

THE HIEROCENTRIC STATE

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THE GREAT ASSEMBLY

IN HIS great history of Greek religion,¹ Professor Nilsson comments on the neglect by scholars of an institution of first importance in the development of civilization and the state. That is the *panegyris*, the great assembly of the entire race to participate in solemn rites essential to the continuance of its corporate and individual well-being. The meeting was a tremendous affair (Pindar leaves us in no doubt about that), yet it was paralleled by equally great and imposing assemblies of other nations all over the ancient world. At hundreds of holy shrines, each believed to mark the exact center of the universe and represented as the point at which the four quarters of the earth converged—"the navel of the earth"—one might have seen assembled at the New Year—the moment of creation, the beginning and ending of time—vast concourses of people, each thought to represent the entire human race in the presence of all its ancestors and gods.

A visitor to any of these festivals would have found a market or fair in progress, the natural outcome of bringing people together from wide areas in large numbers, and the temple of the place functioning as an exchange or bank. He could have witnessed ritual contests: foot, horse, and wagon races, odd kinds of wrestling, choral competitions, the famous Troy game, beauty contests, and what not. He would note that all came to the celebration as pilgrims, often traversing immense distances over prehistoric sacred roads, and dwelt during the festival in booths of green boughs.

What would most command a visitor's attention to the great assembly would be the main event, the now famous ritual year-drama for the glorification of the king. In most versions of the year-drama, the king wages combat with his dark adversary of the underworld, emerging victorious after a temporary defeat from his duel with death, to be acclaimed in a single mighty chorus as the worthy and recognized ruler of the new age.² The New Year was the birthday of the human race and its rites dramatized the creation of the world; all who would be found in "the Book of Life opened at the creation of the World" must necessarily attend. There were

¹ M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, V, 2, 1 of *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. W. Otto (Munich: 1941), pp. 778 f.

² S. H. Hooke (ed.), *The Labyrinth* (London: 1937) and Th. H. Gaster, *Thepsis* (New York: H. Schuman, 1950), are general treatments of the subject. See *infra* for other references.

coronation and royal marriage rites, accompanied by a ritual representing the sowing or begetting of the human race; and the whole celebration wound up in a mighty feast in which the king as lord of abundance gave earnest of his capacity to supply his children with all the good things of the earth. The stuff for this feast was supplied by the feasters themselves, for no one came "to worship the King" without bringing his tithes and first fruits.³

Volumes would not suffice to trace the survival of present-day institutions throughout the world from the practices and rites of the ancient national assemblies. They were the general reservoir into which the myriad culture-streams of an earlier day eventually found their way, and from which are supplied in turn the mainstreams of our civilization. Space will not allow us to examine these magnificent gatherings one by one, nor is it necessary to draw the same identical picture a score of times. However, since no work on the subject has to our knowledge yet appeared (though the evidence is neither suspect nor difficult of access), it will be necessary to reinforce our claims by passing quickly from west to east over the ancient world, pointing out as we go some of the more important sources to which the student might turn for a description of a score of the more illustrious assemblies.

Beginning in the far northwest, we may take the great Thing of Iceland as typical of the primitive assemblies of the whole Germanic North. The meeting place was a mound (the holy *logberg*, mountain of the law) in the center of a stone circle where the four quarters of the island met; the president of the meeting was a ritual king (the Gothi); attendance was compulsory; booths, feasting, games, markets, and the rest were never lacking.⁴ Identical though more imposing were the rites at Uppsala⁵ and at various Teutonic shrines on the continent.⁶ Typical of all Celtic nations was the Beltene fai of the Irish in Connacht, held "at the turn of the year," at the hill where stood "the stone and umbilicus

³ For a general treatment of the year-feast, see H. Nibley, "Sparsiones," *The Classical Journal*, Vol. XL (June, 1945), pp. 515-538.

⁴ See W. Golther's notes in his edition of *Aré's Islendingaboc* (Halle: 1923), pp. 11 f.; also P. Herrmann, *Inland* (Leipzig: 1914), Vol. I, pp. 302 f., 515; F. Niedner, *Inlands Kultur zur Wikingerzeit* (Jena: 1913), pp. 45-47.

⁵ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, in *Mon. Hist. Ger. SS.*, Vol. VII, p. 379; P. Herrmann, *Nordische Mythologie* (Leipzig: 1903), pp. 300, 501; and P. B. Du Chaillu, *The Viking Age* (New York: 1890), Vol. I, p. 296.

⁶ On the time, place, and nature of these assemblies, see A. Tille, *Yule and Christmas* (London: 1699), pp. 47 f., 71; J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Goettingen: 1835), Vol. I, pp. 26-29; P. Herrmann, *Nord. Mythol.*, pp. 497-499, 503 f., 509; Carl Clemen, *Religionsgeschichte Europas* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1926), Vol. I, pp. 355-361; Tacitus *Annals* i. 51, and *Germania* chap. 40; Thietmar *Chronicon* i. 17; and numerous references in the sagas, especially *Ægils Saga*. The classic study of the survival of the old Germanic assemblies in the Middle Ages are *Dissertations iv and v* of M. Du Cange, *Dissertations ou Reflexions sur l'Histoire de Saint Louys* in Vol. VII of *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* (Paris: 1850), pp. 15 ff.

of Ireland . . . regarded as being in *medio et meditullio terrae positus*.⁷ There the king of the new age was established and the creation of the world was rehearsed.⁸ An inscription from Ancyra recording just such a fair of the ancient Galatians⁹ reminds us that we are dealing with no medieval innovations in the Irish fairs or in those of Britain¹⁰ and Gaul,¹¹ which follow the same pattern.

In moving terms, Cicero has described the immemorial rites at Enna in Sicily: "It is the exact center of the island, and is called the navel of Sicily" where, at a sacred lake in the top of a mountain there congregates once a year "a renowned assemblage of people not only from Sicily but from other nations and races."¹² Rome itself was originally, and forever remained, a place of universal assembly. The old *Roma quadrata* was, or contained, a circular enclosure divided into four equal parts, at the center of which stood the *lapis manalis*, the seal of the underworld, marking the *mundus*—a term held by some to be identical with the Greek *kosmos*.¹³ At the end of the sacred roads stood the king's house on the holy mount. Hither repaired the whole human race for the *ludi saeculares*, the universal birthday party from which no human being was permitted to be absent. On this occasion, the king acted as host to all the world; and having won a ritual contest with the powers of darkness, was hailed as father and king of the race for a hundred years.¹⁴

⁷ John Rhys, *Celtic Heathendom* (London: 1878), p. 192. Another such stone, a *petra quadrata in ora fontis*, is described in the *Book of Armagh*, in *Fontes Historiae Religionis Celticae*, ed. J. Zwicker (Berlin: 1934), Vol. II, p. 154. The stone of Tara was moved to Tailtiu when that became the capital, Rhys, *op. cit.*, pp. 207, 576, 585. See also H. Hubert in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Vol. LXXI (1914), pp. 12, 15, and Vol. LXXII (1915), pp. 208-9; H. Hubert, *Greatness and Decline of the Celts* (London: 1934), pp. 241 ff., and L. D. Agate, in *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, p. 21.

⁸ H. D. De Jubainville, *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Heathendom*, trans. R. Best (Dublin: 1903), pp. 3, 9, 20 ff., 25-35, 41, 56 ff., 84, 89 ff., 93, 100, 136, 146 ff., 219; H. Hubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 1 ff., 242; Rhys, *op. cit.*, pp. 409, 460, 514-17, 519 ff., 459 ff., 412, 581, 608, 614, etc.; J. A. MacCulloch, *Celtic Mythology*, Vol. III of *Mythology of All Races* (Boston: 1918), pp. 28, 34 ff.; H. Allerott, *The Circle and the Cross* (London: 1927-30), Vol. II, pp. 73, 20, 207.

⁹ *Corp. Inscr. Lat.*, No. 4,039k, cited in Allcroft, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 299; cf. Strabo *Geog.* xii. 5, 1.

¹⁰ British assemblies described in a letter to Gregory the Great in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 77, pp. 1215-1216; at the Council of Cloveshove, 747 A.D., in J. D. Mansi, *Sacr. concil. nov. et ampl. collect.* (1901 ed.), Vol. XII, p. 400; by Geoffrey of Monmouth *Hist. Brit.* iv. 14; iii. 5; iv. 8; see especially the Welsh version, trans. A. Griscom (London: 1929), ix. 1; iii. 3. The year-drama is described by Rhys, *op. cit.*, pp. 155 ff., 160 ff., 562; cf. M. Williams, "An Early Ritual Poem in Welsh," *Speculum*, Vol. XIII (1939), pp. 43 ff., and R. W. Muncney, *Our Old English Fairs* (London: 1935), pp. 46, 103, 116, 145-147, 156, 162 ff., 166, etc.

¹¹ General descriptions: Athenaeus *Deipn.* iv. 34 (150-2); Venatius Fortunatus *Vita St. Amantii* xx. 108 ff.; Strabo *Geog.* iv. 3, 2-3; iv. 34, 15; v. 11, 1; Gregory of Tours *In Glor. confess.* xi. (in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, Vol. LXXI, pp. 830-1); Rhys, *op. cit.*, pp. 383 ff., 390, 394 ff., 407 ff., 419 ff., 429.

¹² Cicero *In Ver.* iv. 48; xlviii. 106; liii. 117 ff.

¹³ A. Piganiol in *Melanges de l'Ecole de France de Rome*, Vol. XXVIII (1928), pp. 250 f., 271 f., 276 ff.; S. Weinstock, "Templum," *Römische Mitteilungen d. dt. archaol. Instituts*, Vol. XLV (1930), p. 118. On the *mundus* as the model of the universe, J. A. Hild in *Daremberg; Dict.* Vol. III, pp. 2,021-2,022; and F. Muenzer in *Pauly-Wissowa, Realencyklopaedie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 560 ff.

¹⁴ The basic descriptions in Zosimus *Hist.* ii. 5-6; the *Acta Ludorum Saecularium* in T. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: 1913), Vol. VIII, pp. 572 ff., 598 ff.; Statius *Silvae* i, vi; Ovid *Fast.* iii. 525 ff.; Cassiodorus *Variae* viii. 33. See especially A. Piganiol, *Recherches sur les Jeux Romains* (Strasbourg: 1923); E. Diehl, "Das saeculum, seine Riten und Gebete," *Reinheimisches Museum*, Vol. LXXXI (1934), 256 ff.; L. Deubner, "Zur Entwicklungsgesch. der altröm. Religion," *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum*, Vol. XXVII (1911), 325 ff.; G. Wissowa, "De feris anni Romanorum vetustissimi" in his *Geschichtliche Abhandlungen* (Munich: 1904), pp. 154-174; Otto Huth, *Janus* (Bonn: 1932), F. Blumenthal, in *Klio* Vol. XV (1917-8), p. 232.

The *panegyris* of the Greeks has already been mentioned. Delphi furnishes the best known, but by no means the only, example. There the god sat on his holy mound, "the middle omphalos, the navel of the earth," to bestow his blessing on the multitudes that came along the sacred roads to pay him homage on his birthday,¹⁵ and to live in booths and hold their feasts, games, and markets.¹⁶ Jane Harrison and others have fully demonstrated the royal combat, victory and coronation to be the original kernel of the rites.¹⁷

Scholars have long noted the remarkable parallel between the Greek rites at Eleusis and those at the great Slavic shrine of Svantevit: aside from the death-and-resurrection motif of the mysteries, the Slavic assemblies resemble those of other nations in every particular.¹⁸ The great Egyptian assemblies that astonished the Greeks by their size and splendor were from the beginning New Year's gatherings to celebrate the coronation of the king;¹⁹ the place was the mountain of creation at the center of the universe,²⁰ and all the essential aspects of the *panegyris* were conspicuous.²¹ The Kaaba at Mecca is still thought to mark the exact middle of the earth and hub of the universe; it is surrounded by special shrines marking the cardinal points, and the roads that lead to it are holy, the main one being called the Royal Road.²² There at a set time the whole human race must assemble in one tremendous concourse, as it shall assemble on the Day of Judgment before the throne of God.²³ It was common in the Middle Ages to represent Jerusalem on maps as the exact center of the earth, and to depict the city itself as a quartered circle. Long before the days of

¹⁵ Plutarch *Quaest. Graec.* No. 12 (W. R. Halliday, *Plutarch's Greek Questions* [Oxford: 1928], p. 72); also Nos. 9, 35, 59.

¹⁶ M. P. Nilsson, *Gesch. der griech. Religion*, Vol. I, pp. 778 ff., and *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig: 1906), pp. 156-159, 313, 319; P. Stengel, *Die Griechischen Kultusaltertümer* (Munich: Beck, 1920), pp. 190 ff.

¹⁷ J. Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge: 1927), pp. 389 ff. (Delphi), including F. M. Cornford's study on Olympia, pp. 212-259, and Gilbert Murray's "Excursus on the Ritual Forms preserved in Greek Tragedy," *idem*, pp. 341-365.

¹⁸ C. Clemen, *Religiongeschichte Europas*, Vol. I, pp. 374 ff., 386 f. Descriptions of the various assemblies in C. H. Meyer, ed., *Fontes Historiae Religionis Slavicae* (Berlin: 1931), pp. 7, 35 (Ebbro), 63 ff., 66 ff. (Dluposz), 70, 71, 94 f. (Ibn Rusta); and *Saxo Grammaticus Hist. Dan.* xiv (Strassburg: ed. A. Holder, 1858), p. 566 (Arkona). Cf. Jan Machal, *Slavic Mythology*, Vol. III of *Mythology of All Races* (Boston: 1918), pp. 279 ff., 286 f., 281-284, 295, 305, 307 ff., 311 f., and A. Brueckner in *De la Saussay's Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1925), Vol. II, pp. 510-521. Helmsold *Chron.* i. 16, 52, 69, 83.

¹⁹ H. Kees, *Aegypten* (Munich: Beck, 1933), pp. 28, 175, 177 f., 195; Ad. Erman, *Aegypten* (Tübingen: 1923), pp. 41, 59 f., 204; A. Weigall, *History of the Pharaohs* (London: 1931), Vol. I, p. 118.

²⁰ C. N. Deedes in S. H. Hooke (ed.), *The Labyrinth*, pp. 3-5, 13 f.; F. Hommel, *Ethnologie und Geographie des alten Orients* (Munich: Beck, 1926), pp. 113 f., 552 f., 751 ff., 794 ff., 935 ff., 940, 945, 948, 955; Kees, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-158, 229 ff., 325, 328-332; see esp. H. R. Hall's review of A. de Buck, *De Egyptische Voorstellingen betreffende den Oerzeevel* (Leiden: 1922) in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeol.* Vol. X (1924), pp. 185 ff.

²¹ On the rites: Plutarch *de Iside*; Herodotus *History* ii. 58-65; Deedes, *op. cit.*, Chap. I; H. Gressmann, *Tod und Auferstehung des Osiris nach Festbräuchen und Umzügen*, Bd. 23, Heft 3 of *Der Alte Orient* (Leipzig: 1923).

²² Richard Francis Burton, *Guidebook to Meccah* (New York: 1924), p. 54.

²³ *Idem*, pp. 32, 43 f.; C. Snouck-Hurgronje, *Het Mekkaansche Feest* (Leiden: 1899); J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums* (Berlin: 1897), pp. 84-94. Arabic literature is full of the great assemblies of men, jinns, animals, birds, etc., the most impressive treatment of the theme being in the text edited by Fr. Dieterici, *Thier und Mensch vor dem König der Genien* (Leipzig: 1881), *passim*.

the prophets, that place was the seat of a great assembly and of the royal year-drama, of which many echoes survived in the Bible.²⁴ The records from Ras Shamra describe the same rites in ancient Syria,²⁵ and early Christian writers tell of other great assemblies in the desert.²⁶

The most complete descriptions of the year-rites, as of the hierocentric doctrine, have been supplied by the Babylonian investigators, to one of whom (Father Burrows) we are beholden for the term "hierocentric" as that which best describes those cults, states, and philosophies that were oriented about a point believed to be the exact center and pivot of the universe.²⁷ Dumont and Albright have collaborated to demonstrate the essential—prehistoric—identity of the earliest Babylonian rite with the greatest festival of India, the Asvamedha.²⁸ But perhaps the most brilliant of all the great assemblies took place at the Persian Nauroz—continuing the very ancient practices described in the Avesta and the Veddas—when all the world followed the Royal Road to the presence of the king to present their gifts and feast as his guests on his birthday, the New Year, the only day on which his glory was visible.²⁹ The great annual assemblies at the courts of the Mongol Khans and the Chinese emperors, to which we shall refer below, follow the identical pattern. It also occurs in the New World and among primitive tribes.³⁰

THE KINGLY CALLING

But granted that these great assemblies did take place, and that the rites were far too peculiar and elaborate to have been independently invented in a hundred different places, what then? The dominant posi-

²⁴ A. R. Johnson, "The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus," in *The Labyrinth*, pp. 73 ff.; and also E. Burrows, *ibid.*, pp. 53 ff.; A. J. Wensinck, "The Semitic New Year and the Origin of Eschatology," *Acta Orientalia* Vol. I (1922), pp. 158, 176; J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Gesch. Israels* (Berlin: 1899), pp. 18 ff., 84, 85, 104 ff.; A. Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients* (Leipzig: 1916), pp. 647 ff. That there was originally only one festival, see A. Brockelmann, "Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie zu dem ursprünglichen Passahopfer," *Archiv fuer Religionswissenschaft*, Vol. XXXI (1934), 272 ff.

²⁵ "Our Ras Shamra text affords the prototype of New Year's rituals still surviving in Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.," says T. H. Gaster, "Ras Shamra, 1929-39," *Antiquity*, Vol. XIII, No. 5 (1939), p. 316. Widely identified with other rites by T. Gaster, "The Story of Aqhat," *Studia Materiali nel Istoria delle Religione*, Vol. XII (1936), 127 ff. See, especially, Lucian *Dea Syria*.

²⁶ E.g., that at Abraham's Oak in Mamre, *Sozomen Hist. Eccl.* ii. 4 (Migne, *Patrol. Graec.* 67. 941 ff.), and Eusebius *Vita Constantini* iii. 53 *ibidem.*, Vol. 20, p. 1,116.

²⁷ Eric Burrows in *The Labyrinth*, pp. 46 ff.; H. Zimmern, *Das Babylonische Neujahrsfest*, Vol. 25, *Mittheilungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft* (Leipzig: 1926); A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, chaps. iii, and vi. For the Semitic version, M. Jastrow, "Sumerian and Akkadian Views of Beginnings," *Am. Or. Soc. Jnl.* Vol. XXXVI (1917), p. 276 ff.

²⁸ W. F. Albright and P. E. Dumont, "A Parallel between Indic and Babylonian Sacrificial Rites," *Am. Or. Soc. Jnl.*, Vol. LIV (1934), pp. 107 ff. P. E. Dumont, *L'Asvamedha* (Paris: 1927), is the classic treatment of the subject. On the Indian "navel of the earth," see A. Coomaraswami, "The Pilgrim's Way," *Jnl. of the Bihar and Orissa*, December, 1937, p. 457, and E. W. Hopkins, "The Divinity of Kings," *Am. Or. Soc. Jnl.*, Vol. LI (1931), pp. 309, 311.

²⁹ Al-Biruni, *Chronologie*, ed., C. E. Sachau (Leipzig: 1923), pp. 221 ff., 226 f., 230; Herodot. *Hist. ix. 114*; Athenaeus iv. 145a; C. Clemens, *Religionsgesch. Europas*, Vol. I, pp. 181 ff.; A. J. Carnoy, *Iranian Mythology*, Vol. VI of *Mythology of All Races* (Boston: 1917), pp. 259 ff., 293, 297, 299 ff., 301 ff., 307 f., 313 ff., and "Iranian Views of Origins," *Am. Or. Soc. Jnl.* Vol. XXXVI (1916), pp. XX f.

³⁰ Thus among the Quechua of Peru, Paul Radin, *Social Anthropology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1923), pp. 85-90, and the Baganda, *idem.*, pp. 82 ff.

tion of the king in the hierocentric rites suggests the kingly office as the natural point of departure for further examination of the origin and survival of the system.

Within recent years a number of important studies have appeared treating of the sacral kingship as a single uniform institution throughout the Ancient East.³¹ The orthodox conceptions of kingship are not legion but only one, which is clearly restated by each monarch in his turn.

From the beginning Pharaoh is "ruler of all that which is encircled by the sun,"³² he is "the son of God, none can resist him; all people are subject to him, his bounds are set at the ends of the earth," to him the gods "have promised world dominion."³³ In Babylonia where "the earthly was a counterpart of the heavenly monarchy, but distinct,"³⁴ Naramsin called himself "King of the Four Regions" and "King of the Universe." Goetze says that the *Weltreich-Idee* was first carried out in practice by those Semitic conquerors who made Akkad the *Mittelpunkt der Welt* at about 2600 B.C. Whether or not this actually was the first world empire, from that time on every state in the East *erstrebt für sich theoretisch die Weltmacht*.³⁵ The Assyrian King duly called himself "King of the four quarters of the world, the sun of all peoples . . . conqueror of the faithless . . . whose hand conquered all who refused him submission . . . whose priesthood in the temple and rule over all peoples, Enlil made great from days of old";³⁶ and described his divine calling and mission as that of forcing all the world "from the rising of the sun unto the setting of the same . . . to acknowledge one supremacy."³⁷ The earliest kings of Elam and Suza also described themselves as "King of the four regions," and "exalted messenger and high-commissioner of heaven,"³⁸ even as the later Achaemenids, "lords of all people, from sunrise to sunset," felt obliged to conquer all the world for Ahura Madza, to whose rule every enemy was invited to submit before being attacked.³⁹ As late as 1739 a Persian shah could stamp upon his money: "O coin, announce

³¹ To works cited *supra*, add C. J. Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient East* (Schweich Lectures 1945, London: 1948), and H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods; A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religions as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

³² A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford: 1927), p. 74; Alex. Moret, *Histoire de l'Orient*, Vol. I (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1941), p. 213.

³³ Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, Vol. II (Stuttgart: 1909), pp. 72, 113; Kees, *op. cit.*, pp. 172 ff.

³⁴ Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule*, p. 34.

³⁵ Moret, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 355, 357. A. Goetze, *Hethiter, Churriter und Assyrer* (Oslo: 1936), pp. 15 f., 39 f.

³⁶ D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), Vol. I, *passim*.

³⁷ *Idem.*, pp. 170, 185.

³⁸ C. Huart and L. Delaporte, *L'Iran Antique*, etc., Vol. XXIV of *L'Evolution de l'Humanité* (Paris: Michel, 1943), pp. 115 ff.

³⁹ Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. d. Altertums*, Vol. IV (Stuttgart: 1944), p. 21; Huart and Delaporte, *op. cit.*, pp. 289, 380.

to all the earth the reign of Nadir, the King who conquers the world."⁴⁰

The Roman emperor is, from the first, *virtutum rector* of the world, *salus orbis, Romae decus . . . magnus parens mundi*,⁴¹ etc., after the pattern of the old sacral kings.⁴² The basic doctrine of Hellenistic kings is that every true king is a universal king; the divine urge of kings cannot be satisfied with anything less than the world because Zeus the world-king is the only model for them.⁴³ The Byzantine emperor, bearing the titles and insignia of the Persian kings in conscious imitation, was "by definition the master of the universe." "*Il a pour devoir . . . de propager la foi orthodoxe à travers toute la terre habitée, dont Dieu . . . lui promet la domination*";⁴⁴ and he tells his son that God has placed his throne "like the sun before Him. . . . He hath given to thee as worthy His own dominion over all men."⁴⁵

Abscondat solem, qui vult abscondere regem! cries a medieval panegyrist of the French king,⁴⁶ who claimed to be the true successor of the emperor and nothing less than "king of kings and the greatest of princes under heaven."⁴⁷ The great Attila called himself *totius mundi principem* in the firm conviction that the miraculous finding of the sword of Mars that he bore was a sign from heaven that he should rule the world.⁴⁸ He was greatly incensed when he learned that a Roman ambassador had declared him to be only a man, while Justinian was a god.⁴⁹ In the sixth century, the Khagan of the Turks declared that "all the earth from the rising to the setting of the sun is his inheritance, and all who have dared oppose the Turks have been duly enslaved."⁵⁰ A thousand years before, when Darius demanded that a Scythian king bring him earth and water, the latter replied that as a descendant of God he was the only legitimate ruler.⁵¹ The ninth and tenth centuries of our era saw an epidemic

⁴⁰ S. Hedin, *My Life as an Explorer*, trans. A. Huebsch (Garden City, New York: 1935), p. 85. In 562 A.D., Chosroes called himself "divine, beneficent, King of Kings, giant of giants, whose nature is from the gods," etc., Menander de legat. ad gentes, in Migne Patrol. Graec. CXIII, 860.

⁴¹ Optatianus Porphyrius *Carmina* ii; cf. Claud. Namat. de reditu suo i. 47 ff., 61 ff.; Aelian Aristid. *Encom. Romae* 30, 72, 77, 221 ff.; Propertius *Eleg.* III, i; IV, ii, vi; Claudian *Bel. Get.*, end; Horace *Odes* III, v; IV, ii, etc.

⁴² Horace *Carm. Saec.*; Virgil *Aeneid* vi. 793 ff.; *Eclg.* iv. On the hierocentric idea, *Janus est mundus et mundus quattuor partibus constat . . . Augustinus Civit. Dei* vii. 8-9.

⁴³ Dio Chrysostom. *Orat.* i. 37; ii. 75; iv. 4; xiv. 23; xxxvi. 22 f., 36; lvi. 4 f.

⁴⁴ C. Diehl and G. Marcais, *Le Monde Oriental de 395 à 1453*, Vol. III of *Histoire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1928), pp. 55 f., 487-495.

⁴⁵ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando Imperio*, introd., Migne Patrol. CXIII 160, with much more to the same effect.

⁴⁶ Günther, cited in Ducange, *Dissert.* No. v, p. 20, unconsciously quoting Esarhaddon: "Where shall a fox go to escape the sun?" Luckenbill, *Anc. Rec.* II, 210, No. 523.

⁴⁷ Ducange, *Dissert.* xxvii, "De la prééminence des Rois de France au-dessus des autres Rois de la Terre," pp. 112-115.

⁴⁸ Jordanes *Hist. Getarum* chap. 35.

⁴⁹ Priscus Rhetor, *De legat. Rom. ad Gent.* iii, in Migne Patrol. Graec. Vol. CXIII, pp. 708, 716.

⁵⁰ Menander, *de legat. Rom.*, chap. 14, in Migne, *op. cit.*, Vol. CXIII, p. 904 (575 A.D.).

⁵¹ Herodotus *Hist.* iv. 126.

of world-kings in hither India, Cambodia, and Java, all of whom "*ambitionnaient d'être souverains universels*," mystically identical with the universal God himself, for whom they sent out their missionaries to win the world.⁵²

When the papal legate Ezzelino announced at the court of the Great Khan that his master was "placed high above all the kings and princes of the world, and . . . is honored by them as their Lord and Father," his Mongol hosts held their sides with laughter; the nonentity in the West was claiming to be exactly what *their* Khan obviously was in reality.⁵³ "The sky had ordered me to rule all nations," was the sincere pronouncement of Chingis Khan, Sauto-Bogdo, the God-sent, "whose word was heaven's will."⁵⁴ To his successor, he says: "Emirs, Khans, and all persons shall know that I have delivered over to you the whole face of the earth from sunrise to sunset. All who . . . oppose . . . shall be annihilated."⁵⁵ At the same time the pontiffs of Rome were stating like claims in like words, and when the Pope's messenger told Kuyuk that all princes were subjected to his master, the latter answered: "The might of the Eternal Heaven had given the Khagan all lands from sunrise to sunset, and failure to obey his commands was a *crime against God*. . . . Any who made the slightest resistance would be annihilated and exterminated." His seal bore the inscription: "God in heaven, and Kuyuk Khan upon earth, the power of God: the seal of the emperor of all men."⁵⁶

When the Khan's emissaries bore this doctrine to the court of the Caliph (as the pope's legates had to his), the latter countered with the identical doctrine: "You have become in your own eyes the Lord of the Universe, and think that *your* commands are the decisions of fate. . . . Do you not know that from East to West those who worship God, from kings to beggars, are all the slaves of this court?"⁵⁷ The corollary to this being the doctrine that "war against those who are not Moslems is a solemn obligation to God. . . . It is a duty to attack the infidels, even though they may have committed no act of aggression." All the world must be repeatedly invited to accept Islam, and whoever refuses must be wiped out by all possible means.⁵⁸ By the end of the tenth century the Caliphs

⁵² R. Grousset et al., *L'Asie Orientale des Origines au XV^e Siècle*, Vol. X of *Histoire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1911), pp. 351 ff., 355 ff., 361 f., 364, 367, 369, 392, 426 ff.

⁵³ Mich. Prawdin, *The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy*, trans. E. and C. Paul (London: Allen Unwin, 1940), p. 283.

⁵⁴ B. Vladimirov, *The Life of Chingis-Khan*, trans. D. S. Mirsky (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), pp. 65 f.; Prawdin, *Mongol Empire*, p. 367.

⁵⁵ Prawdin, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 282. On the seal, Giovanni P. Carpini, *History* xxvi, in M. Komroff, ed., *Contemporaries of Marco Polo* (New York: Liveright, 1928), p. 44, and Marco Polo, *Travels* II, iii.

⁵⁷ R. Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades* (Paris: Plon, 1936), Vol. III, p. 569.

⁵⁸ E. F. C. Rosenmueller, *Institutiones Iuris Mohammedani circe Bellum contra eos qui ab Islamo sunt alieni* (Leipzig: 1825), Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5.

had under Turkish influence and with the aid of the court theologians preempted the tremendous titles of the Persian kings and announced that "all the world must follow the guidance of the Commander of the Faithful."⁵⁹

In China, the Ming emperors after the expulsion of the Mongols "took over the claim to world dominion," and "sent embassies to every country over which Kublai Khan had once held sway, demanding instant submission."⁶⁰ At the other end of the Mongol world, Tamerlane sought to fulfill the prophecy that he "with the might of his sword, will conquer the whole world, converting all men to Islam."⁶¹ Even then the Grand Prince of Moscovy was preparing to assume the might and glory of the Golden Horde and to call himself God's chosen one and "the only orthodox sovereign in the world."⁶²

All these sample claims, it will be noted, are one and the same. There is no variety among them, no nuances or fine distinctions and shadings such as one might expect. There are other royal claims, but this is the common doctrine of the great conquerors. It is clear and unequivocal in each case: (1) the monarch rules over *all* men; (2) it is God who has ordered him to do so and, significantly, none claims authority as originating with himself, but even the proudest claims to be but the humble instrument of heaven;⁶³ (3) it is thus his sacred duty and mission in the world to extend his dominion over the whole earth, and all his wars are holy wars; and (4) to resist him is a crime and sacrilege deserving no other fate than extermination. The most obvious corollary of this doctrine is that there can be only one true ruler on earth. "The eternal command of God is this," wrote Mongu Khan to Louis IX, "in heaven there is one eternal God; on earth there is no other master than Chingis Khan, the Son of God."⁶⁴

In the great "provincial" cultures of Egypt,⁶⁵ India,⁶⁶ China,⁶⁷ and, as we shall see, of Europe also, this doctrine of kingship appears not as a local invention but clearly as an importation from the steppes of Asia. That is true even of Islam. When, in 979 A.D., the king of the Turks

⁵⁹ A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams* (Heidelberg: 1922), pp. 132 f., 136, 332.

⁶⁰ Prawdin, *op. cit.*, p. 369. "According to Chinese political philosophy there could be in the world only one rightful 'Emperor,' however many kings there might be." Thus W. M. McGovern, *The Early Empires of Central Asia* (Chapel Hill: 1939), p. 321.

⁶¹ Prawdin, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 512-518.

⁶³ A. Mueller, *Der Islam in Morgen- und Abendland* (Berlin: 1885), Vol. II, p. 268, gives a psychological explanation for this phenomenon.

⁶⁴ William of Rubruck (Rubricus), Chap. 53, in M. Komroff, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 188 f.

⁶⁵ Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. d. Altertums*, Vol. II, pp. 72, 311.

⁶⁶ Grousset, *L'Asie Orientale*, p. 42: "La notion du monarque universel ou *tchakravartin* . . . provient des vastes dominations de l'Asie Antérieure."

⁶⁷ McGovern, *Early Empires*, pp. 224, 245, 255, 268, 288, 294.

and Deilemites kissed the earth before the feet of a newly elected caliph, a Moslem general standing by cried out in horror: "O King, is that God?" But the new caliph was much pleased by this custom of the plains, and in time this Central Asiatic king-worship became a permanent fixture in Islam as in Byzantium.⁶⁸

This peculiar but universal conception of kingship may be traced ultimately to Central Asia through, among other things, its close association in theory and practice with the hierocentric point. The universal type of hierocentric shrine bears many marks of its origin.

MOUNTAIN AND PALACE

At every hierocentric shrine stood a mountain or artificial mound and a lake or spring from which four streams flowed out to bring the life-giving waters to the four regions of the earth.⁶⁹ The place was a green paradise, a carefully kept garden, a refuge from drought and heat. Elaborate waterworks figure conspicuously in the appointments and the rites of the holy place. The long ritualized wandering of the pilgrims through the desert, thirsting for the waters of life; the idea that the sacred place is a *Vara* outside of which all is a howling desert; the groves and the cultivated gardens where all creatures are at peace; the mighty central tree that gives shelter to all the creatures of heaven; the stories of a great snake (dragon) that haunts the place and frightens off those who come for the blessed water⁷⁰—all such things make it clear that our hierocentric shrines are supposed to represent an oasis, and forcibly bring to mind Pumpelly's theory that world civilization originated in the oases of Central Asia.

It is the water-mountain combination, artificially produced at so many important shrines, that most strongly suggests Central Asia, where the cattle-dependent nomads have always escaped the deadly drought of summer by driving their beasts to ancestral camp grounds at the source of a sacred river high in the valleys of a holy mountain. It is there that they elect their khans, and it is from there that their world empires take their rise.⁷¹ Throughout the world, those who come to the great assembly

⁶⁸ Mez, *op. cit.*, pp. 136, 130-143.

⁶⁹ Works cited *supra* (notes 4 to 29 inclusive), nearly all mention this combination, but special treatment of the theme may be found in M. Gaster, *Thespis*, pp. 138, 169-171, 185 f., 388, and by H. R. Hall in *Jnl. Eg. Archaeol.*, Vol. X, pp. 185 f.

⁷⁰ Elliot Smith and others have shown that the special business of all dragons is to prevent people from reaching water. Can this otherwise unaccountable peculiarity be explained by the retreat of amphibious monsters—snakes and saurians—to the shrinking water holes of a drought-ridden world, there to become a frightening obstacle to those who came there for the "water of life"?

⁷¹ For the literal reality of the situation among the Mongols of today, H. Haslund, *Men and Gods in Mongolia* (New York: Dutton, 1935), pp. 246, 281; the election of Chingis Khan was at such a place, (F. E. Krause, *Cingis Han . . . nach den chinesischen Reichsannalen* [Heidelberg: 1922], pp. 11, 14, 18 f., 25, 28, 30), as was that of the Mongol emperors of China, according to Marco Polo, *Travels*, II, vi. The Naimans (Krause, *op. cit.*, p. 28) and Turks (E. S. Creasy, *History of*

are supposed to drive cattle with them. The rites at Olympia and Rome were founded when Heracles drove his cattle, dying of thirst, to those places.⁷² The Babylonian counterpart of this hero is himself a seeker for water, and is shown on early seals watering his cattle from an overflowing vase.⁷³ In the north the cow Authumla stands on the mountain at the source of the four world-rivers. The Koran specifically states (Sura xxii, 28, 34, 36) that the rites of Meccah and all great assemblies are "over the cattle" which God has given men for sustenance; and, indeed, the common cult symbol of the archaic assembly is the bull's head.⁷⁴ We are reminded of the wonderful prehistoric rock pictures which, all over the world, depict the driving of great herds of cattle to holy water holes.

The seasonal aspect of the great assembly is but the beginning. The interval of a year between meetings was too much to assure firm government, and the sacred place was often too awkwardly located. So throughout the world we have a multiplication of "law-days" and "crown-days" which are but the duplication of the year rite,⁷⁵ while new and more useful assembly places supplant the old. Thus the stone of Tara to which the ancient Irish would drive their cattle at the New Year was moved to Taitiu when that became the capital, as the shrine of Delphi to which all men drove their hecatombs was later moved to Delos (Hyginus *Fab. cxl*). William of Rubruck (chap. 18) tells us that while the real holy center of the Mongols was the Ononkulitai (the ancestral burial and assembly place on the holy Altai beside the equally holy Onon River), for purposes of administration it had been supplanted by Karakorum, a centrally located roundup center to which the tribute animals could be most conveniently driven from all parts of the empire. Chingis Khan's great minister Yeliu-Ch'uts'ai had "insisted that such a fixed point was essential, so that the tribes might know to what place to send tribute, and

the Ottoman Turks (London: 1854-6), Vol. I, pp. 9 f.; Menander, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, pp. 824, 885), the Golden Horde (Carpini, chap. 25), the Armenians (Moses of Chorene, ed. Lauer, Vol. II, 40 f., pp. 101 f.), Persians (F. Spiegel, *Iranische Altertumskunde* [Leipzig: 1873], Vol. II, 53 f.; Xenophon, *Anabasis* I, ii, 7); as well as the ancient Indians (H. Bächtold-Straubli, *Handwörterbuch des dt. Aberglaubens* [Leipzig: 1927-37], Vol. VI, pp. 1418-1421; S. Hedin, *My Life*, etc., pp. 463 f., 467 f., 122) all held their great assemblies in such a setting. Hommel, *Ethnol. u. Geog.*, pp. 134, 940, compares the Indian with the Egyptian picture. The Assyrian kings built their parks "like unto Mount Amanus," with special channels "for the watering of horses." Luckenbill, *Anc. Rec.*, Vol. II, pp. 162, 170, 185, 188, 269. The Goths met in such a place (Jordanes, *op. cit.*, chap. 51), as did the Scythians before them (Herodotus iv, 52); and the Arabs believe that Mecca was transported from Adam's Mount in Ceylon, which is such a place (Marco Polo *Travels*, III, xxiii). Even the oasis of Ammon followed the plan, according to A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge: 1925), Vol. I, p. 369, as certainly did the shrine of Dodona—the oldest in Greece—which was transported from Ammon's oasis. The whole picture is given in certain Babylonian hymns; see Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, Vol. II, pp. 165, 177. The same in the ancient North, *Gylfaginning*, iv, vi, xv.

⁷² Homer *Hymn to Apollo* 57 ff.; Pindar, *Olymp. Od.* II, 1 ff., cf. I, 1 ff.; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i, 10, 12-14; Terullian *Ad Nationes* ii, 10; Augustine, *Civ. Dei* vi, 7, 2; Plutarch *Quaest. Romanae*, No. 35; Romulus, c. 4 f.

⁷³ Hommel, *op. cit.*, p. 118; H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London: Macmillan, 1939), Pl. xvii, c; p. 92; Meissner, *Bab. u. Assyri.*, Vol. II, p. 165.

⁷⁴ Hommel, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ Ducange, *Dissertationes sur . . . St. Louys*, Nos. iv, v.

come to regard it as a centre of administration."⁷⁶ Chingis Khan himself "fully realized the necessity of finding himself a safe refuge, a definite, if movable, centre, that might become a rallying point, a citadel, as it were, of his nascent empire," from which he might send out the "arrow messengers" with his orders to all the world.⁷⁷ Baghdad, says Al-Fakhri, was founded in a holy place by the "Khalif of all men" to be "the blessed city," and "the house of salvation"; but it was chosen as the most central spot in the empire to be reached with equal ease from all directions, and the tribes of the four regions were admitted to it, each by the appropriate gate.⁷⁸ Thousands of years before the Babylonian and Assyrian kings had observed the identical practice: "I founded a city in the desert, in a waste, and from its foundation to its top I completed it. A temple I builded and placed a shrine of the great gods in it . . . and I opened a road to it." Here we have a hierocentric point where the king on his throne could "receive the heavy tribute of the four regions in the city of Assur, son of Shalmaneser, King of the Universe. . . ." "I opened a palace in the city of Tushhan, the tribute of the land of Nidrun . . . I received in the city of Tushhan." "I opened a palace in the city of Tiluli and received the tribute of the land of Kutmuhi."⁷⁹ The names of the gates of such places—always facing "the four winds"—tell what they are for: when they are not proclaiming an abundance of water, they have such titles as "Bringing the Products of the Mountains," "The Gifts of the Sumu'anite and the Temite Enter Through It," "Door of the Products of the Lands," etc.⁸⁰ The oldest temple complexes in the world, at Ur and Mohenjo Daro, were such places of gathering, it is supposed.

The Persians kept the system, covering the world with scale-models of the royal palace to serve as local collection centers.⁸¹ The oldest of such shrines and collection points would seem to go back to early hunters. Xenophon (*Anab.* v, 3, 1) tells of visiting a shrine of the Asiatic hunting goddess, where hunters would come to sacrifice and the lady would feast all who brought their tithes with bread, wine, and meat as they camped in their booths in the sacred enclosure. This shrine, he says, was an exact replica of the great central temple of the goddess at Ephesus. The picture of the prehistoric Anahita (the same goddess to whom Xenophon refers) is a genuine piece of Steppe-lore: clothed in magnificent furs and gold, the lady rides in her great wagon from one of her thousand castles to the next, each castle having a hundred windows and a throne for Anahita,

⁷⁶ Prawdın, *Mongol Empire*, p. 205; cf. p. 239.

⁷⁷ Vladimirtsov, *Life of Chingis-Khan*, p. 38.

⁷⁸ Al-Fakhri, *Al-Adab as-Sultaniyah wa-ad-Daulat al-Islamiyah* (Cairo), pp. 117, 119.

⁷⁹ Luckenbill, *Anc. Rec.*, Vol. I, pp. 295 f., 59, 156, 154.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 170, 171, 190, 268, 314, etc.

⁸¹ Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. d. Altert.*, Vol. IV (1944), pp. 49, 55; Herodotus, i, 95; Xenophon *Anab.* iv, 4, 4.

and standing in a cultivated oasis.⁸² Eyewitnesses have at wide intervals of time reported the activities of just such great ladies of the steppes, riding upon their wagons from castle to castle.⁸³

In Asia, whoever will found an empire must first have a palace and a city. Xenophon himself was suspected of planning to have his soldiers settle down, and found a city which would be named after him, and from which he could spread abroad his *dynamis* in all directions (*Anab.* v. 6, 17). This was long before Alexander the Great did the same thing. It is the immemorial Asiatic pattern. We are told that patriarchs of the race did it in the beginning,⁸⁴ and, as late as the 1920's, the holy man Dambin Jansang built a mighty fortress in the midst of the Gobi from which he actually dominated all of Central Asia.⁸⁵ The "characteristic Central Asiatic city," according to a modern observer, is a cluster of buildings and tents about a super-palace, built to be the administrative center of all the vast empty spaces around.⁸⁶ Archaeology has shown this to have been the normal order in prehistoric times, when the city was already but an appendage of the palace, and the palace was a combination fort, shrine, and trading center, like any real hierocentric point.⁸⁷ All organized society was centered at that place which bore the name of "the god, the tribe, and the capitol, where the ancestral power was concentrated."⁸⁸ When this fell, the empire fell too; and so we have the concept of Babylon, founded by Nimrod, the mad hunter, the plunderer and enslaver of all the earth, full of "beasts and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves and the souls of men," that perishes in a day (*Rev.* xviii).

KINGS AS HUNTERS AND NOMADS

We have remarked elsewhere that "Kings must be Hunters."⁸⁹ The royal hunt of Asia is a great *battue* in which all the animals are driven by a converging ring of soldiers to that spot in the very center of the contracting circle, where the king sits on his throne on a green mound. There the king slays the beasts he chooses and gives his "peace" to the rest,

⁸² Spiegel, *Eranische Altertumskunde*, Vol. II, p. 106.

⁸³ Xenoph. *Cyropaedia* III, i, 8; Priscus in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, 720 f.; Jordanes, chap. 10 (cf. Herodot. I, 205 ff.); the best description is in Ibn Batuta, *Rihlah* (Cairo, A.D. 1357), Vol. I, p. 214.

⁸⁴ Thus Adam, Cain, and Noah, *Book of Jubilees* iv. 9, following the divine pattern, *Sibyll.* iii. 772, 776. Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule*, p. 6, comments on the strange persistence of building motifs in the earliest creation legends.

⁸⁵ Haslund, *Men and Gods in Mongolia*, pp. 151 f., 156. Cf. the case of the Hun Juji in 43 A.D., McGovern, *Anc. Empires*, p. 191.

⁸⁶ Mildred Cable, *The Gobi Desert* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), p. 133. Cf. Haslund, *op. cit.*, pp. 125, 128; Huart and Delaporte, *Iran Antique*, p. 307; Priscus, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, 725 (Attila's palace).

⁸⁷ G. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, Vol. I of *A History of Russia* by G. Vernadsky and M. Parpovich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 237 ff., 248; cf. 292.

⁸⁸ Moret, *Histoire de l'Orient*, Vol. I, p. 278.

⁸⁹ "The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State," *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. II (September, 1949), p. 343.

which thereby become sacrosanct under his protection.⁹⁰ Human beings are treated in exactly the same manner. After viewing a tremendous animal drive significantly, remarks to his officers: ". . . and when *people* regard us as enemies and neither send up soldiers nor tribute, we hunt *them* with all our might!" (*Xen. Cyrop.* III, I, 17f). Xenophon loves to dwell on the absolute identity of war and hunting in the Asiatic economy (a doctrine dear to the Mongols): the ruling nation is simply a moving army in the field; when it is not hunting men it is hunting animals, and vice versa. Carpini (chap. vi) tells how Chingis Khan ". . . became a mighty hunter. He learned to steal men, and take them for prey. He ranged into other countries taking as many captives as he could, and joining them to him," and so conquered the world. That is exactly how the kings of Babylonia and Assyria describe their own activities. There is no contradiction, incidentally, in a people being at the same time hunters and cattle raisers. Ammianus (31.2) notes, for example, that though the Persians, Scythians, and Alans drove their huge herds before them wherever they went "like perpetual fugitives," they still lived by hunting animals and plundering humans. Certainly the oldest kings of the East described their wars as super cattle and slave raids, in which wild beasts, domestic cattle, and human beings are driven in common herds to the holy palace and shrine of the god.⁹¹

This is the old story of Nimrod, who revolted against God, "became a hunter of men," and founded that abominable state from which all the kings of the earth take their authority.⁹² Even Apollo was in the beginning a deadly hunter who came from the steppes of Asia (the land of the Hyperboreans) and slew the great serpent that guarded the holy spring of Delphi, so that he could gain control of the spot to which all the Greeks brought their tribute, and thereby became their ruler.⁹³ So, too, Othinn is pictured in the beginning as a conquering nomad from the East, who rides into new lands to conquer them, hold games, and receive tribute; joining with the Asia-manna, "formerly called the Aesir" (the As or Alans), he built the castle, Sigtunir, and held his great assembly where those twelve judges officiated "who before had been at Troy and were of the Turkish race."⁹⁴ All of which points again to the steppes.

A nomad origin alone can account for the most paradoxical aspect of all the hierocentric shrines, namely their universal mobility. Every great

⁹⁰ Prawdin, *Mongol Empire*, p. 185; Vladimirtsov, *Life of Chingis-Khan*, pp. 51 f.

⁹¹ Luckenbill, *Anc. Rec.*, Vol. I, pp. 82, 86, 87, 121 f., 189, 271; Vol. II, p. 392.

⁹² *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Nimrod"; Clementine Homily ix, 4 (*Patrol. Graec.* Vol. II, p. 244); A. Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament*, pp. 158 f.; *Bk. of Jasher* vii. 39-46; ix. 20 ff.

⁹³ Hom. *Hymn. Apoll.*, 370 (192) ff.; Eurip. *Iphig. Taur.* 1234-1282.

⁹⁴ Snorri, *Edda*, *Formali chaps.* 10-11.

shrine, while claiming to be the very point of origin of all things, had its founding legend telling how it was transferred through the air from some distant place.

Furthermore, the doctrine that the seat of world dominion, ever since it was sent down in the beginning from heaven, has moved from place to place among the nations, now centered in one city and now in another, is stated in one of the earliest Sumerian texts; and, following Persian patterns, enjoys great popularity among Jewish and Christian apocryphal writers. Related to this concept is the universal custom requiring the king at his coronation to found a new palace and a new city to be the center of the earth. This, again, seems the direct antithesis of belief in an ageless holy shrine marking the one and only center of the universe; but, again, it is a doctrine that the nomads of the steppes must subscribe to. If palace-temple complexes must be built as the only way of "binding down" the conquered and organizing the empire, the necessary mobility of the nomad conquerors would force them to shift their main center from time to time, thus producing duplication. "*Les tribus allaient de place en place, tandis que les dieux restaient dans les sanctuaires. Il fallait s'y rendre*," hence, of course, pilgrimage is still a general and natural institution, and not merely a ritual in Central Asia. The fact that all visitors to all hierocentric shrines must dress and act as pilgrims from afar is a clear enough indication of the nomadic nature of the institution.

As is well known, the oldest temples were tents or huts of reed matting or some other light material. The nomads of Asia still employ these light tent-temples which, like the ark of Israel, move about with them on their wanderings. As soon as such a temple is set up, it promptly becomes a center of pilgrimage.⁹⁶ Here we have a practical explanation for what, in the rest of the world, is purely ritual; namely, the setting up of a sacred booth to serve as the main shrine during the year-rites. Again, the fact that the Jewish writers describe the throne of God (certainly the most stable thing in the universe) as mounted on wheels is indeed perplexing, until one reads that the thrones of the Great Khans were likewise on wheels, so that they could be drawn along by horses or oxen when it came time to move the camp.⁹⁷ The apocryphal picture of God entering paradise perfectly reproduces the scene of the khagan arriving at the summer *kurultai*. The Almighty rides into the glorious meadows on a huge wagon which comes to a halt under the great central tree of life, while all the people sing joyful hymns of welcome.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Moret, *Hist. de l'Orient*, Vol. I, p. 298.

⁹⁷ Haslund, *Men and Gods*, p. 310, chaps. xv and xvi. There were Christian tent churches to match these temple tents, Grousset, *Hist. des Croisades*, Vol. III, pp. 564, 722; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, trans. E. A. W. Budge (Oxford: 1932), Vol. I, p. 505.

⁹⁸ Dan. vii. 9; *Book of Enoch* xiv. 18; Menander, *de legat.*, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, p. 885; Odoric of Pordenone, *Journal*, chap. 12 (in Komroff, *Contempts. of Marco Polo*, p. 239).

⁹⁹ *Book of Adam and Eve* xxii. 3; *Secrets of Enoch* viii. 3.

Paradoxically enough, the idea of a hierocentric point is far more often brought to the minds of nomads than of sedentary people. The royal court of the Mongols is "called in their language *horda*," says William of Rubruck (chap. 21), "which signifies, the *middle*; because the governor or chieftain among them dwells always in the middle of his people." Every schoolboy knows (or once knew) that the Northern king who went into battle surrounded by concentric rings of warriors—the "shield-wall"—was an object of sacred trust; also that such an order of battle is a tactical absurdity—except on the open plains, where it has always been standard with the kings of Asia.⁹⁹ Many observers have described the meticulous care with which the Asiatic nomads orient their camps to the four cardinal points—the basic hierocentric idea. And what is more natural than that wanderers over the featureless plains should be ever concerned with taking their bearings in the universe? Herodotus (iv, 158) tells us that when Asiatic colonists went out at the command of Delphi to found the kingdom of Libya, their leader pointed to the spot where the new capitol was to stand with the order: "Here we must stop for here is the axis of heaven!"

The institution of royal progress in which the monarch moves like the beneficent sun in a tireless round among his people is another Asiatic practice. The Persian kings were constantly on the move between their various summer and winter palaces, and medieval travelers have described how all of Central Asia migrated with the seasons. This is simply the necessary seasonal nomadism of the grass-seeking cattle people, and the royal progress is really royal nomadism.¹⁰⁰

The proper business of all kings, when not sitting on the throne, is war and the hunt, both requiring the nomadic way of life. Tournaments and fairs are no less an occasion for camping out; and even when the king must live indoors, his palace walls, covered with tapestries and skins, are made to look as tentlike as possible.¹⁰¹ Indeed the royal throne, like the royal bed (which in Asia is identical with it)¹⁰² ordinarily stands under a canopy which is nothing but a "Turkish" tent.¹⁰³ "A recent discovery,"

⁹⁹ Jordanes, chap. 49 (the shield-wall duplicated in the funeral-ring, *ibid.*, chap. 40); Ammianus Marcellinus *Bel. Get.* xxxi. 2; 7-8, 12; Xenophon *Anab.* I, viii. 12; Huart and Delaporte, *Iran Antique*, p. 380; William of Rubruck, chap. 29, p. 124.

¹⁰⁰ Attila moved constantly from palace to palace, accompanied by his mighty host, "in the manner of the Scythians," says Priscus, *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, p. 720. Cf. For the same picture, William of Rubruck, chap. 12, p. 76, and Ammianus *Bel. Get.* xxxi. 2.

¹⁰¹ Odoric, *Journey*, chap. 11 (p. 237), see note 102.

¹⁰² Attila sat on heaped-up rugs and cushions (Priscus, *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, p. 732), and his dining hall was hung with curtains and rugs "like a Greek or Roman bridal bed," (*ibid.*, 737). Batu's throne was "like a bed," (William of Rubruck, chap. 3, 21 [pp. 61, 99]), and Scacatar "sat upon his bed holding his guitar in his hand, and his wife sat by him" (*ibid.*, chap. 12, p. 77). Ibn Batuta, *Rihlah* I, 26 f., actually calls the Khan's throne a *firash* (bed). Cf. the *Divan, Lit. de Justice*, etc.

¹⁰³ The throne must be covered by a tent (Menander, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, p. 885), and, indeed, "the canopied throne is part of the original equipment of the primitive nomad tent-temple," according to Haslund, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

writes Gadd, "has revealed that the later Assyrians described their earliest princes as 'kings living in tents,' and the same phrase, occurring at the end of Babylonian history . . . indicates that this means chieftains of desert tribes."¹⁰⁴ This background the kings never lost. To the kings of Asia the royal tent is as much a part of the insignia as is the crown. Tamerlane in the West and the Chinese emperors in the East¹⁰⁵ built their magnificent palaces to resemble their ancestral tents. The tentlike character of the Achaemenid palaces was carried over into the mosques of the Near East and the cathedrals of Europe, so that the great domed structures that sprang up all over the world in the Middle Ages appear both in form and decoration to be reproductions of the great royal yurts of the plains.¹⁰⁶

The arts and treasures that royalty has always coveted are the arts and treasures of the nomads—textiles, jewelry, arms, animals, and slaves—all highly portable and instantly redeemable.¹⁰⁷ Louis XI, for all his absolutism, was despised by other monarchs as being "not royal," because as a European he saw where his true wealth lay. An Asiatic king, who must spend his whole life on the move, must carry the wealth of his kingdom on his back, so to speak, if he is to enjoy it; and this is the type of royal display that passed throughout the world as kingly. The highest expression of royal splendor is the court with its endless feasting and hunting and its display of gorgeous looted bric-a-brac by a nobility whose whole life is a military campaign. It might even be said that the Renaissance was the rediscovery of the sedentary arts—painting, sculpture, pottery, books, architecture—as against the nomadic arts of the Middle Ages, such as bardic poetry, weaving, jewelry, arms, pageantry, etc.

It is in Central Asia alone that chivalry and feudalism, like court ritual, have survived to our day.¹⁰⁸ And they are found there in the beginning. From the first, the conquerors of Asia brought the conquered under control by forcing them to farm and by building castles to watch them. The only free men are the lords, who alone may hunt or even

¹⁰⁴ *Ideas of Divine Rule*, etc., p. 36.

¹⁰⁵ Prawdin, *Mongol Empire*, p. 477: Tamerlane built his palaces like pavilions, "using them for the same purpose as his ancestors used tents." The palace at Peking was "supported" by two hundred silken tent-cords. Marco Polo, *Travels* I, lvii; II, vi; cf. Odoric, *Journey*, chap. 11, p. 237.

¹⁰⁶ Ed. Meyer, *Gesch. d. Altent.*, Vol. IV, p. 111; Diehl, *Monde Oriental*, Vol. I, p. 339; Huart and Delaporte, *op. cit.*, p. 373. The same artisans who built St. Sophia also built the Mosque of Damascus. Ibn Batuta, *Rihlah*, Vol. I, pp. 52 ff. It has often been observed that domed tents are found originally only in Central Asia, where the royal white yurt, covered with brilliant color and of enormous proportions: It is hard not to see in the "golden dome" of the Grand Khan, Ibn Batuta, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 213, the prototype of those golden domes that everywhere rose above the heads of kings and the altars of cathedrals. Marco Polo, *Travels* II, vi, speaks of what can only be colored glass windows at the court of the Khan.

¹⁰⁷ M. Hoernes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen* (Vienna: 1909), Vol. I, p. 380. Mohammedan law defines legitimate spoils as "clothes, arms, and wagons." Rosenmueller, *Inst. Jur. Moh.*, No. 28.

¹⁰⁸ S. Hedin, *My Life*, etc., p. 107, notes that the court ceremonial of Samarkand is exactly the same as described by Clavijo; and Haslund, *Men and Gods*, etc., p. 71, observed in the royal camp of the *Tarzus* "exactly the same tent arrangement as the one which Xenophon tells us was used 2,400 years before in the camp of Cyrus."

mount a horse.¹⁰⁹ They are allowed freedom of motion because they are bound to the monarch by solemn oaths—the code of chivalry is an arrangement by which a nomadic aristocracy is recruited (often from conquered enemies) and kept in leash while being allowed its freedom and enjoying the service and support of grounded serfs. Goetze has shown that chivalry and feudalism are the normal products of Central Asian economy, whence all the great empires of the second millennium B.C. adopted them.¹¹⁰ The system was taken over in the West, along with the chivalric and heraldic devices that still betray their origin by their Asiatic nomenclature, at the time when Europe, overrun by the wild hordes of Asia, was itself simply a western extension of the great Asiatic system. It never worked very well in Europe, however, as Tennyson wistfully observes, and whenever the Europeans came in contact with the real Asiatics, the latter were shocked and disgusted at the laxness, treachery, jangling and hypocrisy that made European chivalry, even for intelligent Europeans, a most obvious farce.

The typical royal court is Asiatic in its rites and appointments. In the western world those hunting parks which may not be missing from the seats of royalty are but feeble imitations at best of the stupendous paradises of the East. Europeans, familiar with the courts of the West, were simply overawed in the presence of the Great Kahns. Their courts were crude and barbaric, but they were the real thing. The Khan himself sat utterly majestic and aloof on his high throne in the dim half-light of the great dome (and what else could have inspired the Byzantine emperors to have their thrones hoisted up by derricks to the ceiling?). "Upon the right hand of the great Khan sits his first-begotten son and heir . . . and under him sit all the nobles of the royal blood. There are also four secretaries, which put all things in writing that the emperor speaks. In his presence likewise stand barons and others of his nobility, with great trains of followers after them, of whom none dare speak so much as one word . . . except his jesters and stage-players, who are appointed of purpose to solace their lord. . . . All his barons present themselves before him, with crowns and crowns upon their heads . . . some are in green, the second in red, and third in yellow; each man holds a little ivory ticket in his hand, and all wear golden girdles half a foot broad, and they stand upon their feet keeping silence." At a given signal, all fall upon their faces and touch their foreheads to the earth. Around the walls the nobility are arranged in tiers of thrones or benches, proximity to the emperor being proportionate to rank. A host of musicians hymn the monarch's praise with ceaseless and terrifying din.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Rosenmueller, *op. cit.*, Nos. 53, pp. 11, 12, 13. Only the horse makes noble; camels, mules, etc., do not count—which betrays the Central Asiatic origin of the code, *idem.*, Nos. 31, 32.

¹¹⁰ Goetze, *Hethiter, Churriter und Assyter*, pp. 39-41, 110-112.

¹¹¹ Quotation from Odoric, *Journal*, chap. 12, pp. 238, 242; cf. Priscus, *de legat.*, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, pp. 713, 737 f.; Carpini, *Hist.*, chap. 20; Menander, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, 664 ff., 885; William of Rubruck, chap. 3, p. 63; Marco Polo, *Travels*, II, x; Ibn Batuta, *Rihlah*, Vol. I, pp. 213, 218.

If the king on his throne is doing his best to imitate God on His,¹¹² we must allow the khans of Asia first prize among earthly monarchs. Here is no sad and puerile Byzantine masquerading, but an expression of tangible power: the mechanical lions of Constantinople were *real* lions before the throne of the khan. There can be no doubt that it is the Asiatic model that is followed in the apocryphal descriptions of the heavenly court, and the Byzantine court that served as the model for all of Europe was itself consciously copied from the East. The livery, for example, which is little more than a pretty conceit in the courts of Europe, has a profound significance among the nomads, as do the chivalric banners that go with it.¹¹³ When the Easter chorus in Constantinople joyfully announces that the heads of the emperor's enemies are heaped up before his feet, it is not difficult to detect a wishful imitation of the Grand Khan, for the collection of heads and scalps for the king was immemorial routine on the steppes.

As the king sits in state at the New Year (and every throne-day is but a repetition of the New Year's rites),¹¹⁴ all the world must bring its tribute and lay it at his feet. In return the king must pour out rich gifts without measure, for he is the lord of abundance and all things are his. The staggering turnover of property in the form of gifts received and bestowed has been the ruin of many a European court; but it is sound economic policy in a nation whose whole existence is an endless campaign of looting, and where it is convenient to dispose of recent plunder to another in all possible haste. The normal economy of the "barbarians" runs down, says Jordanes (chap. 56), as soon as loot stops coming in; and Bar Hebraeus (Budge, Vol. I, p. 496) has given a vivid description of the ruin of a court when its noble members abandoned their customary raids and filibusters.

THE TWO KINGDOMS

Highly characteristic of the hierocentric doctrine is an utter abhorrence of all that lies outside the system. The world inevitably falls into two parts, the heavenly kingdom and the outer darkness, a world of monsters and abortions. Whoever is not of the *frithr* is a *nithung*, without rights and without humanity. All who do not willingly submit to Alexander or Constantine are, according to Dio Chrysostom and Eusebius, mad beasts to be hunted down and exterminated. For the Roman, all the world is either *ager pacatus* or *ager hosticus*, says Varro (*Ling. Lat.* i), the only

¹¹² Edv. Lehmann in C. De la Saussaye, *Lehrb. d. Religionsgesch.*, Vol. II, p. 257. The Byzantine court went so far as to imitate flying angels: Constant. Porphyrt. *De Admin. Imp.*, in *Patrol. Graec.* Vol. CXIII, pp. 306 f.

¹¹³ The colors stand for the four quarters, Carpini, chap. 24; William of Rubruck, chap. 53 (p. 187). *Story of Ahikar*, chap. VI, v. 10-13. (On western livery, Ducange, *Dissert.* V.)

¹¹⁴ Ducange, *loc. cit.*

alternative to submission being outrageous rebellion. Anyone who resents the Roman yoke is a guilty slave, says Claudian (*Get.* 355), who should be consumed by remorse of conscience. For the Moslem, all the world is either *Dar-al-Islam* or *Dar-al-Harb*, the latter being any spot in the world that has refused to pay tribute and thereby made itself guilty of rebellion, because everything in the world without exception is the legitimate property of the Moslems.¹¹⁵ We have already noted the claim of the khans that whoever resisted them were guilty of crime against God. To Attila, those who resisted his yoke were runaway slaves (Jordanes, chap. 52), and the Assyrian kings constantly declare that whoever will not take and keep an oath to them must needs be exterminated as "wicked people" and "rebels."¹¹⁶ In a word, "the world without the 'Kingdom' remains in its state of primordial rebellion," and all who do not recognize the divine king are truly "children of destruction."¹¹⁶

Here we have the root of that dualism so characteristic of Asian theology and commonly associated with Persia. The doctrine is no mere abstraction, however: it is a condition of survival among the nomads of the steppes. Farmers may and must live in *pax*, i.e., agreement, pact, compromise;¹¹⁷ and, when they occupy a region, they divide off the land—annually and by lot, as a rule—and each proceeds to *cultiver son jardin* in a way that absorbs all his thought and energy. But when nomads clash on the open steppe, one or the other must be utterly subjected. A beaten enemy at large is free to recoup his strength, bide his time, and by a lucky chance or ruse overthrow his erstwhile conqueror—a thing that has happened a thousand times in the history of the tribes. An independent chief is therefore *aut Caesar aut nihil*; the alternative to conquering is to be a slave. "Instant submission or annihilation" is the formula, and every pastoral lord sends forth his challenge to all the world: "either fight me or submit to me." By absorbing the armies of the enemy, enslaving some and binding others to him by sacred oaths, the world conqueror builds up his world-host; "I counted them among my people," is the Assyrian expression. For there must be one people only: "With the Mongols," says Bar Hebraeus (*Chron.*, Budge Vol. I, p. 490), "there is neither slave nor free; neither believer nor pagan; neither Christian nor Jew; but they regard all men as belonging to one and the same stock. . . . All they demand is strenuous service and submission which is beyond the power. . . ." The alternative to one rule on the steppes is not only chaos but sheer nonsense. Nomads cannot be held to boundaries; and where more than one ruler

¹¹⁵ Rosenmueller, *Inst. Jur. Moh.*, Nos. 13, 16, 22, 27, 39, 47 f., 55.

¹¹⁶ R. Eisler, *Jesusus Basileus ou Basileusas* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1930), Vol. II, p. 625; A. von Gall, *Basileia tou Theou* (Heidelberg: 1926), pp. 241 f.

¹¹⁷ See W. Nestle, "Der Friedensgedanke in der antiken Welt," *Philologus, Supplementband xxxi* (1938), Heft 1, and H. Fuchs, in *Neue Philolog. Untersuchungen*, III, pp. 39 f., 115 ff.

exists, they follow whom they will and life becomes the intolerable anarchy to which each great conqueror boasts that he has at last put an end— invariably describing himself as the liberator of the human race from depraved pretenders, and the restorer of order in the world.

A natural product of this *necessary* absolutism is the notorious cruelty of the Asiatic princes which, often found in men of magnanimous and even gentle nature, seems to the Western mind nothing short of pathological. But what is one to do when a foe is not beaten until he has lost his mobility? Where oaths can be trusted, they suffice; where adequate supervision is possible, it is enough. For the rest, the only sure ways of immobilizing a dangerous enemy are by beheading, maiming, blinding, or mass transportation. The remarkable thing is that the great conquerors rarely harm a hair of anyone of whose submission they are certain, and always protest their preference for gentle and philanthropic methods. It is invariably the revolted cities and tribes, who have violated the trust and forfeited the faith of the king, that pay the terrible penalties. Moreover, the kings of Asia were sincere in believing that those who opposed them were less than human;¹¹⁸ and ages of experience justified their conviction that no creature on the loose is to be regarded as harmless while it is free to do harm if it will.

The conquering nomad must of necessity either carry all his loot with him or deposit it at guarded stations, in either case involving a serious problem of transportation and manpower. Yet whatever is left behind and unguarded may, and almost surely will, be used against the conqueror by some rival or rebel; so there is nothing for it but to destroy the stuff. The Mohammedan law (Rosenmueller, No. 17) orders that the prisoners and loot of war may not be left behind or mutilated, but if they cannot be carried home must be destroyed—killed or burned. The Huns "obliterated and smashed everything that lay in their route," but they did so reluctantly, for they almost lost a battle with the Goths rather than give up the vast burden of looted goods that was impeding their motions (Ammianus, xxxi. 3). Many have commented on the inconsistency of princes in combining a passion for collecting beautiful things with an absolute indifference to the destruction of beautiful things. It is clearly a heritage of the steppes, where the apparent paradox makes perfectly good sense. All observers have commented on the single-minded devotion of the Asiatic nomads to the accumulation of treasures (as nomads they are hungry for such things); but when their own survival is at stake, the stuff becomes dangerous impedimenta to be destroyed out of hand.

¹¹⁸ This is exhaustively demonstrated by S. Lipkin, *Manas Vielikodushnoi* (Sovietski Pisat'el, 1947), a study of the Kirghiz, in which the enemy chieftains are invariably inarticulate monsters, while the friendly ones are holy knights.

At any period of history the two top hierocentric states may be seen damning each other as Antichrist, and resembling each other like two peas. In the classic duel between Justinian and Chosroes, George of Pisidia describes the court ceremonial of Persia as a carbon copy of that of Constantinople, with the explanation that the Oriental version is but a hideous parody of the real thing. Chosroes replied in kind.¹¹⁹ This doctrine of the Two Kingdoms is already full-blown in the old Babylonian New Year's hymn, *Enuma Ilish*, in which the evil court of Tiamat is described as a perfect reflection—in reverse—of the heavenly court of Anu. Emperors, caliphs, shah-in-shahs, grand khans, popes, and kings were all at one time or another paired off against each other as rival world-rulers; while each, within his own sphere, "had to eliminate rival contenders" for his office. Always, the drama is described by their constituents as the cosmic combat between light and darkness, heaven and hell, between two opposing ideologies, antithetical ways of life while, in reality, they are identical.¹²⁰

They are identical because they are hierocentric—and that is a concept which seems almost incapable of any variety: it is always the same.

A WESTERN HERITAGE

With the decline of the Roman Empire, Europe became a battleground of the tribes: *propter gallorum terras graviter inter se decernati sunt* (Jord. chap. 58). Gibbon has told best of all the story of how the "pastoral kings" of the steppes fought each other for the control of the newly opened lands of the West, exactly as they had fought for their Asiatic grazing lands; and how the native populations were either driven like cattle (a favorite term with contemporary writers) or allowed to live on as serfs, meekly submitting to one haughty lord after another. The most powerful of these tribes, the Huns—*expeditum indomitumque hominum genus* (Ammian. xxxi, 2)—under the mighty Attila, *barbariam totam tenens* (Jordanes, chap. 34), treated Europe simply as a western province of their Asiatic empire. Attila's son Dinzio did, on European soil, exactly what every Asiatic aspirant had done before him in Asia; he rallied the remnants of the tribes about him, and tried to seize a city in Pannonia in an attempt to restore his father's *Imperium* (*idem*, chap. 53). A later descendant of Attila, Mundo, is even more typical, for he went into the most desert part of Europe and there, like Tamerlane and Chingis Khan,

¹¹⁹ Geo. Pisid. *De Expeditione Persica* II, 40 ff., in *Patrol. Graec.* XCII, pp. 1226 f.; Menander, *de legat.*, in *Patrol. Graec.* Vol. CXIII, pp. 824 f.; though the other side do everything we do, with us it is virtue; with them a base perversion. See Theodore the Alan, *Alanicus*, chap. 6, in *Patrol. Graec.* CXL, p. 393.

¹²⁰ Illustrated by the arguments and discussions in Priscus, *De Legat.* iii, in *Patrol. Graec.*, Vol. CXIII, pp. 708, 726, 728 f., 732. While the West posed as champion of liberty, everyone was fleeing to Persia: *Malunt enim sub specie captivitatis vivere liberi, quam sub specie libertatis esse captivi* (Salvian, *Gubernat. Dei* v. 5).

gathered a band of outcasts about him, no doubt making the most of his descent. He had them proclaim him king and declared war on all the world, choosing as his base of operations a tower on the Danube which was called Herta—obviously the later Mongol Horda, "the center" of dominion (chap. 58). These men, typical feudal barons, were transplanting the ways of the steppes in to the West.

The West had long been preparing to receive them, too. Generations of fighting against Alans, Gepids, Goths, and Huns, and of fighting with them shoulder to shoulder, in alliance now with one and now with the other, had transformed the Roman military state into the thing it had been fighting. Narses consciously and successfully employed not Roman but Hunnish tactics against the Franks, and the closing chapters of Jordanes show a Roman army indistinguishable from any barbarian horde. The last chapter of all makes the significant remark that the ultimate victor to emerge from the world shambles was *victor gentium diversarum Justinianus Imperator*. It was in this man Justinian that the Huns won a great and abiding victory over the West.

The Emperor Justinian displayed at all times a single-minded devotion to the Huns that puzzles and dismays his historians.¹²¹ Apparently there was nothing he would not do to please the Huns, even to the wrecking of his own foreign policy (Procop. *Anec.* xi, 12) and the ruination of trade and agriculture throughout the Empire (*Ibid.*, xxi, 26, 28; xxiii, 30; xxv, 25). A passionate devotee of the factionists, he had worn their Persian beards, Hunnish hair-do, Hunnish cloaks, Hunnish shirts, and Hunnish shoes (*Ibid.*, vii, 8, 10-14), the girdles and brooches of the steppes having already supplanted the more civilized styles of the West (*Ibid.*, vii, 18). "The greatest destroyer of established institutions that ever lived" (*Ibid.*, vi, 21), Justinian was determined to make the western world "completely change its clothes" (*Ibid.*, xi, 1); and he succeeded.

All the absurdities and contradictions in his policies vanish if we consider that this Illyrian, who hated Greek things, was set upon becoming a grand khan. He handed over the wealth of the state to the Huns "who were always turning up" at court (a significant note) in ever increasing numbers (*Ibid.*, viii, 5). He would claim for himself all the private property of the citizens, pretending that it was all being brought in to him as gifts (*Ibid.*, viii, 9), and then promptly give it all away again to the Hunnish lords before his throne (*Ibid.*, viii, 13f): a thing that made perfectly good sense to his visitors from the steppes, but appeared to his Roman subjects as "a thing that had never happened since the beginning of time" (*Ibid.*, xxx, 24). What he did not thus throw away to the

¹²¹ Agathias, *Hist.* v, 23, in *Patrol. Graec.* LXXXVIII, pp. 1589-1596; Menander, in *Pat. Gr.* CXIII, p. 853; Justinian showed this partiality even before he became emperor, according to Procopius, *Anecdot.* xi, 5.

barbarians, says Procopius (*Ibid.*, xi, 3; xxvi, 23) he wasted on absurd buildings, constructed simply to outshine all other emperors—a thing that any khan would have understood. This Hun-worship actually amounted to the enslaving of the empire, say Procopius and Agathias, but that was how Justinian wanted it. He insisted that all his subjects, from top to bottom, be called his slaves (*Ibid.*, xxx, 26), and instituted the strictly Central Asiatic style of prostration and foot-kissing (*Ibid.*, xxx, 23). He was not averse to giving the impression of being a sort of super-shaman, and apparently even adopted the well-known Mongol custom of making those who entered his presence step clear of the threshold (*Ibid.*, xii, 25). In short, "instead of acting like a Roman Emperor, he was the complete barbarian in language, dress, and thought" (Procop. xiv, 2). What more could one ask? The welcome barbarians poured into court from all directions, to the immense delight of the Emperor, who never failed to send them away loaded with gold (*Ibid.*, xix, 14), till presently "the barbarians in general became complete masters of the wealth of the Romans" (*Ibid.*, xix, 16). In the end, all the offices and officials of the state were supplanted by one office—the royal court, and by two persons—the Emperor and Empress (*Ibid.*, xxx, 30), for the new ascendancy of the Empress, intensely resented by Procopius, was the crowning Asiatic touch.

Justinian's weird innovations were no ephemeral thing. They were but the culmination of that process of Asianizing which had been deplored by the poets of the Republic. And they were there to stay. In Justinian Diehls, and indeed the ancients themselves, see the perfect type and model of the true Byzantine monarch, and his court became the model for every court of Europe. The sedentary populations of the empire, strictly forbidden to adopt the wandering ways of the conquerors, were permanently saddled with an adventurous hunting and campaigning nobility. How utterly unworkable the system was is vividly described by Fulcher, who shows how in time it led inevitably to the Crusades.¹²² In the Crusades we find the nobility of the West employing all the devices of the Asiatic with accustomed familiarity, so that Edward I can arrange for a coordinated invasion operation with his Mongol allies down to the smallest detail. The Europeans fully understood all the gadgets of the East and were as enthusiastic for a life of raiding and adventure as any Beduin. But the good side of the Asiatic system completely escaped them.

Christianity added nothing to the hierocentric doctrine as such. The early Christian theology was keenly conscious of all the imagery of hierocentric rule and ritual and above all to the contrast of the Two Kingdoms. The Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, Diognotus, Tertullian and the Pastor of Hermas tell us, it is true, that there is a universal throne—but it is not

¹²² Fulcher, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, H. Hagenmeyer, ed., I, i-vii, esp. Urban's speech, chaps. ii, iii.

on this earth. The Devil is the "Prince of this World," which is no place for the children of the kingdom—they sojourn here as pilgrims and as strangers. The conflict is not between contending parties here below, but between "this world" and the other. Our heritage and kingdom lie beyond; "here we have no abiding kingdom."

Later Christian teaching adopted the old hierocentric doctrine with enthusiasm; but it did not, as Ferrero boasts,¹²³ make it more spiritual and intellectual: the lofty ideal of the sacred universal empire is as abstract and intellectual in Horace and Virgil as it is in Dante. The vision of the universal ruler seated at the centre of the cosmos had been fully appreciated and ecstatically proclaimed by the theoreticians of Alexandria in whose steps Roman emperors and Christian thinkers willingly followed.¹²⁴ Gilson, commenting on Pope John VIII's concept of the Church, says that it was identical with the Roman Empire, having the same capital and the same idea, only *plus vaste*.¹²⁵ But what could be more *vaste* than the *urbs aequava polo* of the pagan panegyrists, equal to the universe itself? Diehl sees in Christianity the addition of a profoundly religious element to the old concept of the *Imperium*: the prince is "transformed into the elect of God." But what Cosmocrator was ever anything but just that?

In describing the new World Church as an improvement on the old system, each of these three authorities admits the Church's indebtedness to that system. The absolute predominance of the emperor, "equal to the Apostles" (*isapostolos*), God on earth, the supreme head of the Church as well as the state;¹²⁶ the great imperial councils, a thing new in the Church but, as Gelzer and Batiffol have shown, established usage in the Empire; the investiture of churchmen by the emperor with insignia originally confined to the secular administration and borrowed from the East;¹²⁷ the new ritual and liturgy so closely akin to old court ceremonies—the *laudes* echoing the old imperial acclamation and the liturgies praising God in the same set terms which the panegyrists declaimed before the emperor; the emergence of Christ, the ever-victorious crusher of his foes, as an object of terror and dread¹²⁸—such are a few of the well-documented

¹²³ G. Ferrero, *Characters and Events in Roman History* (New York: Putnam, 1909), p. 233.

¹²⁴ "Christianity had adopted the astrolgical *Weltbild* given by the East to the West," F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry* (Oxford: 1927), p. 70. One might trace the unbroken descent of the hierocentric universe from the Pythagoreans to Dante. Clement. Homil. vii (Pat. Gr., Vol. II, p. 349) is good description.

¹²⁵ E. Gilson, *La Philosophie au Moyen Age* (Paris: Payot, 1944), pp. 253 ff.

¹²⁶ C. Diehl and G. Marais, *Le Monde Oriental*, etc., pp. 487-495; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, passim (Patrol. Gr., xx); L. Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church* (London: Murray, 1931), Vol. II, pp. 518-526.

¹²⁷ L. Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chretien* (Paris, 1898), chap. ii.

¹²⁸ E.g., Liturg. S. Ignat., in *Patrol. Graec.* V, p. 972. Of course, one spoke much of the monarch's all-pervading justice and compassion (T. Silverstein, "The Throne of the Emperor Henry," etc., *Harvard Theol. Rev.* Vol. XXXII [1939], pp. 113-129), but what pagan autocrat's supporters did not do the same?

indications that the World Church of the fourth century was built upon the firm foundation of the old sacral kingship. The Armenian monk Vartan says the Christians prostrated themselves before God as the Mongols did before the Grand Khan.¹²⁹ A trip to Constantinople would have shown him that this pious prostration was not reserved for the Invisible God, but was really the old emperor-worship of Central Asia.

TO CONCLUDE

That it was the people of the steppes, engulfing the great "peripheral" civilizations in wave after wave, who imposed government upon the world Oppenheimer long ago made clear. What he failed to observe is that hunters do not always "work best alone or in small groups," but on the boundless plains have been wont to operate in vast communal *battues* from the beginning. More recently Goetze has completed the picture in describing how the Hurrians and their kind came out of the regions of the North at the end of the Third Millennium and taught the old city-states to become world empires, supplying them with the equipment for the task: the horse, the chariot, the mounted archer, and a thorough-going feudalism.¹³⁰

In China, India, Egypt, and Europe the successive waves of nomad invasion have been like recurrent attacks of a disease, each effecting a permanent change in the organism and leaving a permanent deposit behind it. The invaded civilizations, having absorbed institutions and traditions of the invaders, become increasingly susceptible to the romantic appeal of the same, and in some cases (e.g. Russia) contact between the two worlds is never broken completely.

During the darkest period of its history, when all the works of established civilization were virtually destroyed, the West reverted to a state of primordial chaos indistinguishable from that which normally prevails on the steppes of Asia. At that fatal moment the liquified resources of the West were poured, as they had often been before, into the Asian mold. The obvious solution to the Asiatic predicament was the classic Asiatic solution: with appalling meekness the officials of the Empire literally kissed the earth before the feet of worthless and arrogant emperors, while pastoral conquerors settled down to establish their accustomed economy of theft and tribute on the newly won soil of Europe.

This is the dangerous heritage of the hierocentric state. Removed from those boundless land-spaces which gave it rise and which alone offer boundless empire the hierocentric ideal becomes in practice a pre-

¹²⁹ Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades*, Vol. III, p. 565.

¹³⁰ Franz Oppenheimer, *The State*, trans. J. M. Gitterman (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1914), chap. iii; Goetze, *Hethiter, Churriter u. Assyrer*, pp. 33-42, 85-87, 96 ff., 117-120, 126-132.

tentious ritual, *pontificale et vide*; but in theory a noble dogma, a pure idea of such compelling logic, simplicity, boldness, and universal appeal as to appear nothing short of a revelation from heaven. The great Greeks, like the prophets and Apostles, saw through the imposing fraud; "God never meant that one man should rule all of cattle-raising Asia," says the ghost of Darius, addressing at once the Eastern and Western worlds from the stage at Athens. But the shallower minds of the schoolmen were lost in ecstatic contemplation of the universal king around whom all things revolve in perfect circles. No less so the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, "cabined in the Absolute," hypnotized by the overwhelming authority of the One. And so too the schoolmen of our own day. Toynbee is confident that "religion is likely to be the plane on which this coming centripetal [we would say, hierocentric] counter movement will first declare itself," and recommends above all else the study of "the part which the West has played in the unification of mankind."¹³¹

In the last chapter of his *Histoire des Croisades*, Grousset has shown how Western Europe, at the peak of its intellectual splendor, utterly failed to comprehend the enlightened world views of the Mongol khans who, strongly favoring Christianity in their own lands, were all but begging for an alliance with the Christian West by which the two could crush Islam. Significantly enough, it was the vision of world-rule itself that frustrated action. The cardinals who cross-examined Rabban Sauma would not hear of an alliance that might seem to march against the Antichrist under any other banner—Nestorian or Mongol—than their own. In 297 A.D., the Emperor Galerius haughtily rejected a generous offer of the Persians to divide the rule of the world as equals, East and West, and thus preserve the peace; the Romans, says Petrus Patricius, simply could not conceive of such a proposition as anything but sarcasm or malice. When the Persian ambassadors pointed out the risk and folly of rejecting such a golden offer, the furious emperor shouted: "The custom of my ancestors has been to spare those who submit and make war on those who don't!"¹³² That was all. It would seem that nothing can so effectively block "the unification of mankind" as that very religious "centripetal counter-movement" for which Toynbee yearns, and that the West has been less the author of such unification than its consistent wrecker.

Men seem unable to leave the dream of a hierocentric state alone. To recapitulate the six headings given above, we cannot blame people if they yearn for (1) the grandeur, color, and unity of the great assembly, (2) the lofty and uncompromising certainty of universal kingship, (3) the

sense of refuge and well-being in the holy shrine, (4) the high and independent life of a chivalrous aristocracy, (5) the luxury of hating all opposition with a holy hatred, and (6) the sheer authority of the institutions established and maintained by force. These are the strength of the hierocentric state. Its weakness is that it doesn't exist. That "son of the morning" who went up into the North, placed his throne upon the mountain of the assembly, and said, "I will be like the most high," only succeeded, we are told (Isa. 18:22 ff.) in "weakening the nations."

¹³¹ A. J. Toynbee, "The Unification of the World and the Church in Historical Perspective," *History*. Vol. XXXIII (1948), pp. 1-29; quotation from pp. 25 f.

¹³² Petrus Patricius, *De Legat.* xii. in *Patrol. Graec.* CXIII, pp. 668 f.