

THE
MALAY MAGICIAN

being
SHAMAN, SAIVA AND SUFI

*Revised and Enlarged
with a Malay Appendix*

by

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ROUTLEDGE AND KEGAN PAUL

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PREFACE

THIS book in its original shape was published a quarter of a century ago, since when research has thrown much new light on its subject. Its aim then was to employ historical and comparative data for unravelling the different elements in a complex system of magic, which scholars working in Europe are apt to summarize as Malay; its aim to-day remains unchanged, although all but three chapters of the first edition have been entirely rewritten. For the benefit of students of the language I have added in an appendix the Malay original of all spells quoted in the text.

Chronological order is difficult to observe in analysing a system which even in historical time has comprised three elements, pagan, Hindu and Muslim. Hindu influence, for example, has so infected the shaman's *séance* and sacrifice that the chapters on it precede what were parts of Malay magic in prehistoric days. In the last chapter any attempt at chronological order has been abandoned and magic is described as it is applied now to the main problems of life.

Every race has its lumber-room of magical beliefs and practices, and many such survivals are gracious and beautiful and maintain the continuity of a civilization. It is to be hoped that modern materialist ideas will not obliterate them entirely and leave Malay culture jejune.

I am indebted to Dr. Jeanne Cuisinier and the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, for my Frontispiece and Plate I, to Mr. C. A. Gibson-Hill for Plate IV; and for Plate III to Professor Raymond Firth, whom inadvertently I omitted to thank for Plates II and IV in my book *The Malays*.

I

INTRODUCTION

THIS book deals with the magic of the Federation of Malaya and the magic of Patani, a northern Malay State belonging to Siam. More especially it deals with the magic practised in the Malay States of Kelantan, Perak, Pahang, Selangor and Negri Sembilan. Kelantan was subject to Buddhist Sri Vijaya and later to strong Javanese influence dating back to its conquest by Hindu Majapahit in the fourteenth century; the Perak court is the direct successor of the fifteenth-century court of Malacca, but the state has been influenced by Bugis from Celebes and Minangkabaus from Sumatra; Pahang is an ancient state conquered by Majapahit in the thirteenth century and from the sixteenth has had Minangkabau immigrants; Selangor is Bugis in origin and Negri Sembilan was a colony of mediaeval Malacca, that became swamped by Minangkabaus.

The Malay peninsula is the most southern extremity of the continent of Asia. It has Indochina to the north. South lies the Malay archipelago. It stands midway between India and China. Nature has laid it open to many influences, though Europeans not presented with the evidence of geography, history and religions have been apt to talk as if Malay magic were unique and indigenous.

The language belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian or Oceanic or Austronesian family, which obtained from Formosa to New Zealand and from Madagascar to Easter Island. To the easternmost branch belong the languages of Samoa, Tahiti and Tonga. To the western or so-called

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Indonesian branch belong Malay, Malagasy, and languages of the Philippines, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Celebes. To the Malayo-Polynesian languages are related Khassi in Assam, Munda in central India, Mon in Burma and Siam, Khmer or Cambodian and other languages in Indochina, Nicobarese and the aboriginal languages of Malaya.

Oldest of all the races of the Peninsula are the 3,000 Semang or Pangan of Perak and Kelantan, small, dark, frizzy-haired negritos, kinsmen of the Aetas of the Philippines and the Mincopies of the Andaman Islands, nomads who in prehistoric times may have left their blood in many of the inhabitants of the Malayan region.

Later aborigines, who build houses and plant rice and millet on the mountains, are the 24,000 wavy-haired cinnamon-coloured Sakai, Indonesians related to many hill tribes in Yunnan, Indochina and the Malay archipelago. A branch of this race, the Besisi, has intermarried freely with the Jakun.

Malaya's 7,000 Jakun are straight-haired, bullet-headed representatives of the proto-Malays, and frequent the forests of Johore and Pahang. In Johore these Indonesians with a Mongoloid strain are known as Orang Benua, 'People of the Country', in Negri Sembilan as Biduanda or followers of the Sultans of mediaeval Malacca, in the modern settlement of Malacca as Mantra and in Selangor as Blanda. The coastal tribes are called Orang Laut or 'Men of the Sea'.

All three aboriginal races show marks of intermarriage and in addition exhibit an Australo-Melanesoid strain due to contact with ancestors of the Australians and Papuans who passed from Indochina down the Malay peninsula some 8,000 years ago.

The civilized or deutero-Malays descended from Yunnan some 4,000 or more years ago, a proto-Malay people who spread over Indochina and thence down the Peninsula to

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the Malay archipelago, to intermarry during the last 2,000 years with Chinese, Cambodians, Indians, Arabs and all the other foreigners of innumerable small ports.

Before the beginning of the Christian era Indian traders had already visited Malaya, to be followed soon by Brahmins and monks who brought the Hindu religion and Buddhism to its pagan animists. Sanskrit inscriptions attest the presence of Buddhists in Kedah as early as the fourth century A.D. From the eighth to the fourteenth centuries a Malayo-Buddhist kingdom, Sri Vijaya, dominated the Malacca Straits from Kedah and the northern states, and patrolled the Sunda Straits from Palembang. Then the Thai wrested the north of Malaya from Sri Vijaya, and Hindu Majapahit wrested the south. A rough granite monolith from Trengganu inscribed with Muslim law in a mixture of Sanskrit and Malay and in Arabic script proves the arrival of Islam on the east coast as early as the fourteenth century, and at the beginning of the next century Indians contrived to make it the state religion of Malacca.

A country affected by so many alien influences has had little appeal for the professional anthropologist, who prefers to study the intact customs of primitive tribes. His attitude generally has been that of the Malay who considers that in a perfect state of preservation a neolithic celt has life, but chipped or damaged is dead. This aesthetic liking for the perfect specimen, even of a society, is natural, though if there exists any tribe completely fossilized the study of it would throw no light on the development of the human intelligence, which is one of the prime interests of anthropology.

However, whatever may be the best approach to the study of magic and early religion, the student of the Malay race can exercise no preference. For a people's adaptability to a changing world could hardly be better illustrated than it is by the history of the Malays who during the last 2,000

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years have accepted the ideas of two great civilizations, the Hindu and the Muslim, without abandoning their own pre-historic paganism. That paganism can be reconstructed directly from study of backward tribes in Assam, Indochina and the Malay archipelago and, viewed more widely, is of a piece with the paganism of all the races from southern India to China. What has been written of every Dravidian village is true of every Malay village. It is believed to be 'surrounded by evil spirits, who are always on the watch to inflict diseases and misfortunes. . . . They lurk everywhere, on the tops of palmyra trees, in caves and rocks, in ravines and chasms. They fly about in the air, like birds of prey, ready to pounce down upon any unprotected victim. . . . So the poor people turn for protection to the guardian deities of the village, whose function it is to ward off evil spirits and protect the village from epidemics of cholera, smallpox or fever, from cattle disease, failure of crops, childlessness, fires and all the manifold ills that flesh is heir to. . . .' Apparently throughout the monsoon lands of south-east Asia there was a unity of culture with seasonal festivals, that preceded the civilization of Aryan India and left its mark on the civilization of China. Its main feature was belief in spirits in all things and in the spirits of ancestors. And it held that certain men were qualified to get in touch with supernatural beings to command their aid or placate their wrath. Of this culture modern Malay magic reveals abundant survivals.

What is of great interest is the ingenuity shown in the assimilation and reconciliation of old and new beliefs. Often the process was easy. The white blood of Malay royalty, for example, is that ascribed by Buddhists to divinities, by Hindus to Siva and by Muslims to certain saints. Muslim amulets and Sufi mysticism succeeded naturally to the talismans and ascetic practices of Hindu, and those talismans and practices to the fetish and shamanism of primitive days.

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But it is startling to find that at a Kelantan *séance* the Malay shaman of to-day still copies Tantric ritual in his opening recital of the story of the creation, in his subsequent worship of gods, and in his concluding asseverance, now in Sufi terms, of man's union with God. For such adaptation of Hindu ritual to Muslim purposes the Malay must have been indebted to the subtle brain of the Indian.

A system of magic that has persisted for thousands of years and borrowed in historic time all that the Hindu and the Muslim could contribute to it must have had practical value. It advocated instead of morality the capricious dictates of the tabu; it asked its gods, even Allah, for no spiritual blessings. It promised no happy after-life, no heaven of bliss. But it was a very present help in trouble. Its ritual gave a sense of order and security to man 'in a world he never made'. Its shamans conjured spirits from heaven to assist the sick and preserve the state, commanding faith by a prestige that went back beyond recorded time and comforting people by the assurance of a hereditary and consecrated priesthood. Even to-day it is the trifling things that console the desperate: the calm voice of a B.B.C. announcer, the promise of a patent medicine, the bedside manner of an indifferent practitioner. The news may be false, the promise of a drug fallacious, the general practitioner incompetent. So, too, the directions that a shaman wrung from the gods might mislead, his herbs and his simples be worthless, his assurance of manner be a veil for hypocrisy. But hope overlooks disillusionment, and the fires of a naïve optimism are never quenched.

Consider the main functions of the Malay magician. He held out the likelihood of rain for crops and of remedies for disease. He taught spells with precise iteration, his insistence that any error in words would mar their cogency enhancing popular respect for their efficacy. He instructed how to sacrifice with such stress on detail as to make men almost

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forget the risk or disaster that called for the offering. He dealt in charms and philtres that solaced unhappy lovers and brought excitement into dull village lives. He distributed talismans and amulets, that were outward and visible shields against spiritual evil. He was an indefatigable student of 'inaccessible concupiscences and transcendencies' and he whispered to clever neurotic adolescents secrets that fired their minds for abstruse knowledge and disciplined their vague imaginings. He tightened the bonds of communal union by district and state feasts, and so maintained co-operation among rice-planters and fisher-folk. He lifted men out of themselves by traditional rites and ceremonies. Foreign impacts prevented undue conservatism, and in his time and place he held out the promise of science and the aid of religion. He was, in fact, of his primitive society the most indispensable member. For, as Disraeli wrote once, 'Few ideas are correct ones, and what are correct, no one can ascertain; but with words we govern men.'

II

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THOUGH the Malay has long been an orthodox Muslim, still in every hamlet there is a Pawang or magician, repository of immemorial superstitions and older faiths. The majority of these traffickers with the supernatural are concerned with fishing and hunting or agriculture or mining and traditional cures for the sick, professing to be expert only in spells and tabus, talismans and amulets and simple methods of divination. A minority practise shamanism, acting as mediums who through a familiar interrogate spirits as to the future or as to the cause and cure of a disease. Temperamentally the two classes differ. The ordinary magician may be a village pundit with his head full of amulets and spells and old herbal remedies; the other like the shaman of Siberia and China starts as a neurotic, a dreamer of dreams and seer of visions. Perhaps the distinction originally was one between hereditary and initiated magicians. In some parts of the Malay archipelago the initiated priest or magician has for his province the cure of the sick and the care of rice-fields and house-building; but only the sky-born hereditary magician (who may also be a chief) can invoke ancestral spirits or act as an intermediary between man and heaven. In Malaya, too, one may search large collections of ordinary incantations in vain for references to Father Sky and Mother Earth and for prayers to ancestors: but such references and prayers always occur in the chants of a shaman at his spirit-raising *séance*, and when they are encountered rarely in the ritual of the rice-field or at the opening of a mine, it may be that a hereditary shaman was

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officiating or that the old distinction had been forgotten. Even now the shaman is so respected that in Kelantan if he is operating in a district all other medicine-men are disqualified for the time being. However, the development of a settled agricultural society probably encouraged the initiation of many magicians with no hereditary qualification, there being generally no need for a shaman in order to deal with the rice-baby, or teach the appropriate spell for catching a crocodile or the tabus to be observed by collectors of camphor and honey. The two types of magician reflect a differentiation between primitive science and religion. Islam recognized this and the pious Muslim who readily consults the ordinary magician recoils from a spirit-raising *séance* and condemns the shaman as a follower of false gods.

Whatever the origin of the distinction between the two classes, the Malay magician, whether ordinary practitioner or shaman, commands respect by possessing a body of occult knowledge derived often from cultures greater than his own and framed by the ingenuity of many forerunners into an acceptable dogma of superstition. Before he left Yunnan on his southern trek he had got from Babylon or some other centre in the Middle East the practice of divining the future by the inspection of the liver of beasts and by observation of the flight of birds. From the same source, it is surmised, he learnt to employ the incantation or spell¹ and so to have recourse to prayer and sacrifice, if indeed he had not already essayed them.

Incantations presume a belief in spirits, and offerings are

¹ Features of the Babylonian spell that recur in Indian and Malay magic are (1) the ascription of exorcism to some god—'Anu and Antu have commissioned me. . . . Against the might of the sorcerers Marduk lord of incantations has sent me'; (2) the importance of some symbolic act, to which the spell is an accompaniment; (3) the invocation of beneficent gods and spirits against the demons and ills that plague mankind; and (4) an exhaustive enumeration both of benevolent gods and spirits and of demons and evil spirits.

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an obvious method of propitiating them. Any tree or stone where a community habitually sacrificed tended to become holy and the person who officiated came to partake of its sanctity. If his forebears, too, had been approved intermediaries with the spirits of the countryside, who better than he, their descendant, to ask for harvest and health from his own dead, now after a life's care of the locality resting in its soil? Here was dynasty in the making, if not for the ordinary magician, certainly for the shaman who can communicate with the spirit world and in some regions has been accepted as sky-born or a man-god. Dynasties are commonly credited with a divine origin, and so we find the Mantra declaring Mertang, the first magician, to be the child of the sky-god and the earth goddess. Did these proto-Malays perhaps get this notion too from Babylon, where Marduk, leader of gods and creator of man was priest, looser of tabus and lord of incantations?

Among some at least of the proto-Malay tribes the Batin is both chief and shaman. And it seems likely that differentiation between the Malay chief and shaman is hardly more remote than their conversion to Hinduism. Both hold offices that ideally are hereditary and in any event require some form of consecration; both are masters of an archetypal world; both have insignia baleful to the profane; both have been credited with the possession of familiars and with supernatural ability to injure and to heal and to control the weather; both have been honoured by tree-burial.

In Kelantan a shaman qualified by heredity still ranks higher in popular esteem than one qualified by seeing visions or by study under a teacher. In the same state his consecration, like that of most rulers in Asia and Europe, includes lustration and turning towards the four quarters of the globe. Many countries in the Far East, Japan, Fiji, Timor and others solved the dual functions of leadership by having two sovereigns, one secular, and one spiritual. In the

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eighteenth century Perak had a state shaman, who was of descent fully royal and bore the title of Sultan Muda or Junior Sultan; at the end of the last century he was a *kramat* brother of Sultan Idris. The holder of this office (which still exists under the title of State Magician) is head of all the magicians in Perak and he is expected to keep alive the sacred weapons of the regalia, to conduct an annual feast and *séance* with libations for the royal drums and to make sacrificial offerings to the genies of the state. Such offerings are still made as part of the ceremony of installing a Sultan of Perak.

Malaysian people as primitive as the Dayaks of Borneo believe that at first the creator of the universe stretched out the heavens no bigger than a mango, and in a Dayak legend a medicine-woman satisfies an army with rice cooked in a pot the size of a chestnut and with meat cooked in a pot the size of a bird's egg. The world of the Malay magician is the breadth of a tray with a sky the breadth of an umbrella. Malay royalty, too, had appanages of the same magical proportions, belonging to that world where Titania's mannikins 'creep into acorn cups' and her fairies 'war with rear-mice for their leathern wings to make her small elves coats'. The shield of the Sultan of that old Sumatran kingdom, Minangkabau, was made of the skin of a louse, his palace pillars of nettle stalks and its threshold-beam from a stem of spinach. A clarionet in the Perak royal band is reputed to be fashioned of the hollow stem of a nettle, and the heads of the Perak royal drums are fabled to be the skins of lice. The same skins covered the heads of drums that belonged to the regalia of the former Raja of Jelebu.

Potent magic attaches to the musical instruments of ruler and shaman. The tambourine of a shaman will generate an evil spirit if not bequeathed to a successor. To tread on a royal drum is to invite death. Even a Chinese has been

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known to swell up and die after removing a hornet's nest from this terrific instrument.

The Malay shaman (pp. 57-58) and the Malay ruler both own familiar spirits. The familiars of a sultan are the genies who protect his state. In Perak they were supposed to alight on the raja's sword at his installation, even so recent and enlightened a ruler as Sultan Idris wondering if he had not felt a slight vibration. After the annual *séance* and feast to revive the Perak regalia, the state magician would bathe the sultan and in his person those royal familiars, the guardian genies of the country. At a *séance* held during the last illness of another Perak sultan, Yusuf (d. 1887), the royal patient was placed shrouded on the shaman's mat with the shaman's grass-switch in his hand to await, as at an ordinary *séance* the shaman alone awaits, the advent of the spirits invoked. At a famous *séance* held in 1874 to discover if Mr. Birch, the first British Resident, would be wrecked on the bar of the Perak river, Sultan Abdullah himself was a medium and was possessed by nine spirits in succession.

The Malays of the Peninsula often use different names for magicians in general (*pawang*) and those (*bomor*) who practise medicine only, and in Perak and Kelantan different names are given to the ordinary magician (*pawang*) and the shaman (*bélian*). Shamanism was the primitive religion of peoples from the Behring Straits to Scandinavia, and spreading to China and Tibet it reached the Malays before they left Yunnan. It is still the sole religion of the Sakai aborigines who entered the Peninsula before them. Among civilized Malays it has survived as a last recourse in sickness or trouble, under a veneer first of Tantric Hinduism and to-day of Sufism. Like his Siberian counterpart the Malay shaman has for his main tasks healing and divination. His familiar speaking through him, the medium will reveal the name and demands of the spirit causing an epidemic or afflicting a patient with disease so that it can be expelled by

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the help or advice of a stronger spirit or coaxed out of the sufferer's body either into the shaman's own or usually on to a receptacle that contains an offering of food. Or the shaman falling or pretending to fall into a trance will divulge the whereabouts of lost property, the result of a lover's wooing or of a hunter's chase, or even the fate of a pious pilgrim bound for Mecca!

The existence of the Malay shaman before a nomadic life was abandoned for agriculture is shown by a method reserved down to quite recent times for the disposal of his corpse. That method was exposure upon a branch or in the hollow trunk of a tree or on a platform in a tree or in a hut in the forest. In Timor Laut, in Ceram and among the 'negritoes' of New Guinea the bodies of chiefs are so treated; the negritoes of Kelantan have reserved the noisome honour for magicians. It is an honour that has been paid to them not only by the negrito but by Indonesians like the Sakai of Malaya and the Sea Dayak of Borneo and by the proto-Malay Jakun. A nomadic forest life explains why such exposure has continued to be retained by some wandering tribes for all their dead. But where agriculture led settlers in cleared fields to prefer interment, conservatism was powerless to insist upon the older practice except for the eminent. Two discrepant myths were then invented to explain the survival of a custom originally common and natural. The shaman was exposed in the forest so that he might turn into a were-tiger or so that his tiger familiar might visit him and release his soul or desert his body for that of his successor. (The last shaman to be left unburied in Upper Perak was 'stuck up' in a tree with purple flowers (*Lagerstroemia floribunda*) between 1870 and 1875 and became a tiger with a white patch. Another Perak shaman was interred but scratching his way out appeared as a were-tiger with one eye closed owing to injury sustained in the grave.) Negritoes in Kelantan invented a different myth,

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namely that exposure in a tree enables the shaman to fly above the head of a fearful figure that blocks the way to the next world. A Jakun myth asserts that the shaman's body is exposed so that his soul may ascend to the sky, a privilege denied to lesser mortals who depart to an underworld. Some Jakun believe that a great shaman is translated alive to the sky. And there are still civilized Malays who hold that the soul of a dying shaman can escape only if a hole is made in the roof. The idea that, unlike common folk, chiefs and magicians ascend to an upper-world occurs with tree-burial among the negritoes of the Andamans, and like the idea of a were-tiger is sporadic in the Malay archipelago: whether the two ideas have independent sources is not known.

War and the acceptance of Hindu and Muslim ideas have led Malays almost invariably to prefer male rulers, but the shaman, product of inspiration as much as of lore, may still be male or female. The female shaman survives among the Mu'ò'ng of Indochina and the Dayaks of Borneo. And when the Malay became Hindu, he found that Tantrism admitted women teachers of its mysteries.

III

TOWARDS ANIMISM

IT is difficult to write of the primitive mind without ascribing to it theories and systems beyond its reach. Although, for example, the Malay, like many other races, arrived at what has been termed animatism or the idea of a vital force in stone and plant and beast and man, it would be absurd to suggest that he proceeded to postulate uniformity in nature, an idea too abstract for the Malay language even to-day. When again he believed that flagging strength could be restored by contact with objects possessed of abundant vital force, he was merely exercising a puerile logic and drawing a natural inference from the powers of suggestion. It cannot even be claimed that the primitive mind needed any complicated or systematized body of thought to conclude that one might as well entrust an enemy with one's spear or club as put into his power hair or nails which are full of one's vital force. A modern woman instinctively dislikes the idea of another using her nail-file. The savage woman instinctively dreaded the idea of another possessing part of her body, clippings or parings, which malice might knead into a waxen image of her person to be transfixed with pins or melted in fire.

There is another primitive idea by which vitality if not yet individualized is at any rate canalized, and that is the idea of sympathetic or mimetic magic, namely that like produces like, even though the notion may be due to no

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more than an impulse to imitate what one desires to happen and to a natural repugnance to imitate what one dreads happening. The Malay angler who wants his hook to hold will almost instinctively keep his teeth clenched. The Malay gardener who wants fine cobs will plant his maize on a full stomach and with a thick dibble. Conversely a reaper would strip herself bare to the waist in order to make the rice husks thin to pound. Examples are innumerable. If becalmed, the Malay sailor would send the ship's cook with a bowl of rice aloft as high as he could climb, when after making a great noise he would scatter its contents and invoke a breeze, the bowl being used to symbolize the sky and the rice representing hail or the pattering drops of tropical rain. A rice-spoon (which the Torajas of Celebes dip in water to produce rain) figures in another rain-compelling ceremony from the interior of Pahang. There to bring down showers before planting out their rice Malays will wade through the shallows of a river, plant banana-suckers, sugar-cane and betel and coconut palms on an islet the drought has created and then to the din of music carry in procession on the sands a boy or old man arrayed in rain-calling paraphernalia. His umbrella is a succulent aroid leaf on whose surface water loves to remain, his cap is the cane-stand for a cooking-pot and his dagger a rice-spoon. In many parts of the world a boy or girl is dressed up in leaves to represent the rich vegetation rain is invited to promote. The proto-Malay Mantra believe the heavens to be a great pot suspended over the earth by a string and a common Malay method of trying to get rain from 'that inverted bowl we call the sky' is to wash the cooking-pots and their cane stands. So the Pahang peasant endeavours to procure the showers he needs by an elaborate symbolic performance. A plausible explanation of this type of mimetic magic is that the savage, noting how terrified his neighbour was of any symbolic design on his person, concluded that the

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powers of nature could similarly be intimidated to do his will.¹

If there are many examples of imitative magic, those of what is often its converse, the tabu, are even more numerous. Where there is a pregnant woman, no old-fashioned Malay will enter by the front door and pass out by the back or contrariwise, because there is one exit only from the womb, the house of life. Neither pregnant wife nor her husband may sit at the top of their house-ladder, as any blocking of a passage protracts delivery. An unplanned house-pillar indented by the pressure of a parasitic creeper that twined round it when it was a living tree will exercise a like obstructive influence. No husband of a pregnant woman should blind a bird or fracture the wing of a fowl for fear his offspring be born sightless or with a deformed arm. If he is an angler, he must not slit the mouth of a fish for fear his child may have a hare-lip. After the engagement of the midwife in the seventh month, the Malay husband (like the Brahmin) may not have his hair cut for fear the afterbirth break. All these may be termed tabus of primitive science as distinct from tabus enjoined to avoid the anger of spirits or a divine king, which are of the nature of religious injunctions.

Oddly enough while it is tabu (*pantang*) to allude to the beauty or health of an infant for fear of inviting the malice of some jealous spirit, there is no ban on mentioning his vitality. 'My goodness, what vitality he has!'—*Wah! sēmangat*—is a common term of admiration for children. The absence of any ban on its use would appear to be part and parcel of an almost scientific attitude towards vital force considered as impersonal and devoid of individual will, soul or spirit. For the primitive Malay looking below the outer aspect of man and beast and plant and stone found in all of

¹ Mimetic magic and tabu were both supplemented by the spell (pp. 147-150).

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them an energizing power that permeated them like electricity. It is possessed by all things 'in widest commonalty spread'. There is no 'rank, condition or degree' to distinguish the vital force in man from the vital force in rice or the vital force in an animal. Nor is the idea of immortality associated with it. But certain objects like stones and tough plants and certain parts of the body like the teeth and hair are prized as having it to an abnormal degree. Throughout Indonesia, for example, the *Dracoena terminalis* is a plant, whose indomitable vitality the medicine-man tries to transfer to his patient. The sick are also rubbed with bezoar stones, and a hard candle-nut and a stone are placed both in the cradle of an infant and in the cradle of the rice-baby. The vitality in the hair shorn at a girl's first tonsure is considered so strong that it is buried at the foot of a barren tree to bring fruit as luxuriant as her tresses. In old days, Malay warriors, like Samson, wore their hair long and uncut. Saliva, too, is full of a man's vitality, so that there was a special courtier to guard a royal cuspidore. For everything connected with the body where vital force is present must be protected from the sorcery of enemies, as it was in Egypt and Babylon. A woman's blood can be employed to her hurt by a disappointed lover. Clippings from hair or nails are hidden or destroyed for fear possession of them may give an enemy control over their owner's vital force and endanger his life. This vital force exists even in one's shadow. There is a snail reputed to kill cattle by sucking their shadows. One should not walk upon a person's shadow, and the modern magician to vaunt his power will declare his shadow to be 'the shadow of one beloved by Allah and the Prophet and angels forty and four'.

The imagination of early man, obtruding its fantasies into the province of primitive science associated the idea of vitality with the notion that all objects of the same class have what can only be called external visible souls, generally

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miniature, of identical form. A cricket is often seen or heard in a Malay house: so in Negri Sembilan the soul of any house is thought to appear as a cricket. The Patani fisherman imagines that even a boat has a soul (*maya Skt.*), generally invisible, to keep it from disintegration: it is lucky to hear the chirping sound of this soul and luckier still to see it. The soul of a dug-out manifests itself as a fire-fly, that of a large boat as a snake, that of a ship as a person, male or female, according to the quality of the vessel. There is no soul till all the planks have been fitted and the hull can properly be termed a boat. To find the soul of the rattan imagination has no further to go than its mimic, the stick-insect. The soul of the camphor tree, with the romanticism introduced by the Hindu, may appear as a princess or as the cicada she became when her human lover divulged the charms she had taught him, just as the soul of rice may appear as a grasshopper or be adjured as a mannikin to beware of wind and sun and to avoid the bite of sandfly and mosquito. The soul of a man may appear also as that extraordinary phenomenon, the fire-fly. And again, like the soul of eaglewood and the soul of the coconut palm, it is conceived as a bird, so that rice may be sprinkled over a man to retain 'the bird in his bosom' and the soul of the faint be recalled by the same cry that summons chicken.¹

The flutter of the heart, the vital spark in the fire-fly, the stridulous telegraphy of the cicada in a tree, the rustling

¹ In some parts of the globe it is believed that there are separate souls for the head, the blood, the heart, the saliva and even the foot-prints, and perhaps a survival of this idea is to be traced in the morsels representative of every part of the beast sacrificed which the Malay shaman puts on his altar. A Besis legend tells of a bright snake with seven souls in the form of iridescent rainbows. The Malay ascribes seven souls to the toddy palm, named after princesses whose 'neck' the tapper seizes, whose blossom-like 'hair' he gathers up and for whose juice he holds an ivory 'bath' where the princesses may 'clap their hands and chase one another'. Respect for the number seven goes back to Babylon but the Malay's romantic address to the toddy palm is likely to be of Indian origin.

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flight of a bird from its branches, an uncanny likeness and the anthropomorphic leanings of men explain the fortuitous origin of these conceptions.

But did the Malay of the Peninsula originally think that man or beast can be injured by the destruction of this external soul or did he borrow the idea from the Indian? At the *séance* held in 1874 to discover if the first Resident of Perak would be wrecked at sea and killed, the Sultan asked a shaman if he could get Mr. Birch's spirit. The shaman drew a mannikin figure and hit it with a fan, whereupon there appeared 'something like a butterfly'. The shaman killed the butterfly and prophesied the death of the Resident. Negritos say that butterflies are the souls of Malays and other foreigners.

The notion of an individual soul can hardly have formed part of the idea of what was amoral and mortal and took the same outward visible shape for a whole class of objects. And the Malay or the Indian missionaries who converted him to Islam showed a remarkable awareness of the difference between animation by vital force and the immanence of soul or spirit in rock, tree or beast. For vital force was retained the Malay name (*sémangat*); to numinous places and sacred beasts was given the Arabic name, *kramat*. The passage from rudimentary science to rudimentary religion is illustrated further by the Malay awe for the strong personality of chiefs and magicians, leading to a definite idea of some kind of personal survival and to the invocation of the dead to assist the living.¹ What it was that survived might baffle definition, but it was analogous to the self that could wander in dreams or, if its tabernacle were a shaman, be transferred to the body of a were-tiger. And numinous tree or sacred rock, though lacking the personality of a nature-spirit, was credited with feelings of dudgeon and regard that connote an element of reason.

¹ In Polynesia only nobles survive, the souls of common folk perishing immediately after death.

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Animism or the idea of a world of spirits the Malay mind seems to have derived from the apparent abundance of vitality in certain persons and objects, and its approach to permanence in solid rock and immemorial tree, in old animals that have dodged the hunter and in men who had so impressed their fellows that for a while at least their personalities appeared to outlast the death of the body.

The magician invokes dead predecessors and chiefs and provides spells against the ghosts of murdered men and of women dying untimely in childbed, ghosts feared by the Malay as by the Dravidian, the Cambodian, the Burman and the Mongol. But no reference is made to the ghosts or souls of ordinary folk except in village verse. One quatrain tells how a girl pats her pillow and calls upon her lover's soul, which comes to her in dreams; in another a lover vows that his soul is caught in the tresses of his sweetheart's hair; in yet another the soul is depicted as weeping in the grave from longing to return to this life. Many pagan tribes in the Malay archipelago believe in individual souls (apart from vital force) that survive after death, and it is possible that the verses quoted exhibit traces of a similar belief, long since obliterated first by Hindu ideas of reincarnation and then by the Muslim belief in a resurrection of the dead on a day of judgment. On the other hand, the soul longing to return to life may be only the ghost that according to an old Malay belief haunts the grave for seven days. As a Hindu, the Malay learnt that only the soul of one who has won deliverance is ever entirely separated from the body. But before that, he must have had other ideas of life after death. For the belief of Malaya's aborigines and the Andamanese and many Indonesian tribes in a bridge off which the wicked tumble into an underworld appears not to have been borrowed from Islam but to belong to a far older Iranian tradition, which also affected, however slightly, Indian mythology.

Untuk melihat muka surat seterusnya, sila berhubung dengan petugas kami di kaunter.