129. "El 'Azl": Shame-Compulsion in the Yemen

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accroupit devant le jeune homme, pratique l’opération, tandis que le quatrième aide bat furieusement le tambour, chante au plus fort de façon à étouffer les cris du nouveau circoncis. La blessure est sommairement pansée et le nouveau circoncis envoyé dans l’enclos qui leur est réservé.


Lorsque toutes les blessures sont guéries, le grand maître de l’initiation fait annoncer le retour des “Danzi.” Aussitôt les indigènes organisent la réception. Les femmes préparent le grand repas, les hommes rassemblent quantité de calebasses de vin et les jeunes filles nubiles se parent de leurs bijoux, s’enduisent de ngula et se rendent belles pour recevoir les “Danzi,” les nouveaux mâles.

Cependant au village des “Danzi” tout est en mouvement. Les nouveaux circoncis sont lavés par les aides du grand maître de la circoncision. Leur costume en raphia est remplacé par un morceau d’étoffe tissée, enduite de ngula et de mpembe. Ils se coiffent d’un masque surmonté d’une figurine animale le “Rakasa” ou taureau, symbole et esprit de la virilité que seul le “Danzi” devenu homme peut porter ce jour. Avant de quitter l’enclos de l’Inkima les “Danzi” mettent le feu aux huttes et veillent à ce que tout ce qui à été utilisé pendant l’initiation soit détruit par le feu.

Puis le cortège précédé par le grand maître de l’initiation sonnant du petit tam-tam, suivi des “Danzi” et fermé par les aides de l’initiateur, se met en route vers le village. La réception se fait au milieu des manifestations les plus diverses et les plus bruyantes. On chante, on danse, on boit et la fête dure bien tard dans la nuit. Les “Danzi” pour bien montrer qu’ils ont rompu avec l’enfance et ont abandonné leur premier nom, pour prendre le zina na Mukanda ou nom de la circoncision que le grand maître du Nkanda leur a donné lors des rites et cérémonies de l’initiation.

Fig. 2.
TAM-TAM DE L’INKIMA
VUE DE DOS.
RÉGION DE HAUT KWILU.
COLL., MR. SCHOF.

Arabia: Religion.


Last spring, while in Aden, Mukalla, and Shih, on the southern coast of Arabia, I learned of some Arab social usages which, I believe, have not yet been...
published. One of these is a Yemeni form of shame-compulsion (el azl—'ain, zal, lam), embodying some of the most important motives in Arab life.

When a man in a quarrel or feud stands in mortal need of assistance, he takes his rifle, his dagger, an animal—such as a sheep or a goat—for ceremonial slaughter, and his daughter or wife, to the dwelling of the person from whom he seeks help. Having cut the throat of the animal before the door, he fires his gun into the air and, when a crowd has gathered, lays his wife or daughter on the ground, with her head resting on the slaughtered body, and declares in formal language his abject dependence on the master of the house, presenting the woman as a guest. The host then helps her to her feet, saying to the suppliant: "I have given my protection." The principals and the people of the village enter the host's house and enjoy a feast at his expense. Only the servants, however, eat the animal formally killed by the suppliant.

The critical point is to take the host by surprise, slaying the animal at his door before he can refuse protection. This is sometimes done successfully by a murderer, compelling the relatives of his victim to grant him an amnesty. In this case such amnesty is limited to a period of months, giving the murderer time to flee from the territory, or his tribesmen time to plead for mercy in his behalf.

Since this practice brings disgrace on the suppliant—especially in placing one of his womenfolk publicly under another man's care—it is dreaded as a great 'arib, "shame," and performed only as a last resort. A far more terrible infamy, nevertheless, would brand the man who refused to grant protection under these circumstances, or who, having taken the unfortunate in, betrayed him.

Though only one example of the many types of shame-compulsion in Arabia and North Africa, this combines in a significant way such elements as "blood-sacrifice," the Arab's attitude toward women, and obligatory hospitality.

WALTER CLINE.

India: Technology.

Ancient Indian Hand-Mirrors. By K. de B. Codrington.

On one of the Bharhat-Stupa railing-pillars recently transferred to the Indian Museum, Calcutta, from Sutna, Rewa State, Baghelkhand, is the figure of a woman holding a handled mirror [Arch. Survey Rep. 1925-26, Pl. LVIII]. On the Ajanta frescoes, circular mirrors without handles are often represented. In Cave II [Victoria and Albert Museum, (I.M. 42-'85) Griffith's copy, Vol. 1, Pl. 33] one of the two women seated in the little pavilion holds a mirror, as does the standing princess in Cave XVII [I.M. 99-'87, Vol. 1, Pl. 55]. Near the latter stands an attendant holding a tray with small pots of toilet preparations. In Cave XVI [I.M. 77-'87, Vol. 1, Pl. 48], in a palace bedroom scene a circular mirror is represented as hanging by a cord from a small table on which there are more of the same toilet pots.

In the Archaeological Survey Report 1902-03, in the list of finds from urn-burials at Adittanallur, Timnevelly District, five circular bronze "plaques" with projecting tangs or central bosses are described, one of each type being illustrated [Figs. 12 and 13, Nos. 294 and 577]. The first is described as "a flat moulded plaque, 5½ in. in diameter, with flat triangular pointed handle, 1½ in. long, projecting from the rim. Around the circumference is a broad flat bead moulding, with a small concentric bead outside and another inside it. The under side is flat; the upper slightly convex." In the separately published handbook to the Adittanallur finds, this object is identified as a frying-pan. The second object is 7 in. in diameter and has a "flat fillet" ½-in. broad round the rim, and a central "knob" encircled by a bead moulding. These objects, which are of bronze, can only be mirrors. It is surprising that others have not been found, especially in northern India.

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