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Lewis Richard Farnell

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THE CULTS OF THE GREEK STATES

CHAPTER I

THE CULTS OF HERMES

THIS divinity, although probably recognized by every Greek community, plays only a subordinate rôle in Greek life in comparison with the higher divinities of the state, nor does his cult appear to have taken deep root anywhere except in Arcadia and, as numismatic evidence leads us to suspect, at Ainos in Thrace and Eresos in Lesbos. His figure is not prominent among the coin-types of Greece, save in the last-mentioned city, nor his name among the genealogies of clans or communities; only Arcadia claimed him as divine ancestor. Yet some of the details of his worship are of interest for the comparative study of religion and for the history of certain social usages.

In the Homeric and much of classical literature the god appears to us as a Hellene of the Hellenes, the embodiment of the leading characteristics of the race; yet we have reason to suspect that he may have been a surviving figure of a pre-Hellenic religion. The question could only be settled if we could interpret the name Ἑρμῆς, which appears under the form Ἑρμειος in Boeotia and Ἑρμῶν in Laconia and Arcadia; but none of the etymological theories that have been put forward can be regarded as satisfactory; for though the name has the air of being Hellenic, we do not know to what stratum of language it belongs.

On the other hand, it is equally true that no region outside Greece has any plausible claim to be considered as the cradle of the Hermes-cult. It has been supposed that he may

have come down from Thrace; chiefly because of Herodotus statement that the kings of Thrace honoured him as their chief divinity and as their ancestor^a. But this is merely a statement parallel to his other, that the Thracians worshipped Hera, or to Tacitus' observation that the ancient Germans worshipped Mercury. There is no reason for supposing that the Thracians had ever heard of Hermes till the Greeks taught them the name and the cult. Nor is there any sure clue by which we could discover the source of this cult in Asia Minor. But we can regard it as one of the proved conclusions of modern ethnographic study that the Anatolian peoples had their congeners in many districts of Greece before the arrival of the Hellenes; and the worship of Hermes may have been taken over from some one of these earlier stocks. If any district could put forward a strong claim to be regarded as the source of this cult, it would be Arcadia. Nowhere else do we find its hold on the popular faith so powerful, and it is here associated with local legends that relatively to our knowledge may be called aboriginal. His earliest and most prevalent local epithet, one that was known to the Homeric world, was *Κυλλήνιος*, and this name and the legend of his birth on Mount Kyllene in the north-east of Arcadia, made familiar to the Greek world through the Homeric hymn, become the commonplaces of later classical literature. Pindar speaks of the ritual on the mountain, and, though Pausanias found the temple there in ruins, we gather that the sacrifice was maintained down to late times; concerning which we are told a miraculous legend, that the priests who ascended to make offerings once a year on the mountain-top, always found there the remains of last year's oblations undisturbed by winds and rain^b.

From this region it is probable that the cult travelled along the route that led westward by Psophis into Elis, and finally established itself at the settlement on the coast that was also known as Kyllene^c. We have also abundant evidence

^a Geogr. Reg. s. v. 'Euxine and Thrace.'

^b Geogr. Reg. s. v. Arcadia-Kyllene.

^c Immerwahr, on insufficient grounds which I have noticed elsewhere (*Class. Rev.* 1896), would regard the Elean and

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here of a primitive worship of Hermes Φάλλης¹⁸, and of the fetichistic use of the φαλλός in ritual, which probably belonged to the original Arcadian tradition. Nor is Kyllene the only Arcadian district with which the god was closely associated; a birth-legend and prominence in the public worship are attested for him in Pheneos, where the year was dated by the name of his priest, and we have proofs of his cult at Phigaleia, Stymphalos, Tegea, and other localities^a; while far down in the south-west the place Akakesion^b, which also claimed to be the spot where Hermes was nurtured, derived its name from his Homeric epithet ἀκάκηρα, the meaning of which will be afterwards considered. And it may be from this quarter that he penetrated into the mysteries of Andania, which is spoken of as the home of Hermes^c.

Again, it is only the Arcadian genealogies that are closely attached to the name of Hermes. Aipytos is a primitive Arcadian ancestor of an earlier population that resisted the intrusion of the worshippers of Poseidon^d; his name was cherished in various localities and in various mythic kindreds, and it penetrated the royal legends of Messenia, but it was most nearly associated with Kyllene, where Homer was aware of the tomb of Aipytos, to which was probably attached an ancient ancestor cult; and at Tegea he was actually identified with Hermes in a common worship, as Agamemnon with Zeus in Laconia or Erechtheus with Poseidon in Attica^e. Other

Messenian Hermes-cult as anterior to the Arcadian and as the sources of it, vide *Kulte u. Mythen Arkadiens*, pp. 88-89.

^a Geogr. Reg. s. v. Arcadia.

^b The learned world in antiquity disputed whether the name of the god —ἀκάκηρα—was derived from the town or vice versa: if the two are really connected, Ἀκακήσιον is obviously the derivative. Pausanias derives both from a mythic founder Ἀκακος, the fosterer of Hermes.

^c Vide vol. 3, p. 209. Demeter, R. 246.

^d Vide Poseidon-chapter, vol. 4, p. 44.

^e Immerwahr, op. cit. p. 85, regards Aipytos as another form of Hermes: but the legend does not support the theory, which is not necessary to explain the Tegean cult of Hermes-Aipytos. If the identification were correct, the tomb of Aipytos would suggest that Hermes was occasionally regarded as a buried god. Deities of the earth were sometimes believed to die at certain seasons, but there is no sign that this idea was ever current in regard to Hermes; when Clemens—*Recog.* 10. 10, 24—speaks of the sepulchre of Hermes at Hermopolis he is thinking of the Egyptian city and cult.

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Arcadian heroes are affiliated to Hermes: Myrtilos, the charioteer of Pelops, whose grave was shown behind the temple of Hermes at Pheneos^{89 d}, and to whom the Pheneates brought nightly offerings each year; Euandros, the hero of Pallantion, who led the Arcadian colony to Italy^a. According to Aeschylus, he was worshipped as ancestor in the district about Stymphalos^b; and one of the coin-types of Pheneos shows Hermes bearing in his arms the infant Arkas, the eponymous ancestor of the Arcadians, perhaps in allusion to the legend that the babe born to Kallisto was sent by Zeus to Maia to be nurtured^c.

We should expect that so powerful a cult-figure would influence other parts of Arcadian religion. We do not find that Hermes was associated with Zeus Lykaios; but at an early period he was regarded as the father of Pan^d, the divinity specially characteristic of Arcadia, and he was adopted into the impressive worship of the Despoinai on the Messenian border^e; while it was probably in Arcadia that the close companionship between Hermes and the incoming Apollo arose, which was usually recognized by the Greek world^f.

When we survey the other areas of the Hermes-cult, we find it nowhere else so prominent. In Elis the worship at Kyllene bears the marks of great antiquity, but there is reason for regarding this as a derivative from Arcadia. In Messenia he was received into the 'Karnasion' grove; in Achaia the records are somewhat fuller concerning him, while in Argos they are very scanty, though he may have belonged here to the same stratum of legend as Perseus, who himself derives certain traits from the god. In Laconia his cult was neither prominent nor, as it seems, important; it is significant that, in Herodotus' account of the maltreatment of the Persian ambassadors at Sparta, the violation of the herald's sanctity aroused the resentment, not of Hermes, but of Talthybios. We may conclude then, as regards the

^a Paus. 8. 43, 2.^b Geogr. Reg. s. v. Arcadia.^c Apollod. 3. 8, 2; Head, *Hist. Num.*

p. 378.

^d Geogr. Reg. s. v. Arcadia-Kyllene.^e Demeter, R. 119^b, vol. 3.^f Vide infra, p. 20.

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Peloponnesian that, while Hermes no doubt figured in old Peloponnesian legend and worship, it was mainly in Arcadia that his name had vitality and power.

In Sikyon and on the Isthmus he seems to have occupied a very subordinate position, and we find but scanty traces of him in Thessalian legend and public cult, though the coinage of Ainos and Eresos prove that he was prominent in certain Aeolic communities; and elsewhere in North Greece the only region where the records concerning him are of interest and importance is Boeotia. We gather from Pausanias that both Thebes and Tanagra advanced rival claims against Arcadia to be the place of Hermes' birth or nurture^a; and he appears to have been revered in certain parts of Boeotia as a powerful divinity of the nether world.

Finally, we must consider Attica as a district where the cult possessed a certain vitality, perhaps from very early times. On the Acropolis in the temple of Athena Polias, stood a very ancient wooden agalma of Hermes, said to have been a dedication by Kekrops, and as its form was almost invisible beneath the myrtle-boughs that were twined around it, we may regard it as descending from the semi-iconic period. The god was remembered in the ancient formula of prayer uttered in the Thesmophoria^b, in the ritual of the Anthesteria on the day of the *Xύτροι*^c, and in the preliminary sacrifices of the Eleusinia^d. Yet the Athenians do not appear to have claimed him as one of their leading aboriginal deities, nor as one of their divine ancestors, nor did he enter into the phratric system^e.

With these facts before us, we are justified in regarding Arcadia, not necessarily as the birthplace and cradle of the cult, whence it spread into other communities, but at least as the country most likely to give a clue to the solution of the ethnographic question, whether Hermes is *ab origine* a Hellenic or pre-Hellenic deity. The race-problem is specially

^a Vide Geogr. Reg. s.v. Arcadia and Boeotia; cf. R. 3.

^b Demeter, R. 75^e.

^c Dionysos, R. 124^e.

^d Demeter, R. 176.

^e The pretence of the Kerykes to be

descended from Hermes was disputed in Attica, and probably only arose from their feeling that the sacred family of 'Heralds' should be descended from the herald-god.

complicated as regards ancient Arcadia. The Hellenic strains are mixed, as we have noted in studying the Arcadian cults of Demeter, Poseidon, and Apollo; and we may discover traces of more than one pre-Hellenic stratum in the population^a. Now we have no trace or hint in any legend of any Hellenic migration into Arcadia that would have been likely to have brought in Hermes as a predominant god. And the Elean dogma that Pausanias gives us, that the founder of the Peloponnesian cult of Hermes was Pelops, does not help us; for it may mean no more than that in this region the cult was very old and would therefore naturally attach itself to the name of the ancient kings, as at Athens it attached itself to the name of Kekrops; and even if we trusted it and found reason for closely associating Hermes with the family of the Pelopidai^b, this would not advance us, while it remains uncertain whether 'Pelops' is the name-symbol of an early Hellenic or of an Anatolian stock^c.

A priori, it may appear more likely that the cult we are considering belonged originally to a pre-Hellenic stock, for the hypothesis of Hellenic origin would not explain why it was so prominent in Arcadia and prominent nowhere else; but, to attain a reasonable judgement on the question, we want more direct evidence. The philology of Arcadian place-names, recently considered with great insight by Fick, reveals pre-Hellenic associations of Arcadia with Crete and the Anatolian shore; but it does not reveal the answer to our question. Kyllene, the place to which the Hermes-cult is rooted, may be a Hellenic or a Carian name^d. Again, his mother Maia has been identified with the Cappadocian and Bithynian goddess Mâ, 'the Mother,' and this has been urged as a proof that Hermes belongs to an Anatolian stock; but such an argument carries no conviction, for the name

^a Vide Fick, *Vorgriech. Ortsnamen*, pp. 92-95.

^b The Pelopidai attach themselves more nearly to Zeus, and though according to a doubtful statement of the Scholiast L. Hom. B. 104 Hermes is the father of Pelops, yet the legend of

Myrtilos suggests that the god is really hostile.

^c Vide a good article on 'Pelops' by Bloch in Roscher's *Lexikon*; cf. Fick, *op. cit.* p. 160.

^d Fick, *op. cit.* p. 93.

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'Maia,' of the divine Mother, may be a genuinely Hellenic parallel to *Mâ*, not a derivative from it.

Perhaps we can gain a clearer view from certain facts of archaeology and comparative religion. The earliest emblems of this cult belong to the aniconic period, and this coincides on the whole with the earlier Mycenaean. The *Ἑρμαιοσ λόφοσ* above the city of Ithaca, mentioned by Homer, is the subject of some interesting commentary by the Scholiast³², who informs us that the Roman milestones were called *Ἑρμαιοι λόφοι*, and that the custom had long been prevalent in Hellas of honouring Hermes, the god of ways, by piling up a heap of stones called a *Ἑρμαιοσ λόφοσ*, and then throwing stones at it; Cornutus merely says that each passer-by added one to the heap³². Out of this ritual a very naïve aetiological legend arose which is preserved for us in a statement attributed to Xanthos, the historian of the fifth century B. C.³²: when Hermes was tried in court for the slaying of Argos and was acquitted, the gods in anger at his acquittal threw their voting-stones at him. The legend and the custom belong to an aniconic pillar-cult, and the pile of stones seems regarded both as the *agalma* of the god and as the god himself^a. Another primitive cult-object associated with Hermes is the *φάλλοσ*, the symbol of the divinity at the Elean Kyllene¹⁸.

We may conclude that in the earliest Arcadian period his worship was aniconic; and hence the Arcadians long clung to the semi-iconic form of the pillar-statue known as the *Herme*, which Pausanias erroneously believes to have been borrowed by them from the Athenians²⁰, though he himself tells us that this was a form in which the Arcadians specially delighted^b. But the question whether his personality is Hellenic in origin or pre-Hellenic is not decided by the fact that it emerged in the period before iconism; for it is certain that Hellenic deities had settled in the land at a time when the ritual was still mainly aniconic.

But the facts of phallic worship seem to give us better

* We note the same double view of the *ἀγνιεύσ* column of Apollo, vide vol. 4, p. 149.

^b 8. 48, 6.

data for a decision. For we cannot ignore Herodotus' statement that the Athenians adopted the phallos-emblem of Hermes from the Pelasgians¹⁸ ^o. If this is a scientific observation^a, based on the historian's critical observance of existing Pelasgic ritual and a wide comparison of them with the purely Hellenic, 'cedit quaestio'; we must believe that the Hermes-cult is originally Pelasgic and non-Hellenic. But Herodotus is not usually so critical and careful in his judgements concerning matters of comparative religion. A comprehensive survey of the facts of phallic worship in the Mediterranean area and elsewhere would be necessary before we could use them as an ethnographic criterion: and this would involve too long a digression here, and would be probably premature before the 'Minoan' religious world is more fully revealed to us, in which at present no phallic element has been discovered. Meantime, we must admit that Herodotus' opinion seems to receive a general support from the fact that the other best-known cults in which the phallos was a prominent cult-object, namely, those of Dionysos, Priapos, and the Samothracian mysteries, are of non-Hellenic origin. But we cannot be certain that it was unknown to the original Hellenes, for we have found indications of the use of it in Demeter ritual^b, and to conclude that therefore Demeter was Pelasgic is to argue in a circle; and it has figured in the ritual of other Aryan races, Phrygians, Vedic Indians, Russians, and even English^c.

Still it may be felt that the facts hitherto examined engender a reasonable suspicion that the personality of Hermes belongs to the pre-Hellenic period. But the best and clearest evidence that this is the true view is supplied by a record of a Cretan festival preserved by Athenaeus⁸⁹ ^f, namely, that in the ^gΕρμιαία of this island, the slaves and the masters changed their parts,

^a It is accepted by Fick without hesitation, *op. cit.* p. 145, and made the key-note of his account of 'Pelasgic' religion; but his work is throughout uncritical in dealing with religious phenomena.

^b Vol. 3, pp. 46, 89.

^c Vide Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 155; Mannhardt, *Der Baumkultus*, pp. 416, 417, 469, 521. There appear to be traces of it in the old Scandinavian religion, vide Craigie, *Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*, p. 36.

the slaves making merry and the masters waiting upon them. We have a few other examples of similar privileges of slaves in Mediterranean ritual; and we are justified in such cases in believing that the worship belonged originally to a more primitive population, who were conquered by later immigrants. We have good reason for the conviction that one of the pre-Hellenic stocks in Crete was akin to one in Arcadia, and we may believe that stock, whether Pelasgian or Anatolian, to have been the primitive Hermes-worshippers, from whom the later Achaeans and other Hellenic tribes received it; and perhaps it is from their vocabulary that the mysterious epithet *ἔδᾶς* has come down, which was attached to him at Gortys^a. And possibly the same people handed down the personality and name of Hermes Kadmilos, who penetrated the mysteries of the Kabeiroi, and was revered in Lemnos, Samothrace, and Imbros^b: in Samothrace, the phallic cult of Hermes reminds us of Arcadia^{18 e}, and in all these islands the presence of a pre-Hellenic Pelasgic population is well attested^c.

This hypothesis of his non-Hellenic origin may be found to explain certain features in his character and worship, of which it now remains to give a systematic account^d. The general view of Hermes, his qualities and functions, presented in the exordium of the Homeric hymn¹, and in the Latin inscription on the bust of Hermes in the Villa Albani², corresponds fairly with the various ideas that are found to attach to him in the public cults; and most of these are in agreement also with Homer's conception of him.

As Arcadia has been from time immemorial the great pasture-ground of Greece, so probably the most primitive character in which Hermes appeared, and which he never

^a Geogr. Reg. *s.v.* Crete.

^b Geogr. Reg. *s.v.* Samothrace, Lemnos, Imbros.

^c Vide Fick, *Vorgriech. Ortsn.* p. 98.

^d I have not discussed in this chapter the theory about Hermes put forward by Roscher in his article in his *Ausführliches Lexikon*, vol. I, and in a separate treatise, *Hermes der Windgott*, that he

was originally the god of the wind and that all his functions can be deduced from this idea. This method of evolving a complex divine personality from a single physical concept is now discredited; and the wind appears to be one of the natural phenomena with which Hermes has no recorded connexion at all.

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abandoned, was the pastoral. He is the lord of the herds, ἐπιμήλιος⁵ and κριοφόρος⁶, who leads them to the sweet waters, and bears the tired ram or lamb on his shoulders, and assists them with the shepherd's crook, the kerykeion. Those whose wealth was derived from pasture owed their fortune to Hermes⁷, and probably this was the significance of his ancient and in Homer almost stereotyped epithet ἐριούμιος, 'the bringer of blessing.' Springs and the Naiads were sometimes associated with him^{10, 12}, and he was frequently grouped in cult with Pan and the Nymphs and other deities of vegetation^{10, 11, 12}. At the sacrifice of Eumaios in the *Odyssey*, Hermes and the Nymphs receives a common portion^{85 c}; according to Simonides, the Nymphs and Hermes are the natural protectors of shepherds⁹; and the lyric prayer of Aristophanes, 'I pray to Hermes the pasture-god, to Pan and the Nymphs beloved, with fain heart to smile upon our choral dances,' can be illustrated by many records of actual cult in Attica. Inscriptions and dedications found on the south slope of the Acropolis point to this cult-association on the banks of the Ilissos¹⁰; and we find him in company with Pan and the Nymphs on the recently discovered relief of the fourth century B.C. found in a cave on Parnes^a. This cave-worship, from which he acquired the epithet Σπηλαίτης in the neighbourhood of Laodikeia⁴, belongs to his primitive pastoral character, which was always prominent in him; and it is noteworthy that this god of the Arcadian pastures never becomes an agricultural deity: the animals associated with him both in sacrifice and in art are not those which were used for ploughing, but sheep, goats, and swine. We may suspect that there was a close communion between the god and this animal world, and that the ram which he bore on his shoulders was sometimes regarded as instinct with his power; for in a Tanagran festival the lamb that was carried round on the shoulders of a boy, in imitation—it was said—of Hermes who bore a ram round the walls to avert a plague, was evidently supposed to exercise a magical

^a Vide Geogr. Reg. s.v. Attica. Cf. ib. s.v. Cilicia, worship of Pan and Hermes in the Corycian cave.