178), although possibly referring to some other Japanese localities, apparently speaks of sweeping for the purpose of purification after the removal of a corpse.³

Perhaps the practice of carefully sweeping out the rooms in which an unwelcome guest has been, after the visitor has left the house, for the purpose of keeping him from repeating his visit [Chikuzen province], is based on an idea of sweeping out all influences belonging to him which he has left in the house, so that there will be nothing to tend to draw him back there again. I am inclined to

¹ E. S. Morse, *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings*, pp. 85, 86.

² "When, from a Shintō household, a body has been taken for removal to the cemetery, the house is purified "by prayers and other observances, one of which is the scattering of salt and water upon the floor and at the entrance. When the mourners return, they are presented with water to wash their hands and rinse out their mouths, and salt is cast over them as a purifier" (A. II. Lay, "Japanese Funeral Rites," in *Trans. Asiatic Soc. Japan*, vol. xix. [1891], p. 541. Cf. *Man*, 1918, p. 93).

³ In Vogtland and in Lusatia, after the corpse has been taken out, three little piles of salt are made in the death-chamber, which are then swept out and, together with the broom, thrown into the cemetery or into a field, in order that the dead will not return (Samter, *op. cit.* pp. 155 and 32). Sweeping the house after the removal of a corpse from it is a widespread practice (cf. Samter, pp. 31, 32). For a Jamaican negro custom of sweeping after a death, one of a number of customs closely paralleling customs in Japan, see "A," "Folklore of the Negroes of Jamaica," in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xv. (1904), p. 88.

think, however, that we have here to do rather with symbolic magic, and that the intention of the sweeping is the representation, by means of an action, of the operator's wish, either as an operation in which "like produces like" of itself, or one in which the action either symbolizes that the person shall not return any more than a corpse returns or serves to direct the activities of some supernatural agency.¹ We may observe, incidentally, that in the district whence comes my record of the practice of sweeping after an unwelcome guest, there is a practice of scattering salt in the rooms where one has been, also, and similarly, with the intention of preventing his return; this, too, I take probably to be a symbolic action rather than one of simple cleansing.

That the action of sweeping is sometimes looked upon as purely symbolic seems to be indicated by the Japanese practice of omitting on New Year's morning the usual sweeping and dusting of rooms, for certain other actions and the speaking of certain words are refrained from on New Year's Days being inauspicious; the practice is spoken of by its recorder as "doubtless in order to avoid sweeping away good luck."² And merely the waving of a broom seems sometimes to have been similarly looked upon—whatever may have been its original function—for we learn that in a certain Japanese ceremony "the high priest waves before the company a sort of broom made of grass, to symbolize the sweeping away of their offences."³ That indeed some supernatural agency is involved in the operation for preventing the return of the unwelcome visitor, and that that agency is not

¹ Compare my "The Directing of Conscious Agents in some Japanese 'Imitative' Magical Practices," in *Man*, 1917, 2.

² B. H. Chamberlain, *Things Japanese*, 1905, s.v. "Festivals." Various British superstitions in connection with sweeping embody ideas closely resembling this.

³ Aston, *op. cit.* p. 301, footnote, quoting Satow.

improbably some spirit or other being associated essentially with the broom, would appear to be indicated by certain of the practices to be noted below. In China a purificatory sweeping seemingly is sometimes looked upon as symbolic, rather than as actively cleansing, for in the case of a certain procession whose purpose is the expulsion of a pestilence, "A few men with brooms precede it. They cleanse the road for the gods, but without much display of energy, it being taken for granted that all the people have done this work previously before their own doors; moreover, according to many, the sweeping merely purports removal of the plague, and of the spectres which cause it."¹

In Japan, men bearing brooms still form part of the van of a funeral procession according to the Shintō practice,² just as broom-bearers were included in the funeral cortege of a deceased Emperor during the early centuries of the Christian era,³ and in that of a prince in the seventh century A.D.⁴ We may reasonably conjecture that probably the original purpose of the broom-bearers was the clearing of the road of evil supernatural influences, as in the case of the Chinese broom-bearers just referred to. It seems possible, too, that they may have had as a part of their duties a purifying sweeping of the ground selected for the actual interment, or perhaps that to be used for ceremonies near the grave, for we learn that "an old custom, still surviving in remote districts, is for a person not connected with the deceased by blood, and therefore free from death-pollution, to sweep the ground selected for the grave, to spread a rush-mat on it, and on a table placed on the mat to erect a *himorogi* ('temporary tabernacle') for the earth-god."⁵ But the preservative powers still attributed to the broom in China (*cf.* p. 174, *supra*) suggest

¹ de Groot, *op. cit.* vol. vi. bk. ii. p. 986.

² Lay, *op. cit.* p. 539.

³ *Ibid.* p. 510.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 519.

⁵ A. Lloyd, in "Death and Disposal of the Dead (Japanese)," in *Encyclo. Religion and Ethics*, vol. iv. p. 487.

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that the brooms at Japanese funerals were most probably intended largely, even if not entirely, by their mere presence (like, for example, that of weapons laid by a corpse awaiting burial, or of those carried in funeral processions), to preserve the mourners and the deceased from the attentions of evil supernatural beings; colour is lent to this supposition by the presence at a great Japanese funeral in ancient times (*e.g.* 700 A.D.) of an attendant "arrayed in grotesque fashion, who led the way to the sepulchre, and was credited with the power to scare away evil spirits by his garb and gestures."¹

We may observe that at some Japanese funerals the brooms in the procession appear to have been replaced by bundles of reeds (compare the ancient Chinese use of "bundles of reeds or twigs," thought by Ching Khang-ch'ing to have been tied together as a broom, referred to on p. 174, *supra*), for in a picture showing the funeral procession of the Governor of Nagasaki, who was buried in 1784, the leading figures are "Two servants, each carrying a bundle of dry reeds."²

The use of brooms for clearing evil influences out of the way of a procession in China and, seemingly, in Japan, appears to me to parallel a certain Fijian practice. Among the natives of the Fiji Islands fans take the place of brooms;

¹ Lay, *op. cit.* p. 521; he points to this as one of the indications of "the influence already exercised by Chinese usages at the Court." de Groot mentions (*op. cit.* vol. i. bk. i. pp. 162, 163) the same form of attendant as set at the head of Chinese Imperial funeral corteges during the period of the Han dynasty; and also (vol. vi. bk. ii. pp. 973, 977, 978) as leading or otherwise occupied in processions for the expulsion of contagious diseases.

² M. Titsingh, *Illustrations of Japan*, London, 1822, pl. 16 of part ii., and p. 249. In another picture (pl. 13 of part ii.), showing the Buddhist funeral of "a civil officer of distinction," a man carrying a large bundle of straw, tied with a cord of white paper, to all intents and purposes leads the procession; the bundle of straw was said to be "for the purpose of making torches to light the road during the night. This is rather a matter of ceremony than utility, since lanterns are used at funerals which take place in the night" (p. 239; cf. also p. 246).

house-mats, for example, when not cleaned by shaking, are fanned in order to cleanse them. These natives, when on the way to war, or in a procession, cause the main body of warriors or of people in the procession to be preceded by a band of men who fan the ground in front of them—a procedure which looks as if it is (or at least, in former times, was) intended as a means to drive evil influences from the path.¹ Now, this Fijian practice suggests to me an explanation of certain Japanese beliefs and practices in which fans are concerned.² At the "*miya mairi*" (the ceremonial first visit of an infant to the shrine of its tutelary deity) there is a custom of decorating the clothing of the child with small fans,³ and among the presents given to the child on this occasion "two fans figure, in the case of a male, . . . The fans are precursors of swords."⁴ At this "shrine-going" the customary gifts to the infant of its parents' friends and relatives are of a ceremonial character, and there is much evidence to show that although they are generally looked upon to-day as symbolical expressions

¹ Sir Everard im Thurn, who has often seen such fanning done, but who has not received any native explanation of its purpose, thinks my suggestion a reasonable one. He mentioned to me, as seemingly supporting it, that when he visited Ongtongjava (a large isolated coral atoll, inhabited by Polynesians), before it had been subjected to any European influence, and—after exercising considerable persuasion—had been permitted to enter the temple there, he observed that strong fanning, evidently of a purificatory character, took place in it after his exit, whereas before he entered no such fanning had been done.

² Was the use of the flabellum, of ancient Church ritual, like the burning of incense and the sounding of bells, perhaps in part intended as a means for keeping evil supernatural beings at a safe distance?

³ H. ten Kate, "Aus dem japanischen Volksglauben," in *Globus*, vol. xc. p. 113. Compare this with the Bani Isra'ila' custom noted on p. 202, *infra*.

⁴ A Humbert, *Japan and the Japanese*, London, 1874 (*trans.* from an earlier French edit.), p. 280. The swords here referred to are, obviously, the pair formerly carried by a Samurai; it is, however, worthy of note that swords were (and still are) in Japan well-recognised amulets for protection against the attacks of evil supernatural beings. A certain kind of fan, "carried by priests or nobles," was formerly "also attached to presents sent by the bride's parents to the son-in-law" (J. C. Hepburn, *Jap.-Eng. Dict.* s.v. "Chûkei").

of good wishes for the infant's future, most—if not all—of them were formerly regarded as serviceable for the protection of the infant from the evil beings which might seek to harm it. I think it not unlikely that in these little fans we have the equivalent of the small brooms still hung by Chinese mothers near to their babies (*cf.* p. 174, *supra*); and, possibly, also a reminiscence of a period when the Japanese used fans instead of brooms. Two other Japanese superstitions concerned with fans and perhaps corroborative of the above suggestion may be cited: If one finds a fan, one should pick it up, as one thereby secures good fortune¹ (a play on the word "*suehiro*" = "fan" is cited in connection with this); and a fan, with its binding-pivot removed, is thrown upon the highest roof of a house in which a death has taken place, "as a means to further the passage of the deceased to heaven"²—perhaps, I think, a euphemistic way of expressing protection formerly supposed to be afforded by a fan against evil supernatural beings or possibly even against the undesired visits of the ghost of the dead person.

We have seen that sweeping is resorted to after an undesired visitor has left, as a means to ensure that he shall not return. The converse of this practice is found in the refraining from sweeping for some little time after a member of the family—whose safe return is desired—has gone out [Chikuzen province]. Concerning this, Griffis says³ that "They never sweep the rooms of a house immediately after one of the inmates has set out upon a journey, or to be absent for a time. This would sweep out all the luck with him."⁴ The taboo

¹ *ten Kate, loc. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

³ W. E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, New York, 1896, p. 467.

⁴ Compare with these the Silesian belief quoted by Samter (*op. cit.* p. 38, footnote 1) that when any one has set out from the house the rooms must not be swept out before he has arrived at the boundary ("grenze"), lest he have ill-luck; and the Lithuanian belief that when any one leaves after a visit rooms

seems to be of ancient standing in Japan, for Brinkley records¹ that "The house of a person who had set out upon a journey must not be swept, nor must hair be combed there, for the space of three days." That the taboo is one connected with the welfare of the absent person rather than with that of the persons remaining at home is suggested by its bracketing with the taboo against combing the hair, a widespread prohibition applying to persons whose friends or dear ones are away from home. Dr. John Steele, discussing the Japanese taboos against sweeping when a person has left his house, and using Chinese beliefs as the basis of his proposition, says² that "a man who leaves his house and goes abroad does not leave the house entirely. Behind him remain some of his influences. The relatives . . . believe that a man's spirit remains in the home to which he is accustomed, and are unwilling to disturb it by sweeping." This explanation

and floors must not immediately be swept out, lest ill-fortune be thereby brought upon the traveller (*ibid. loc. cit.*). Samter suggests that these taboos against sweeping too soon after a person has left the house may be based upon a belief "das die Geister, die etwa im Hause weilen," are allowed to be swept out of the house only when the person is already so far distant that they can no longer harm him. Compare also Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 155. A Bulgarian belief quoted by Kunze (*loc. cit.* footnote 13) is to the effect that a house must not be swept on the day that the head of the house sets out on a journey, lest he never return home, or lest ill-luck befall him. One is led to speculate as to whether the custom, found in some parts of England, of a husband's hanging a broom from the window when his wife is away for a few days (V. S. Lean, *Lean's Collectanea*, Bristol, 1903, vol. ii. p. 70, quoting *Notes and Queries*, i.), and the Surrey custom of the neighbours' setting the broom inverted in the top of the chimney when the housewife is away (*Folk-Lore*, vol. xxi. p. 388), are connected with conceptions of a like nature, or whether they are perhaps merely intended to signify that the broom is a woman's implement.

¹ F. Brinkley, *Japan and China*, vol. i. p. 177. The note appears to refer to the Heian epoch, which covered from about the end of the eighth century to the beginning of the twelfth.

² *Trans. Japan Soc.* (London), vol. xiv. p. 122, in "Discussion" following "Some Japanese Minor Magical or Religious Practices connected with Travelling."

accords with the conceptions I believe to underlie the cleansing sweepings to which I have referred above, and it accords also with certain Japanese beliefs as to a plurality of a person's spirits. But simple logic (not always, one must confess, a prominent characteristic of Japanese popular magic) would, if the explanation given by Dr. Steele be the true one, show the believer that sweeping at *any* time, and not merely sweeping within a brief period of the setting out of the absent person, would be likely to disturb the home-keeping spirit. It seems more reasonable, therefore, for us to seek our explanation in something other than the fear of displeasing a home-keeping spirit, and that notwithstanding any assumptions we may make that practical considerations have tended to limit the period during which the taboo should hold. The explanation above suggested, based upon the idea that a symbolical representing of the result wished for is attempted, appears to fit in with our evidence. Furthermore, that the sweeping after a departure has been looked upon as symbolic rather than as directly active, would seem to be shown by a certain Japanese marriage-custom—which appears at present to be regarded as purely symbolic in character—in accordance with which a bride wears white, when she marries, in order to signify thereby that she dies to her own family, while when she has left her parents' house in order to go to her husband's home, the house is "swept out, as if purified after the removal of a dead body."¹ The sweeping in this marriage-custom may, however, I think, not always have been looked upon as merely symbolical; we may reasonably conjecture that possibly it was formerly based—although not quite logically—upon an idea of sweeping out of her late home any clinging remnants of the bride's soul-substance; or, again, that it may be a modified survival of some rite for purifying or for protect-

¹ *The Manners and Customs of the Japanese People from the Earliest Times*, Madras (Sankaran & Co.), 1906, p. 102.

ing the bride. With further reference to the symbolism involved in the rites at this time, it is worth mentioning that I have been told by a Japanese friend [from Chikuzen province] that when a woman leaves her home at her marriage-time she is dressed in white as if to indicate her death, "so that she will never return," and the rice-bowl she has been accustomed to use is broken upon the stone steps of the house, at the moment of her departure, with exactly the same intention.¹

There is, however, another explanation of the taboo against sweeping too soon after a departure, seemingly fitting in with our evidence, which is based upon the principles of contagious magic—namely, that there is a fear of sweeping out of the house, where there are protections against the machinations of evilly disposed beings (whether they be natural or supernatural), things which have recently been in contact with the absent person and through which, therefore, injury may be caused to him. The principles involved are too well known to require restatement here, and their very frequent occurrence in Japanese magical practices suggests that they may well form the basis of the practice we are discussing. The time-limit in that practice, if we accept as a basis for the practice a fear of contagious magic, I think is to be explained by an idea that the psychical traces left by a person upon an object with which he has been in contact are evanescent and gradually disappear, just as do such physical traces as warmth from his body, or odours. I am under the impression that, for example, the effect which is thought to be producible upon an absent person by working upon a footprint or other trace left by him is believed to be the greater the less the time which has

¹ It need hardly be pointed out that, whatever may be its present intention, the breaking of crockery at this moment may well be a survival of some rite (or rites) having a character quite different from that at present assigned to the practice.

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elapsed between the production of the trace and the performance of the magical operation—unfortunately, I seem to have no note bearing directly on the occurrence of this idea in Japan, although some of my records refer to Japanese practices which may conceivably be based on it.

One more conjecture as to the reason for the taboo against sweeping within too short a period after a member of the family has left the house seems worth mentioning—namely, that sweeping (as further suggested below) tends to irritate the normally beneficent or at least quiescent supernatural beings settled about the house, and that these beings will therefore be likely either to withdraw their protecting care from him even while he remains within their radius of action, or to try to injure him (who, away from the shelter of his home, is the member of the family who is most open to attack) as long as he remains within their reach.¹ This conjecture, while seeming to accord with what I take to underlie the taboo forbidding the combing of the hair,² and the one concerning sweeping at night, does not appear to explain quite satisfactorily the practice of sweeping after an unwelcome guest, although that practice has the appearance of being closely associated with the taboo under discussion.

There is a taboo which forbids the sweeping of a house at night, poverty being the penalty threatened if the operation be performed at that time.³ Night is the time

¹ Compare footnote 3, p. 173, *supra*.

² Cf. "Some Japanese Minor . . . Practices connected with Travelling," p. 104.

³ J. Inouye, *Sketches of Tokyo Life*, Tōkyō, 1895, p. 66. Ehman, *op. cit.* p. 337, tries to explain this from a rational standpoint (as he does with many of the other Japanese beliefs which he records), and suggests that it is founded on a fear lest valuable things might be swept out accidentally at night. In E. Prussia, in Mecklenburg, and in Silesia sweeping, or the throwing out of sweepings, after sun-down is forbidden, lest one expel good-fortune (Samter, *op. cit.* p. 38, footnote 1); similar beliefs are recorded of the Venetians and of the

when evil supernatural beings, who fear the sunlight,¹ come forth from their hiding-places of the day, and the taboo is perhaps based on some fear of irritating them whilst they are abroad either by the flying particles swept out or by the direct effect of the broom. Night, too, is the time when the spirits of the dead, who also fear the sun and therefore go about only during the hours of darkness,² are likely to be revisiting the houses or the persons they loved in their lifetimes, and there is therefore perhaps a dread that they may be disturbed by the use of the broom. Again, the taboo may conceivably be connected with a distrust of performing in the presence of some evilly-disposed prowler of the night the action of sweeping things out of the house, lest he look upon it as symbolic, and (as the recorder of the taboo says is threatened) the people of the house become poor. Furthermore, possibly there may be some fear that, if things which have been in immediate and recent contact with the people of the house be swept out into the presences and thus within easy reach of the evil haunters of the night air, those people are thereby rendered subject to harm brought about through a contagious action carried out upon the sweepings.³

Certain sweepings are used magically in Japan; I think, however, that their supposed qualities are thought to be due rather to the circumstances of their deposition than to

Austrian South Slavs (Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 154). Galician Jews greatly fear to throw out sweepings at night—the time when demons are about—lest death result therefrom (*ibid.* p. 149). In Brittany sweeping at night is thought to disturb returned ghosts (Samter, *loc. cit.*).

¹ See, for example, W. Anderson, *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Paintings in the British Museum*, London, 1886, pp. 136, 137.

² For an example, see L. Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, 1894, p. 223.

³ Compare with this suggestion the S. Bohemian belief mentioned by Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 149; and the W. and E. Prussian belief mentioned by Samter, *op. cit.* p. 34.

those of their collection. These sweepings are obtained from the outer platforms of certain much-frequented shrines, and consist practically entirely of the dirt brought in upon the footwear of the attendant worshippers. They may be sold either by a privileged person (distinct from the sellers of the shrine's religious charms) at the shrine, or gathered by the persons wishing to use them. The belief concerning them is to the effect that if some be scattered outside of a shop in the morning, the shop will be well patronized during the day. I think that little or no religious significance has been attached to these sweepings—that is, that they have not the sacred character attributed to the dust collected from certain Christian or Mahomedan shrines—and, also, that the circumstance that they have been collected by sweeping (or brushing) is not looked upon as having any part in their properties.¹ I have mentioned them here because of the many superstitions connected with sweepings and with dirt about the house, among European peoples.

Thus far we have dealt with the broom mainly as engaged in its normal function of sweeping. We now pass to an examination of its other applications in Japanese magic. Of such applications one of the best known is that for the sending away of guests who have outstayed their welcomes and of whom courtesy (or a fear of losing their future custom, as at a tea-house, for example) forbids an ordinary dismissal. The present basis of the several forms of this particular application seems to be the inverting of a broom. I have been told that, to cause an unwelcome guest to go away, a broom is stood upside-down [Chikuzen province]; while Inouye says (*op. cit.* pp. 66, 67) that "an unwelcome visitor will leave the house as soon as a broomstick is set

¹ A more detailed account of them, together with the reasons I take to underlie their employment, may be found in "Japanese Popular Magic connected with Agriculture and Trade," in *Trans. Japan Soc.* (London), vol. xii. pp. 59, 60.

up on its handle." In a slightly more elaborate form of the *majinai* the broom is stood on its end in the room next to that in which the visitor is, a pair of sandals is laid out before it, and the operator says to it in a whisper "'There now, *do please* go away quickly.'" ¹ In another form the operator stands a broom on end against a wall, wraps a towel round the brush (in order to cause the broom to resemble a person with a towel round his head, I was told; this, I imagine, like the setting out of the sandals, is intended to suggest a preparation to leave the house), and goes outside of the room in which it stands and beckons to it [Yokohama]. In still another form the broom, with a towel round the brush, is stood on end, and the operator fans the lower part of the handle and repeats, over and over again, the visitor's name and the phrase "please to go away." ²

¹ J. E. de Becker, *The Nightless City*, 1905, p. 145.

² Among Jamaican Negroes, "If you wish a visitor to go away, take a broom and lean it up behind a door and sprinkle salt on it, and he will leave directly" ("B," in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xv. p. 206). This reminds us of the practice of the Wends of E. Prussia, who, when they wish to protect themselves against the "noxious influence" of wandering Gipsies, lay an old broom upon the threshold of the chamber-door and "Salz darauf [? the broom, or the threshold] streuen" (Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 161). In Thuringia, Lower Harz, Mecklenburg, and Saxon Switzerland, as Kunze records (*loc. cit.*), there is an association of the burning of a broom with the subsequent arrival of visitors (whom he chooses to identify with "böse Leute" or witches)—an association which (if it be not merely the effect of a boorish witticism based on the dirt the visitors are likely to bring into the house) would appear to be in some degree the converse of the basis of practices in which a broom is used to send visitors away. The East Anglian belief that "If you set the broom in a corner, you will surely have strangers come to the house" (R. Forby, *Vocab. East Anglia*, London, 1830, vol. ii. p. 414) would seem to be allied to these Germanic beliefs. The Carlsbad belief that the sweeping of a tavern at night after the guests have left will keep them away thereafter, and the Bulgarian belief that the sweeping of a shop in the evening will keep buyers away (Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 156), appear as if based on other conceptions than those we are at the moment discussing; these two beliefs, we may observe in passing, have had some practical considerations—such as the proprietor's convenience, his reputation for returning lost articles, and the cleanliness of his place—to support them, especially in small and backward communities.

In the three more elaborate forms of the guest-removing operation just described the broom seems to be employed at present—whatever may have been its original purpose—to represent the person to be operated upon ; the expressions used in the first and third of these forms, and the beckoning in the second, all indicate this. Magical operations in which the victim is represented by a puppet-image, or by a likeness of some other kind, which is injured with the intention that injury shall be caused thereby to fall upon the victim himself, are so well known in Japan¹ that a casual examination of these guest-removing *majinai* might easily tempt us to believe that they are essentially operations in which a representation of the guest is to be worked upon, and that the form of the *majinai* in which mimetic actions do not appear is a decadent one in which the main idea underlying the operation has been forgotten. But closer investigation seems to show that such is not the case, and that the simplest procedure is in reality more or less nearly in the original form, the others having acquired characters at first foreign to the operation. A proof of this seems to lie in the fact that in the guest-removing operations above cited the victim is always represented by an *inverted broom*, for there seems to be no reason why an inverted broom should be specified unless it be an essential part of the apparatus—the Japanese housewife has many kitchen utensils which, individually or combined with each other, could be used with equal facility and for the production of a greater likeness to a human being than that obtainable with an inverted broom, while often she has at hand paper upon which she can draw, or from which she can cut or twist, an unmistakable likeness of a human being. It would thus appear that the first matters for us to inquire into are the questions : Why

¹For a number of examples of operations of this character, see "Notes on some Japanese Magical Methods for Injuring Persons," in *Man*, 1915, 65.

should a broom be chosen for these operations? and Why should it be inverted?

We have already seen that sweeping is applied as a means for preventing the return of an unwelcome visitor, so that we have good reason to infer that the broom has been selected for the driving away of visitors because of its associations with sweeping. The inversion of the broom employed indicates, I think, that compulsion of some kind is being attempted, and, further, that the attempted compulsion is probably concerned with some supernatural being or beings. The Jamaican Negroes' sprinkling of salt—a substance commonly disliked by ghosts and spirits—upon a broom (see footnote 2, p. 187, *supra*) looks to me as based on a similar idea. Inversion, which is often resorted to in Japanese magic, is, I believe, frequently there applied with the express intention of causing such annoyance to a supernatural being (or of perhaps otherwise obtaining such power over it) that it will be forced to follow the operator's wishes.¹ That the broom is in Japan looked upon as containing a spirit of some kind, peculiar to itself, is to be anticipated, for there are various tools, implements, and the like, the spirits appertaining to which receive generally kindly and respectful treatment, and even, in some cases, devotion. Thus—to take a few examples—the measuring-stick used in cutting clothing is thought to contain a spirit capable of working harm to persons, and a spirit is associated with needles;² certain taboos forbidding the ill-treatment of household utensils appear to indicate that these latter are regarded as containing conscious supernatural beings who are able to

¹ The European employments, as a protection, of an inverted broom, referred to on p. 193, *infra*, are attributable, I imagine, to the conceptions according to which a broom is looked upon as a weapon (cf. p. 193, footnote 1, *infra*) rather than as the seat of a sentient being; I think that the inversion in them is intended mainly, if not entirely, as a means for making the broom more noticeable than if it stood in its ordinary position.

² Various beliefs connected with these two objects are given in "Some Japanese Charms connected with the Making of Clothing," in *Man*, 1917, 17.

revenge themselves for disrespect or injury; and the bellows of potters are allowed one day of rest in the year and have offerings made to them.¹ I do not happen to have direct evidence that there has been an active spirit associated with brooms in Japan, but further indirect evidence to that effect is provided by the information that in China brooms have long been used for divination (as have been wicker trays and some other things), being so held or suspended that they were free to move, and that "sudden swinging or rotating motions . . . indicated occupation by the spirit"; and, as to certain women, that if they wish to "use the Broom Lady, they wind a petticoat around an old broom for divination; and when the Lady is in it, it can give oracles by upright or prone positions."² But even if there be not a spirit especially associated with the broom as an implement and thought to be angered by the inversion, it is probable that any spirit believed to be still resident in the wood of the handle will be regarded as likely to resent it³ and as in a mood to try to carry the operator's wishes into effect.⁴ Furthermore, I think that

¹ Aston, *Shinto*, p. 73.

² de Groot, *op. cit.* vol. vi. bk. ii. pp. 1311, 1329. It is perhaps worth observing here that divination of this kind seems to have been in some ways associated with the 15th day of the 1st month, and with unclean places, such as pig-sties or privies (*ibid.* pp. 1310, 1326-1329, *inc.*). In Japan the 15th day of the 1st month was in certain ways associated with the Sahe-no-Kam. (Aston, *op. cit.* p. 190), who were connected with cross-roads (*ibid.* pp. 188, 197)—which, in Japan as in many other parts of the world, have been considered to be favourite meeting-places for evil supernatural beings, and thus parallel the sties and privies mentioned—and with the *Tsujiura*, divination at the cross-roads (*ibid.* pp. 197, 190). It is perhaps also worth noting that in several parts of Germany brooms are associated with love-oracles on New Year's Eve, and that in Mecklenburg, at that time, young women ride brooms (? thus imitating witches) to the neighbouring pig-sties, where they try to draw oracles from the pigs' grunting; while elsewhere they go similarly to the stables (like the sties, dirty places), to listen for the horses' neighing (Kunze, *op. cit.* pp. 157, 158). We may note, incidentally, that it is natural to associate mentally brooms and dirty places.

³ Compare *Man*, 1915, 65, p. 119.

⁴ See *ibid.* pp. 118, 119.

there is a possibility that supernatural beings are thought to become enmeshed within the brush of a broom while it is in use,¹ and that these beings are then supposed to be the active agents in the magical operations under discussion; I have not, however, any evidence concerning Japanese beliefs which appears to support a hypothesis of this kind rather than the one previously set forth.

We are now in a position to examine the minor details of those forms of the guest-removing operation in which the broom appears as representing the visitor. In the first of these the placing of the sandals before the broom and the request to it to "please go away quickly" seem to be in full consonance with the conceptions of the broom as representant of the visitor, and completely out of accord with an idea of it as an object having inherent powers capable of direction; we may therefore, I think, take as the probable present intention of the broom's use here the production, in the visitor, of a mental discomfort which shall cause him to put on his sandals (discarded upon entering the house) and depart. Similarly, in the variant in which beckoning is resorted to, a mental discomfort would seem to be aimed at. In the third form, however, where the end resting on the floor is fanned, the intention is, I think, probably that the visitor's feet should be caused to become cold, and that his physical discomfort should lead him to go or, at least, to think of his departure.² We may observe, incidentally, that an intention to produce such physical discomfort would bring the operation very closely into line with the many *majinai* in which actual physical injury of a person is looked for as the result of

¹ Cf. p. 171, *supra*. Compare also Samter, *op. cit.* p. 33, footnote 6, where various harmful results believed to follow striking, etc., with brooms are attributed to the actions of spirits ("geister") caught in the brooms during sweeping and clinging to them.

² Some other *majinai* for causing a visitor to leave, based on operations carried out on his clogs or near to his feet, are given in *Man*, 1915, 80.

an injury to his pretended likeness. How the change here assumed came about, from the employment of the broom as an active agent to its employment as a passive agent, it is difficult to say. It seems not improbable, however, that words or actions would be used at first for the purpose of indicating to the broom the direction in which there was a desire that its powers should be applied,¹ and that later, because of people's familiarity with the *majinai* in which a likeness is to be injured, the broom-using operations came to be looked upon as forms of such *majinai*, and perhaps were altered slightly in order to make them conform more closely to the new ideas which had come to be conceived to underlie them. It may be, too, that superior and more widespread education had an effect in causing the change which seems to have occurred, because the idea that an effect may be produced upon a person by doing something to a thing representing him is one which is likely to survive into a later stage of culture than one according to which a common household implement is regarded as containing a more or less powerful spirit. Confusions similar to that which seems to have occurred here are, I believe, by no means uncommon in Japanese popular magic—indeed, it would be strange if they did not exist amongst a people who were accustomed to attribute the courses of events of every kind to supernatural agencies, and who, while they nowadays seek a rational interpretation in order to explain a custom or a practice the reason for which has become obscure, in former times found for it and fitted an explanation based on supernatural agencies.

A case which I believe to be very similar, so far as its history is concerned, to that of the guest-removing *majinai* we have been discussing, is that of the picture of the *Hashiri Daikoku*. This picture, representing the divinity

¹ Compare "The Directing of Conscious Agents in some Japanese 'Imitative' Magical Practices."

Daikoku going off ("hashiri" = "fleeing" or "running") with his sack on his back, is used commonly for thief-catching, the picture being inverted and pins or needles being driven into the feet (and sometimes also into other parts) with the intention of causing the thief to become lame (or otherwise injured). While at the present time the picture seems to be regarded as representing the intended victim, there appears to me to be a considerable probability that the original idea of the *majinai* was that Daikoku should be forced, by the inversion and by the insertion of the pointed objects, to injure the intended victim.¹

Another *majinai* in which a broom is, at least at present, used seemingly to represent a person who is to be disquieted, is one for causing a departed guest of a house of entertainment to return to the house and pay money he owes there. A figure is formed of a broom with a girdle round its middle and a towel round its brush (the description refers to inversion; although it does not make clear whether the broom or the figure is to be inverted, I think that we need not doubt that it is the broom), the operator complains to the figure that the guest's promise has not been fulfilled, and then, knocking the figure over, she tells it to bring the money the following day. The effect intended is that of causing the victim to dream of the operator's indignation, and as a result to come and pay his debt.² In this *majinai*, in the form recorded, the broom-image seems clearly intended to represent the departed guest. If we assume the *majinai* to have been primarily an operation of imitative magic worked upon an image, it is difficult to see why a broom should have been selected to represent the intended victim, unless for the reason that an inverted broom is used to represent, in the guest-removing *majinai*, the guest whose departure is desired. But if, instead, we take the *majinai* to be based

¹ For a somewhat fuller account of this, see *Nan*, 1915, 80.

² de Becker, *op. cit.* p. 146.

on an active participation in it of the broom, we may obtain a much more satisfactory explanation—the broom is inverted and is maltreated in order to force it to cause the man to be uncomfortable, and the phrases used by the operator have been intended to instruct the broom-spirit as to its duties in the matter. This latter explanation still leaves us, however, with the question as to why a broom-spirit should be especially selected for the work. As an answer to this I would suggest that it is either because of the association of the broom, in other *majinai*, with departing guests, or because the spirit attributed to the broom is regarded as one which, although (due to the nature of the broom) easily controllable, is exceptionally powerful.

There is another broom-*majinai* (said by its recorder to be "an exceedingly doubtful" one), which is employed in order to obtain news of an absent person. The broom is dressed in human clothing and, at a very early hour of the morning, is set on end in an empty room having eight *tatami* (floor-mats). Then a letter addressed to the absent person is placed in the bosom of the dummy, and the latter is told to deliver it and to leave the answer in some specified place. Finally, the operator leaves the room without looking back at the dummy. If the dummy topples over entirely by itself, it is thought that the answer requested will be obtained.¹

An application of brooms well known in Japan is that for the laying of unquiet corpses. There is a belief there that if a cat jumps upon the body of a person who has lately died, the corpse may arise and walk about as if it were alive, just as if (so I was told) the person had died "with a bad conscience." In order to lessen the probability of this occurring, the cats of the household are sent away until after the funeral, and, in addition, "something sharp," such as a sword, a knife, or even a pair of scissors,

¹ de Becker, *loc. cit.*

is placed near the head of the corpse when it is laid out for burial, this latter precaution having the advantage not only of keeping away cats (which sometimes contain a kind of demon ¹), but also that of keeping all evil supernatural beings away. But if, as sometimes happens in spite of the above precautions, a cat jumps upon the body and causes it to arise, it is considered that the proper procedure is to strike the corpse with a bamboo-broom, upon which it will instantly lose the semblance of life it has taken on [Yokohama]. The informant from whom I received the above information added that it is because of this employment of a bamboo-broom that to strike a living person with one is considered to be exceedingly insulting, and liable to affect seriously in some way the person struck (compare *infra*, p. 199). Concerning the use of the broom against walking corpses, Titsingh says ² "It is asserted that if a cat springs upon a corpse, the person revives; that if he then be struck with a broom, he sinks lifeless again; but that if he be struck with anything else he still continues to live. For this reason it is strictly forbidden to drive away cats with brooms." ³

To enter into a discussion of the Japanese beliefs bearing upon the effects of cats on human corpses, or upon the protective virtues attributed to knives where supernatural beings are concerned, would take us far afield. With respect to the taboo against cats touching or passing over corpses, we may observe that it is to be found distributed over a wide area. Thus, to take a couple of examples

¹ For much information concerning the supernatural attributes of cats, see M. W. de Visser's "The Dog and the Cat in Japanese Superstition," in *Trans. Asiatic Soc. Japan*, vol. xxxvii.

² *Op. cit.* p. 252.

³ This prohibition, which I have not seen or heard referred to elsewhere, looks as if it were based on a fear lest the action in question might presage a death in the family. It is perhaps interesting to recall, in connection with this prohibition, the associations in European folklore of witches with cats and with brooms.

from the East, among the Malays a pair of betel-nut scissors, or a short weapon, is laid upon the breast of a corpse, its use being explained as due to a belief that "The 'contact with iron' prevents the dead body from rising again should . . . a cat . . . enter unawares and brush against it";¹ and in Korea there is an idea that "It is terribly unlucky for a cat to jump over a corpse. It may even cause it to stand upright."² And in Scotland—to turn to the extreme West of the great Euro-Asiatic land-mass—it is believed to be extremely ominous for a cat to pass over a corpse, and cats are therefore not permitted to come near to a dead body. It is, however, in China that, as we should naturally expect, we find the closest parallels to the Japanese beliefs regarding the effects of cats on human corpses. There great precautions are taken, as soon as a person has died, to send all cats out of the house or to tie them fast until the coffining has been accomplished, lest it might occur to one of them "to leap or walk over the death-bed, and so cause the corpse to rise up at once. A long pole would, in this case, be required to push it down into its former position, or a piece of furniture would have to be used as a projectile, though nothing can serve the purpose so well as a broom. The handle, namely, renders it eminently fit for being grasped with the hands, so that the corpse, frantic with rage, will pull the broom at once against its breast to cool its wrath upon it, and by this vehement motion sink down into its inert state . . . the danger of being seized instead of the broom . . . [is that of] a horrible death in a ferocious embrace."³ We may observe in passing, and as possibly helping to explain some of the very numerous beliefs that are to be found among European peoples concerning the magical powers of brooms, that the Chinese

¹ W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 398.

² Mrs. Bishop, *Korea and her Neighbours*, 1898, vol. ii. p. 87.

³ de Groot, *op. cit.* vol. i. bk. i. p. 43.

and Japanese beliefs just given seem to indicate the existence of an idea that the corpse which has been touched by a cat becomes something in a way resembling the vampire of European folk-lore—indeed, de Groot speaks of the dead body becoming “a dangerous vampire.” We see that the corpse walks just as if the person had died “with a bad conscience,” and that it attempts to kill other persons.¹

It is natural, in view of what we have learned concerning the magical applications of brooms, to conjecture that the broom is probably employed for the laying of a reanimated corpse because of some belief in a power it possesses for subduing and expelling supernatural beings, because the reanimation of the body seems to be ascribed to its occupation by such a being—whether the latter be a cat's or other animal's spirit or (as de Groot, *loc. cit.*, says the Chinese believe) the dead person's own spirit brought back by a “soul-recalling hair” in the cat's tail. But even if we leave aside the rationalistic view that its length, its soft end (which will not injure the revered body), and the facility with which it can be obtained in case of need, cause the broom to be an implement peculiarly suitable for laying a corpse, two further explanations of its use, or factors in such explanations, are suggested to us, as possible ones, by the Chinese account. Of these, one is that the broom serves as some kind of substitute for the human being whom the corpse is about to attack, and colour is lent to this suggestion by the employments of brooms, in Japanese guest-removing and other *majinai*, as representatives of human beings. The other is that the corpse, or its animating spirit, is compelled to count the pieces forming the brush before it can cause injury

¹ In China it is believed, also, that a corpse may become reanimated if a pregnant female animal passes over it, and that it then “will rise up and pursue those nearest to it, and if it overtakes anyone, strangle him” (N. B. Denny, *The Folk-Lore of China*, p. 20).

to the person holding the broom, and that its inability to do this counting renders it impotent.

There is a widely distributed idea that evil supernatural beings (or persons—witches, for example—who are supposed to control such beings) are unable to carry out their designs before they have counted all the particles of at least certain things in the immediate vicinities of the places where they wish to do evil. This idea appears in Japanese folk-lore in the well-known practice of quickly wetting the eyebrows with saliva, in order to cause the hairs to stick together and thus to become uncountable, with the intention of preserving oneself from being bewitched.¹ In Sicily we find a broom used, among other protections (including salt, a common Japanese preservative against evil influences), against witches, and that the reason there given for its employment is that a witch must, before entering the room where the broom is displayed, count all the little parts of which its brush is made.² And in Silesia the laying of a broom upon the threshold, as a protection against the entrance of the Alp at night, is sometimes explained as based upon the idea that that creature must count all the twigs of the broom ere the first stroke of midnight has sounded, or turn back without having entered.³ Although the belief in the protective virtue of a thing containing an unknown (or unknowable) number of parts is so prevalent in Italy and in Sicily that there seems to be a considerable likelihood of its having been wrongfully applied for the purpose of explaining the local employment of the broom as an amulet, and although Samter (*loc. cit.*) expresses—and rightly, I think—the

¹ Compare "Some Japanese . . . Practices connected with Travelling," pp. 98, 99, and 119.

² G. Pitré, *Usi e Costumi . . . Siciliano*, vol. iv. p. 102.

³ Samter, *op. cit.*, p. 34, footnote 8, quoting Drechsler's *Sitte, Brauchen und Volksglaube in Schlesien*, ii. p. 177.

opinion that the idea of the necessity of counting is an accretion masking the conception originally underlying the use of the broom in the case cited, there seems to me room for a possibility that a similar association of the broom with indefiniteness, and thus with immunity from the attack of a supernatural being, may occur in Japan and as a factor in the employment there of the broom for the laying of reanimated corpses.

We have observed above that if a living person be struck with a bamboo-broom, the striking is thought to be exceedingly insulting, and serious harm of some kind to that person the possible consequence of it [Yokohama].¹ Death within three years is sometimes specified as the result of being struck with a broom,² but the menace is probably not intended to be taken too literally, because death within the same period is threatened to one who is besprinkled with *chōzu-mizu* ³ (the water standing near

¹ The striking of children with old birch-brooms, or with twigs from such brooms, is thought in various parts of Central Europe to be exceedingly injurious to them, and to be followed by consumption, withering, failure to continue growth, and the like; Kunze, who records (*op. cit.* pp. 131, 149, 150) examples of this, ascribes the beliefs to symbolism attached to the *dryness* of the broom-twigs, and points out (p. 130) that there is still a belief in some places (e.g. in Bavaria) that whipping a child with switches of fresh birch is good for its health, while in W. Prussia a horse must not be driven with a dry birch switch lest it "dry up" (p. 131). He recognizes, however, that his theory based on a sympathetic action does not cover all his examples. He mentions, also (pp. 156, 157), that brushing a person with a broom is considered harmful in Moravia and elsewhere. Samter mentions (*op. cit.* p. 33, footnote 6) that if men or animals be struck with a broom they will become deteriorated ("bekommen sie den Schwund"), and ascribes the belief to the idea of the action of spirits clinging to the brush (see p. 171, *supra*). With the above there should be compared the Salop taboo against chastisement with "the low-growing broom," lest it should "stunt the victim's growth" (C. S. Burne, in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii. p. 18). Also, the North Carolina Negro belief that "To whip any one with a broom makes him lazy" (W. G. Black, in "Folk-Lore from the United States," in *Folk-Lore Record*, vol. iv. p. 95).

² Ehman, *op. cit.* p. 338.

³ *Ibid. loc. cit.* Other penalties for such sprinkling are sometimes cited in place of the above.

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a privy and used for washing the hands ; it often becomes very dirty from much use) ; or to whom various other misadventures occur. We may, I think, from what we have seen of the beliefs attached to the broom in Japan, reasonably conclude that the harm to which a person is thought to become exposed when struck with a broom is (or is due to) the driving away of or an injury to some psychical part of himself.¹

The broom in Japan is also associated, as is the case in many parts of the world, with the phenomena of childbirth. Thus, there is a recommendation that a parturient woman and her assistant should grasp a bamboo-broom, in order that the course of the afterbirth may be favoured ; ² whilst another warns a woman against stepping over such a broom, lest at some future time her delivery be made difficult.³ Now, taboos forbidding the stepping-over of brooms are of widespread occurrence, and in a number of them the penalty threatened is in some way associated with childbirth. "Pythagoras," for example, in ancient Greece, "warned his followers against stepping over a broom. In some parts of Bavaria, housemaids, in sweeping out the house, are careful not to step over the broom for fear of the witches (5). Again, it is a Bavarian rule not to step over a broom while a confinement is taking place in a house ; otherwise the birth will be tedious, and the child will always remain small with a large head. But if anyone has stepped over a broom inadvertently, he can undo the spell by stepping backwards over it again (6). So in Bombay they say you should never step across a broom, or you

¹ When photography was first introduced into Japan it was "considered dangerous, because likely to absorb some portion of the life or spirit of the person photographed" (B. H. Chamberlain, *op. cit.* s.v. "Superstitions").

² Ten Kate, *op. cit.* p. 129. Compare with this Kunze's quotation (*op. cit.* p. 136 ; it appears to refer to Transylvanian Saxony) to the effect that brooms forward the course of the afterbirth.

³ *Ibid.* *loc. cit.*

will cause a woman to suffer severely in childbed (7)."¹ And in England women are often warned not to step over brooms or broom-handles, and are threatened with an undesired conception as a penalty if they step over one of the latter.² It thus seems manifest that the Japanese beliefs associating brooms with childbirth are founded upon something broader than purely Japanese (or Sino-Japanese) conceptions or combinations of ideas. We are therefore enabled to put aside, as probably of minor importance, if of any, in determining this association, the broom's use as a representative of a human being, or reasons directly underlying that use. So, too, we may safely disregard, excepting as perhaps a minor factor, the play on words (suggested to me, by a Japanese friend, as possibly being the basis of the association of brooms with parturition) whereby the word "*hahaki*," "a broom," may be taken as "*haha-ki*," equivalent to "mother-tree."

¹ Frazer, "Some Popular Superstitions of the Ancients," in *Folk-Lore*, vol. i. p. 157, quoting (5) Lammert, (6) Wuttke, and (7) *Indian Notes and Queries*.

² For some examples, see E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, vol. i. pp. 133, 134. This English taboo appears as if it might possibly be connected, through some mental association, with the ceremonial jumping-over of a broom used as a marriage-rite by English and Welsh gipsies (see T. W. Thompson, "Ceremonial Customs of the British Gipsies," in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiv. pp. 336, 337), or with the term "Broomstick Marriage" (equivalent to "Hoop-pole Marriage") referring to a marriage "contracted to save the legitimacy of a child, or to father the child on another parish" (see W. Rye, *Glossary Words used in East Anglia*, London, 1895, pp. 26, 105). The stepping-over of a broom by a bridal pair, which appears in various parts of Central Europe (see, for some examples, Samter, *op. cit.* pp. 35 and 170) is, I think, probably merely a means, such as is commonly used at the time of a marriage, to rid the bridal pair of evil influences, whether inherent or those of supernatural beings about them. It, like the stepping-over of an axe and a broom by the procession or the midwife taking a child to baptism (Westphalia and E. Prussia; Samter, *op. cit.* p. 36, and Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 136), and the stepping of cattle over a broom (Silesia) or over a broom and an axe (Hesse) as a protection against evil (Samter, p. 35), seems to me to be a survival of a set of conceptions in which the broom was looked upon rather as an implement of defence (or of offence) than as the seat of an animating spirit or of some other supernatural being.

The broom's common application as an expeller of things may conceivably sometimes have acted as a factor in determining its association with delivery and with the expulsion of the placenta. And the shape of its handle may conceivably in some cases have caused the broom to be looked upon as representative of the phallus or of a phallic divinity, and this again may possibly have acted as a factor in associating it with child-birth. I think, however, that our evidence indicates that the basis of the association in question lies primarily in the belief in the broom as an object feared by evil supernatural beings. An extremely widely distributed idea—and one very common in Japan—is that the difficulties, pains, and dangers of parturition are due to the actions of evil supernatural beings, who tend to gather about the mother, and seek to injure her and the unborn (or helpless new-born) babe. We have seen that such beings are thought, in Japan, to fear brooms, and, although we have had no Japanese examples of the use of brooms as simple amulets, we have had examples from China, whence come at least several of the Japanese beliefs concerning brooms. Examples of the employment, in other countries, of brooms for the protection of parturient women or new-born children are easily to be cited—thus, among the ancient Romans, a woman was protected, after childbirth, by the beating and sweeping of each threshold of the house in which she lay with an axe, a pestle, and a broom, by three men who went about at night ;¹ " among the Bani Isrâ'îls of Bombay, when the midwife drives off the blast of the Evil Eye, she holds in her left hand a shoe, a winnowing fan, and a broom ;"² a number of examples of the use of brooms

¹ Frazer, in *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, London, 1918, vol. iii. p. 476, quoting Augustine. Samter, *op. cit.* pp. 29, 38 and 52 *seqq.*, discusses this in detail.

² W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-Lore of Northern India*, London, 1896, vol. ii. p. 191.

to protect infants and women in childbed, in Bavaria, in Russia, in Hungary, among the Graeco-Wallachs of Monastir, and in Southern India, are given by Samter (pp. 35, 36); in Franconia and in Moravia a broom is stood inverted before the door in order to prevent, in one case the "changing" or the harming of the unbaptised infant, in the other the harming of the parturient woman;¹ and, as we have already noted (p. 198, *supra*), in Sicily a broom is included among the defences of a new-born child.

Now, amongst many peoples there is a belief that if a person passes over a thing, some more or less permanent effect is produced by his action.² In Japan, the effect believed to be produced would appear to be either (a) the creation of some sort of more or less definite psychical relationship between the person and the thing; or (b) a physical weakening of the thing, due to some psychical action; or (c) a sense of resentment on the part of the psychical portion of the thing, due to a passing-over being regarded generally as such an insult that anything subjected to it becomes displeased. These three kinds of effects are not thought necessarily to be produced independently one of the other; usually, it would appear—as, indeed, we should anticipate—two or all of them are thought to be produced simultaneously. It is not always easy to determine which of the effects are the ones thought to underlie some particular one of the many operations of Japanese magic—whether negative (*i.e.* taboo) or positive—in which passing-over appears. It will be worth our while, therefore, before proceeding further with our investigation of the Japanese taboo forbidding the stepping-over of a broom, to glance momentarily at a few typical examples of Japanese

¹ Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 136. Cf. *Folk-Lore*, vol. xv. p. 128, where an inverted broom, protecting against witches, is referred to.

² Frazer, *Golden Bough*, part ii. pp. 423, 424, gives a number of examples of this, and many others might easily have been cited.

magical operations in which a passing-over occurs. The following may be taken as such examples :

Objects which have been magically treated are placed where persons whose injury is desired, or whom the operator wishes to control, will pass over them.¹ When a girl menstruates for the first time, she may, with the intention of securing regular and efficient menstrual periods in the future, step three times over the privy—which appears in many of the *majinai* for the regulation or control of menstruation—singing a certain verse while so doing.² If a person (especially a woman) step over a whetstone, it will become broken ;³ if a person step over one of the paper cords used for tying the hair, the cord will break easily ;⁴ if a woman step over a razor, it will become dull ;⁵ and if any part (but more especially the upper portion) of a person's body be stepped over, his growth will be interfered with, unless the transgressor steps back again over the prospective victim⁶ [Chikuzen province]. If a measuring-stick, an instrument to which (as to needles and to certain other implements) a degree of sanctity is attributed, be stepped over, it will cause trouble to the person who has stepped over it, and has thus acted disrespectfully towards it [Chikuzen province] ; and a person is warned not to step over a cutting instrument, such as a knife or a pair of scissors, lest it thus be caused to wound him at some future time.⁷

We are now able to perceive what appears to be a sound basis for the taboo forbidding a woman to step over a

¹ For a couple of examples of this, see de Visser, *op. cit.* p. 18, and Aston, "Japanese Magic," in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiii. p. 191.

² ten Kate, *op. cit.* p. 113.

³ Ehman, *op. cit.* p. 339. Griffis, *op. cit.* p. 469, gives this, but only in connection with women.

⁴ Ehman, *loc. cit.*

⁵ Griffis, *loc. cit.*

⁶ Compare with this the Bavarian practice, noted *supra* (p. 200), for counteracting the effect of stepping over a broom.

⁷ ten Kate, *loc. cit.*

bamboo-broom. The broom is an implement whose assistance may possibly be required for her protection from the attacks of evil supernatural beings during her delivery—it seems not improbable that her frequent association with it in the course of her normal household duties may have aided in giving the household's broom a special standing with respect to her—but that assistance can scarcely be reasonably expected from a broom which has been treated in such a way as to cause it displeasure, nor in full measure from a broom to which something has been done which may have weakened it. Indeed, it may possibly even be supposed that the broom which has been stepped over not only will refuse to help in keeping off the attacking demons, but that it will perhaps seek to revenge itself in some more active way upon the parturient woman.¹ There is, however, another groundwork which—though, I think, with less to recommend it—may reasonably be advanced to account for the taboo. It is that, since the woman who steps over a broom may be regarded as thus entering into some sort of psychical relationship with an implement disliked (or feared) by ghostly supernatural beings, such beings may therefore be thought likely to avoid introducing themselves into her body for the purpose of incarnation, and she therefore to tend to have the great misfortune of remaining barren—or, if one of those beings has already entered, to expect a miscarriage.

If we may assume that the fear of displeasing or of weakening the psychical member of the broom is the true basis of the taboo just discussed, we may easily account for the

¹What seems to parallel this closely, especially if we may regard the "cursing" as an accretion—as, in view of certain of the European beliefs I have cited, we appear justified in doing—is the Silesian cursing of an old broom followed by the placing of it where the prospective victim will step over it, with the intention that he should become ill (Samter, *op. cit.* p. 33, quoting Drechsler, *op. cit.* ii. p. 236).

employment of a broom for favouring the expulsion of the after-birth. That is, it seems probable to me that (at least from the supernatural side) that employment has been based primarily on an application to the broom for its assistance (because of the implement's general associations with child-birth), largely for the keeping away of the demons who might delay the expulsion of the afterbirth, and perhaps in part for actual assistance and with special reference to its power as a clearer-out of things. The convenient form of a broom-handle has, on purely physical grounds, doubtless helped in the adoption of the broom as a thing to be held during parturition, although what has been its importance as a factor in that adoption must at present remain indeterminate.

As a cure for a wart, one is recommended to touch the wart with a twig broken from a broom, and then to place the twig in a drain, where it will rot and gradually be washed away, the belief being that as the twig disappears so will the wart, until nothing is left of either [Yokohama]. This practice, in which contagious and imitative magic are combined, is easily to be paralleled amongst other peoples. It is especially interesting to find what seems an extremely close parallel to it in England, where, when the removal of a wart is desired, the wart may be touched with a stick of elder-wood, which is afterwards buried in the ground to rot,¹ for the elder is looked upon as a magic-working shrub. That, in Japan, the twig with which the wart is to be touched is taken from a broom mainly because of the supposed magical virtues of the broom, and not merely

¹ J. Hardy, "Wart and Wen Cures," in *Folk-Lore Record*, vol. i. p. 222. Kunze, *op. cit.* p. 147, cites a W. Prussian wart-cure consisting of the stroking of the wart three times with a broom, and then, without speaking a word, putting the broom back into its place. The Cornish belief, quoted in *Folk-Lore Record*, vol. v. pp. 176, 177, to the effect that "A cure for sore throat was to take a piece of a birch broom and cross it nine times over the part affected" (compare, with this, footnote 2, p. 200, *supra*) is also interesting in his connection.

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because it is easily to be obtained thence, seems unquestionable, even though we may not be able to say whether the broom has been brought into the *majinai* as a conscious agent, or as a simple instrument to which magical powers are credited, or as a mere symbol of sweeping away.

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