

A FEW EXAMPLES OF ANALOGY IN THE ANCIENT UKRAINIAN AND JUDAIC CULTURES

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A comparison of the ethnographic and folklore material of tribes and peoples of different periods and parts of the globe shows certain similarities and dissimilarities and discloses affinities and differences in underlying forms and ideas. Research in this field has established many analogies and even identities. These analogies are not necessarily indications of mutual influences, direct or indirect; not infrequently, so great a difference in time and so wide a separation in area may be involved as to exclude any such influences.

The perception of man's surroundings, whether he be an individual or a member of a group, the criteria of thinking, and the process of spiritual improvement of primitive man from the very beginning to higher stages of civilization and, finally, the formation of his world outlook are, generally speaking, common to all mankind. These common factors have formed common analogies.

One of the problems in comparative ethnography and folklore is to find analogies between the folklore of the inhabitants of ancient Ukraine and that of the ancient Jews. At first the search for such analogies may seem farfetched. On the one hand, there is the Iranian and Hellenistic world of lower forms of polytheism strongly influenced by Eurasian nomadism, wide steppes of fertile soil with great agricultural potential, the social structure of a slave system with certain remnants of the neolithic matriarchate and a political form of a primitive feudalism, and, finally, the subordination of the autochthonous, rural inhabitants of ancient Ukraine to the invading nomads. On the other hand, there is the quite different Semitic world with a crystallized monotheism, a desert and mountainous territory for pasturing livestock, and the social structure of a strict patriarchate. The anthropogeographical, geopolitical and cultural factors in these two worlds were different.

Palestine's geopolitical situation gave rise to a crossing of many cultures there from the ancient Orient. The influence of the Canaanites on the Jews, who arrived in Canaan as seminomadic shepherds, the polytheism of the land of Pharaoh with a considerable influence of totemism, ancient Chaldea, and Zoroaster's motherland with a specific system of dualistic Parseeism, the spirit of the Hellenistic period, and the idea of religious syncretism—these are only the most important ancient influences which crossed over this territory. In contrast, South-eastern Europe, except for agricultural cults of the settled rural inhabitants of ancient Ukraine and the impact of the Greek pantheon, was under the influence of nomadic Eurasian shamanism.

The oldest phases of the Jewish past, viz., the period of patriarchs and judges, developed under the influence of anthropogeographical factors; while the historic period, i.e., the reign of kings, viz., Saul, David, and Solomon, and the political state dualism of Israel and Judah, were overwhelmingly influenced by geopolitical conditions. At the same time, it must be remembered that two spiritual ideologies were present among the ancient Jews, especially during archaic and then early historic periods. The orthodox Jews led by their priests and prophets held to monotheistic Jahvism, while the influence of primitive religious forms of the archaic period gained ground among the masses of the population; later, during the historic period, these masses were influenced by the religions of the neighboring peoples and tribes, i.e., lower and, later, higher forms of polytheism. These influences often reached the palaces of Jewish kings, and even the sanctuaries of the priests themselves. This is why the ancient Jewish folklore has not only the spiritual elements connected with monotheistic Jahvism, but also foreign influences, i.e., elements of religious primitivism in the form of fetishism, animism, and totemism from the archaic period of the Jews, as well as the lower and higher forms of polytheism from the historic period due to the influence of the cultures of Egypt, Chaldea and Babylon, Phoenicia, Persia, and the Hellenistic period. The

spiritual influence of the neighboring peoples on the Jews at that time was so strong in Palestine that the Jews were subject to them, despite their devotion to Jahvism. Reinach¹ was right when he stated in passing that the Jews were totemists without knowing it.

Anthropogeographical conditions in ancient Ukraine were much stronger, and geopolitical factors developed under the influence of Hellas and Asia Minor (the influence of the latter being introduced through the Caucasus). The influence of Central Asia was felt strongly, mainly political; this was also an important factor in the cultural process.

Such are the general characteristics of the developmental process of the mentality of the inhabitants of ancient Ukraine and Palestine, whose analogies in folklore we shall examine.

The archeological material alone brings to light some questions related to the archaic period. The idea of painting the dead with ocher is worthy of our attention. Skeletons of the dead with traces of ocher were found in the graves of the late neolithic and early metal period in the Ukraine.

Ebert² is right in believing that man at that time strewed ocher over the dead bodies in order to impart to the pallor of the dead the appearance of the rejuvenating force in human blood. Ebert believes that the idea behind strewing ocher over the dead rested in the belief that blood was part of a man's soul. The very ceremony of using ocher dates back to the paleolithic period.

A similar practice is also found in the books of the Old Testament. Ancient anthropology pays tribute to the significance of human blood. In *Deuteronomy* 12:23 we read: "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh."

The prohibition against eating blood is also found in *Leviticus* 3:17, 7:26, and in 17:10 and 11. In *Deuteronomy* 12:16 we find the prohibition with the command that the blood be poured upon the earth. In *Samuel I*, 14:33 it is said that the

¹ S. Reinach, *Orpheus, Histoire générale des religions*, Paris, 1909, p. 269.

² M. Ebert, *Südrussland im Altertum*, Bonn und Leipzig, 1921, p. 40.

Jews had sinned because they had eaten blood. The Old Testament texts quoted above, and especially Moses' Law, the *Pentateuch*, reveal that ancient folklore regards blood as a soul—*nepheš*, i.e., the highest biological principal of both man and animal and, therefore, forbids the consumption of it. The meat of a slaughtered animal could be used only after the blood had been drained. Such an understanding of blood linked it with the religious idea of catharsis, i.e., a sacrifice in order to cleanse man of his sins (see *Leviticus* 4:27-30).

The concept of blood as the "life" and "the soul" of man and animal found an analogous idea in the ceremonial act of strewing ocher over the body of the dead among the Scythians. The possibility is not excluded that the idea of painting the body of the dead with ocher was not only in order to eliminate their deathly pallor, but also reflected certain, perhaps weak, gleams of faith in life after death.

Archeological finds tell us that the inhabitants of Palestine believed in life after death. Various objects of everyday life, including clay wares in which remains of food were found, were discovered in Palestine.³ The custom of putting everyday objects into the graves with the dead is common to almost all primitive peoples. Herodotus also speaks of this custom (4, 71) when he describes the burial of Scythian kings. The difference here is in the fact that also the king's concubine, cupbearer, cook, stableman, servant, and herald—i.e., the people who served the king when he was alive and whom he was believed to need in the life after death—were killed and laid in the king's grave. When a common Scythian died, only everyday objects and domestic animals were buried with him.

The family graves of the ancient Jews are relevant here. Those outside the family were forbidden burial in these graves. This custom had a peculiar name, viz., "to be buried with the parents" or "to be joined with one's own people." The dying Patriarch Jacob said:

³ Gressmann, "Religion (Palästina-Syrien)," *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, herausgeg. von M. Ebert, 1927/28, Vol. XI, pp. 103-6.

I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. . . . There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah" (*Genesis* 49:29, 31).

Individual books of the Old Testament, viz., *Genesis* (23), *Samuel I*, 25:1, *Kings I*, 2:34, *Chronicles II*, 16:14, *Isaiah* 22:16, tell us of these family graves.⁴ Common burials were assigned only to the poor, to strangers, and to criminals (*Kings II*, 23:6; *Jeremiah* 26:23). It was a severe punishment when someone was not buried with his parents (*Kings I*, 13:22). This is why some of the atheistic kings were not buried in kings' graves (*Chronicles II*, 21:20, 24:25, 28:27).

The Old Testament belief finds a certain analogy also on Scythian territory. Darius, who during his Scythian expedition sought an opportunity to fight the Scythians in the open, was told by their King Idanthyrsus:

. . . We Scythians have neither towns nor cultivated lands, which might induce us, through fear of their being taken or ravaged, to be in any hurry to fight with you. If, however, you must needs come to blows with us speedily, look you now, there are our fathers' tombs—seek them out, and attempt to meddle with them—then ye shall see whether or no we will fight with you (*Herodotus, The Persian Wars*, 4, 127).

Idanthyrsus' words referred to the kings' graves in the land of Gerrhi (4, 71); *Herodotus* calls it "the Royal district" (4, 20).

The Jews did not burn their dead. On the contrary, they regarded the burning of the dead as a disgrace (*Amos* 2:1). Cremation was only an intensification of the punishment by death which was applied to the most notorious criminals (*Leviticus* 20:14, *Joshua* 7:25).

This idea from the Old Testament is similarly reflected among the Scythians. We find in *Herodotus* (4, 69) how the Scythians punished by death the "lying diviners":

. . . a wagon is loaded with brushwood and oxen are harnessed to it; the soothsayers, with their feet tied together, their hands bound behind their backs, and their mouths gagged, are thrust into the

⁴ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 1929, Vol. III, pp. 444-7.

midst of the brushwood; finally the wood is set alight, and the oxen, being startled, are made to rush off with the wagon.

One of the common elements in the folklore material of primitive man is fortunetelling. Distinct traces are found both in the ancient Ukraine and in Palestine; their forms, however, are different. According to Herodotus (4, 67), Scythian soothsayers foretold the future by means of a number of willow wands and the inner bark of the linden tree. This mode of divination was indigenous to Scythia. Fortunetelling by willow wands and the bark of the linden tree has fetishism as its basis. Many researchers believe that the Scythian bath, which, according to Herodotus (4, 73-75), was taken after a burial and had a cleansing function, was of a religious nature. Meuli⁵ thinks that the Scythian bath might have had some deeper meaning in connection with the cult of the dead. If this was the case, then elements of necromancy are not excluded. From the burials of the Scythians it is seen that the latter had a certain primitive conception regarding life after death; and this is the first and most important step to necromancy.

Among the masses of the Jewish population, foreign influences, chiefly Babylonian, with respect to life after death gained ground. The prohibition against fortunetelling and necromancy found in the Old Testament (*Leviticus* 19:31; *Exodus* 22:18; *Deuteronomy* 18:10-12; *Leviticus* 20:27; *Isaiah* 8:19) in itself confirms this influence among ancient Jews. A classical example of such necromancy is the story of King Saul and the woman fortuneteller from En-dor (*Samuel* I, Chapter 28).

Herodotus says of the Scythians' baths after burial of the dead (4, 73):

. . . they soap well and wash their heads; then, in order to cleanse their bodies, they make a booth by fixing three sticks in the ground

⁵ K. Meuli, *Scythica*, *Hermes*, 1935, Vol. 70, pp. 121-176; W. Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig, 1908, 2 Aufl., Vol. III, p. 427; K. Th. Preuss, *Die geistige Kultur der Naturvölker*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1914, p. 32; E. Bäumer, *Die Geschichte des Badewesens*, Breslau, 1903, p. 19.

inclined towards one another, and stretching around them woolen felts, which they arrange to fit as close as possible: inside the booth a dish is placed upon the ground, into which they put a number of red-hot stones, and then add some hempseed.

This might point to the belief of the Scythians that contact of the living with the dead contaminates the former.

This kind of belief can be observed also among other peoples of that time, including the Jews. Moses' Law regarded anyone as impure who had touched the dead, because ". . . whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days" (*Numbers* 19:16, 5:2).

Herodotus tells us that every Scythian, to indicate his mourning, "chops off a piece of his ear, crops his hair close, makes a cut all round his arm, lacerates his forehead and his nose, and thrusts an arrow through his left hand" (4:71).

Moses' Law forbade the ancient Jews this kind of practice (*Leviticus* 19:28, 21:5; *Deuteronomy* 14:1). Prohibition of this practice indicates that such burial customs had been practiced among large numbers of Jews.

The difference between these two analogies between the Scythian and the Jewish folklores lies perhaps in the fact that this burial rite of the Scythians was related at the time to the subordination of the Scythians to their dead sovereign, and had a certain political significance, whereas among the Jews it was an expression of the Jewish soul, i.e., a psychological state. This view is the more probable because Herodotus mentions this form of mourning only in describing the burial of the Scythian kings, while he says nothing about it when he describes the burial of common Scythians (4, 73).

Of some interest at this point is the matter of totemism, which has been found among ancient inhabitants of the Ukrainian territory and among the ancient Jews. Herodotus, in telling us about the Neurians (4, 105), on the basis of the stories he has heard from the Scythians and the Greeks, says that each Neurian became a wolf for a few days once a year and later

returned to his normal state. Niederle,⁶ who regards the Neurians as Slavs, says that this belief is the Slavic belief in werewolves. This approach, however, gives us very little toward understanding of the genesis of the beliefs which, in various forms, are found in the ethnographic and folkloric material of ancient peoples.

The belief in werewolves has been found under various geographical conditions and is adapted to the animal species found in a given region. In Abyssinia and Eastern Africa we find a belief in man's metamorphosis into a hyena, a leopard or a lion; in India, into a tiger; in Borneo, into a goat or a leopard; and in South America, into a jaguar. These beliefs originate in totemism, whereby an animal or even a plant elicited a religious response in primitive man.⁷ It is possible that the griffins, mythological animals with wings found in Aristeas' narration (Herodotus 4, 13), whose duty it was to watch gold treasures, also belong to the oldest objects of totemism. In the Greeks' account of the origin of the Scythians (Herodotus 4, 9), we find that a creature half-woman, half-snake had three sons by Hercules. These children were named Agathyrus, Gelónus and Scyth. The question arises: are we not dealing here with a specific variant of the sexual totem?

Regarding the religion of the ancient Jews, we find, according to the view of scientists, certain signs of totemism.⁸ For instance, the Prophet Hosea (8:5, 10:5) opposes the cult of the calf, or rather of the bull, which was a totemic idol in the land of Canaan and was the embodiment of Baal.

The masses of Jews who often retreated from the orthodox principles of monotheistic Jahvism were surrounded by primitive peoples and were unwillingly subject to the influence of foreign, primitive religions, i.e., polytheism in general, and animism, totemism and even fetishism. We recall the inci-

⁶ L. Niederle, *Slovanské Starožitnosti*, 1902, Vol. I, p. 270.

⁷ *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, herausgeg. von M. Ebert, Vol. XIII, p. 356.

⁸ E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme*. Halle a.S., 1906, pp. 116, 426-7, 308-311; M. Rostovtzeff, *The Animal Style in South Russia and China*, Princeton, 1929, p. 4.

dent of Rachel, wife of the Patriarch Jacob, who stole images from Laban, her father (*Genesis* 31:19, 34).

An analysis of ethnographic and folklore material shows that the concept of fire is a common fundamental religious principle of prehistoric and ancient man; this concept is found almost everywhere in numerous folklore variants.

In the Scythians' own version of their origins we find that the first human in Scythia was Targitau. He had three sons: Leipoxais, Arpoxais, and Colaxais the youngest.

While they still ruled the land, there fell from the sky four implements, all of gold—a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a drink-in-cup. The eldest of the brothers perceived them first, and approached to pick them up; when lo! as he came near, the gold took fire, and blazed. He therefore went his way, and the second coming forward made the attempt, but the same thing happened again. The gold rejected both the eldest and the second brother. Last of all the youngest brother approached, and immediately the flames were extinguished; so he picked up the gold, and carried it to his home. Then the two elder agreed together, and made the whole kingdom over to the youngest born (*Herodotus*, 4, 5).

Undoubtedly, we find in this tale one of the numerous variants of the belief in the holiness of fire, which primitive man believed came from heaven. The names Leipoxais, Arpoxais and Colaxais, with their -xais endings, show their Iranian origin.⁹

The idea of the holiness of fire was cultivated especially in Iran. In mentioning the Scythian gods, *Herodotus* tells us that the Scythians praised Hestia most, whom they called Tabiti, i.e., the goddess of the hearth:¹⁰ "And only then they pray to other gods, namely: Zeus-Papai, Gaia-API, Apollo-Oitoziros, Aphrodite-Argimpaza, and Poseidon-Tagimazadas" (4, 59). *Herodotus* tells us also that the Scythians used to swear by the royal hearth if they wanted to swear by the strongest oath (4, 68).

Distinct analogies concerning such beliefs are also found in

⁹ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 1929, Vol. III, p. 193.

¹⁰ O. Schrader, *Reallexikon der indogermanischen Alterumskunde*, 2 Aufl., Berlin-Leipzig, 1929, Vol. 2, p. 239.

the religion of ancient Jews. For instance, Jahveh reveals himself before Moses in the form of a burning bush (*Exodus* 3:2); he manifests himself in the form of a fire before the Jews on Mount Sinai (*Exodus* 19:18); he appears as a "consuming fire" (*Deuteronomy* 4:24). In the anthropomorphic conception, smoke comes out of Jahveh's nostril and fire from his mouth (the Second Book of *Samuel* 22:9). In the eschatological image of Isaiah (66:15) we find that Jahveh "shall come with fire."

A common element in the ethnographic and folklore material of individual peoples is the story of giants capable of accomplishing extraordinary deeds. This story belongs to the semi-mythological and mythological period.

In the Old Testament, too, we find reference to this kind of giant who, according to the tradition, lived in Palestine (*Genesis* 6:4). To these giants belongs first Samson, known for the superhuman strength of his hair. He was invincible, and only after he was betrayed by Delilah, his mistress, and taken by the Philistines, who blinded him, was he robbed of his glories (*Judges, Chapters* 13-16).

We believe that Reinach,¹¹ in finding in Samson an ancient object of the totemistic beliefs of the Jews, has gone rather too far. Reinach advances the view that Samson, who had fought the lion, must have been a lion himself whose strength was in his mane.

In accordance with Herodotus' tale about Hercules, Scyth, the youngest of the three sons of the creature whose upper body resembled that of a girl and the lower that of a serpent, must be regarded as a giant—he was able to draw the giant bow of Hercules, his father (*Herodotus* 4:8-10). Scyth's elder brothers, who could not draw the bow, were driven away by their mother while the youngest was given all power. An erotic motif similar to that in the story of Samson is found also in Herodotus' tale about Hercules and the above-mentioned creature, half-human, half-serpent; it appears that here the sexual motif is dealt with, and apparently also the sexual totem, as noted above.

¹¹ S. Reinach, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-9.

The manifestation of civilized life in Eastern Europe, including the Black Sea region, is a synthesis, generally speaking, of three main elements: Oriental, Greek, and local.¹² Since the older, Oriental element lies "at the bottom," it is less conspicuous. However, in analyzing the ethnographic material in the light of ethnological studies, we also find the older, Oriental traces upon which is superimposed the later, Grecian layer, which entered the ancient Ukraine, either through the Causasus or the Bosphorus, or even through the Urals and the Caspian. All these influences played a role in the development of the local folklore.

It happened, however, that historic fate has brought together these ethnic groups—the prehistoric Ukrainians and the Jews—by settling the Jews on the territory of the ancient Ukraine. It was then that the folklores of both of these peoples, geographically speaking, came closer. At the same time, supplemented by the Grecian element, they produced religious associations known as *σεβόμενοι Θεὸν ὕψιστον*. Unfortunately, the epigraphic material of modern science is too scanty to learn fully the relative importance of each of the three basic elements in the history of the development of these associations.

¹² R. Walzer, "Klassische Alterumswissenschaft und Orientalistik," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 1933, Vol. 86, p. 153.