

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04733-3 - The Golden Bough: The Third Edition: Volume 4: The Dying God

J.G. Frazer

Table of Contents

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I.—THE MORTALITY OF THE GODS . Pp. 1-8

Mortality of savage gods, pp. 1-3 ; mortality of Greek gods, 3 *sq.* ; mortality of Egyptian gods, 4-6 ; death of the Great Pan, 6 *sq.* ; deaths of the King of the Jinn and of the Grape-cluster, 8.

CHAPTER II.—THE KILLING OF THE  
DIVINE KING . . . . . Pp. 9-119

- § 1. *Preference for a Violent Death*, pp. 9-14.—Human gods killed to prevent them from growing old and feeble, 9 *sq.* ; preference for a violent death, the sick and old killed, 10-14.
- § 2. *Kings killed when their Strength fails*, pp. 14-46.—Divine kings put to death, the Chitimé of Congo and the Ethiopian kings of Meroe, 14 *sq.* ; kings of Fazoql on the Blue Nile, 16 *sq.* ; divine kings of the Shilluk put to death on any symptom of failing health, 17-28 ; parallel between the Shilluk kings and the King of the Wood at Nemi, 28 ; rain-makers of the Dinka not allowed to die a natural death, 28-33 ; kings of Unyoro and other parts of Africa put to death on signs of failing health, 34 *sq.* ; the Matiamvo of Angola, 35 *sq.* ; Zulu kings killed on the approach of old age, 36 *sq.* ; kings of Sofala put to death on account of bodily blemishes, 37 *sq.* ; kings required to be unblemished, 38 *sq.* ; courtiers obliged to imitate their sovereign, 39 *sq.* ; kings of Eyo put to death, 40 *sq.* ; voluntary death by fire of the old Prussian *Kirwaido*, 41 *sq.* ; voluntary deaths by fire in antiquity and among Buddhist monks, 42 *sq.* ; religious suicides in Russia, 43-45 ; a Jewish Messiah, 46.
- § 3. *Kings killed at the End of a Fixed Term*, pp. 46-58.—Suicide of the kings of Quilacare at the end of a reign of twelve years, 46 *sq.* ; kings of Calicut liable to be attacked and killed by their successors at the end of every period of twelve years, 47-51 ; kings of Bengal and Passier and old Slavonic kings liable to be killed by their successors, 51 *sq.* ; custom of a five years' reign followed by decapitation in Malabar, 52 *sq.* ; custom of the Sultans of Java, 53 *sq.* ; religious suicides in India, 54-56 ; kings

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04733-3 - The Golden Bough: The Third Edition: Volume 4: The Dying God

J.G. Frazer

Table of Contents

[More information](#)

killed by proxy, 56 *sq.* ; Aun, King of Sweden, and the sacrifice of his nine sons to prolong his life, 57 *sq.*

- § 4. *Octennial Tenure of the Kingship*, pp. 58-92.—Spartan kings liable to be deposed on the appearance of a meteor at the end of eight years, 58 *sq.* ; superstitions as to meteors and stars, 59-68 ; octennial period of king's reign connected with the octennial cycle of the early Greek calendars, which in turn is an attempt to reconcile solar and lunar time, 68 *sq.* ; the octennial cycle in relation to the Greek doctrine of rebirth, 69 *sq.* ; octennial tenure of the kingdom at Cnossus in Crete, 70 *sq.* ; sacred marriage of the King and Queen of Cnossus (Minos and Pasiphae) as representatives of the Sun and Moon, 71-74 ; octennial tribute of youths and maidens to the Sun, represented by the Minotaur, at Cnossus, 74-77 ; octennial festivals of the Crowning at Delphi and of the Laurel-bearing at Thebes, both being dramatic representations of the slaying of a water-dragon, 78-82 ; theory that the dragons of Delphi and Thebes were kings who personated dragons or serpents, 82 ; Greek belief in the transformation of gods and men into animals, 82 *sq.* ; transformation of Cadmus and Harmonia into serpents, 84 ; transmigration of the souls of the dead into serpents and other wild animals, 84 *sq.* ; African kings claim kinship with powerful animals, 85 *sq.* ; the serpent the royal animal at Athens and Salamis, 87 *sq.* ; the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia at Thebes perhaps a dramatic marriage of the Sun and Moon at the end of an eight years' cycle, 87 *sq.* ; this theory confirmed by the astronomical symbols carried by the Laurel-bearer at the octennial festival of Laurel-bearing, 88 *sq.* ; the Olympic festival based on the octennial cycle, 89 *sq.* ; the Olympic victors, male and female, perhaps personated the Sun and Moon and reigned as divine King and Queen for eight years, 90-92.
- § 5. *Funeral Games*, pp. 92-105.—Tradition of the funeral origin of the great Greek games, 92 *sq.* ; in historical times games instituted in honour of many famous men in Greece, 93-96 ; funeral games celebrated by other peoples ancient and modern, 96-98 ; the great Irish fairs, in which horse-races were conspicuous, said to have been founded in honour of the dead, 98-101 ; their relation to the harvest, 101-103 ; theory of the funeral origin of the Olympic games insufficient to explain all the features of the legends, 103 *sq.* ; suggested theory of the origin of the Olympic games, 104 *sq.* ; the Olympic festival based on astronomical, not agricultural, considerations, 105.
- § 6. *The Slaughter of the Dragon*, pp. 105-112.—Widespread myth of the slaughter of a great dragon, 105 ; Babylonian myth of Marduk and Tiamat, 105 *sq.* ; Indian myth of Indra and Vṛtra, 106 *sq.* ; two interpretations of the myth, one cosmological, the other totemic, 107-111 ; suggested reconciliation of the two interpretations, 111 *sq.*
- § 7. *Triennial Tenure of the Kingship*, pp. 112 *sq.* —Chiefs of the Remon branch of the Ijebu tribe formerly killed at the end of a reign of three years, 112 *sq.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04733-3 - The Golden Bough: The Third Edition: Volume 4: The Dying God

J.G. Frazer

Table of Contents

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

ix

- § 8. *Annual Tenure of the Kingship*, pp. 113-118. — The Sacaea festival (possibly identical with Zakmuk) at Babylon seems to shew that in early times the Babylonian kings were put to death at the end of a year's reign, 113-117; trace of a custom of killing the kings of Hawaii at the end of a year's reign, 117 *sq.*
- § 9. *Diurnal Tenure of the Kingship*, pp. 118 *sq.* — Custom of putting the king of Ngoio to death on the night after his coronation, 118 *sq.*

## CHAPTER III.—THE SLAYING OF THE

KING IN LEGEND . . . . . Pp. 120-133

Story of Lancelot and the proffered kingdom in the *High History of the Holy Graal*, 120-122; story of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain in India, 122-124; Vikramaditya the son of an ass by a human mother, 124 *sq.*; stories of this type (Beauty and the Beast) probably based on totemism, 125-131; story of the parentage of Vikramaditya points to a line of rajahs who had the ass for their crest, 132; similarly the maharajahs of Nagpur trace their descent from a cobra father and have the cobra for their crest, 132 *sq.*

## CHAPTER IV.—THE SUPPLY OF KINGS . . . . . Pp. 134-147

Traces in legend of a custom of compelling men to accept the fatal sovereignty, 134 *sq.*; false conceptions of the primitive kingship, 135; the modern European fear of death not shared in an equal degree by other races, 135-139; men of other races willing to sacrifice their lives for motives which seem to the modern European wholly inadequate, 139 *sqq.*; indifference to death displayed in antiquity by the Thracians, Gauls, and Romans, and in modern times by the Chinese, 142-146; error of judging all men's fear of death by our own, 146; probability that in many races it would be easy to find men who would accept a kingdom on condition of being killed at the end of a short reign, 146 *sq.*

## CHAPTER V.—TEMPORARY KINGS . . . . . Pp. 148-159

Annual abdication of kings and their places temporarily filled by nominal sovereigns, 148; temporary kings in Cambodia and Siam, 148-151; temporary kings in Samarcand and Upper Egypt, 151 *sq.*; temporary sultans of Morocco, 152 *sq.*; temporary king in Cornwall, 153 *sq.*; temporary kings at the beginning of a reign in Sumatra and India, 154; temporary kings entrusted with the discharge of divine or magical functions, 155-157; temporary kings substituted in special emergencies for Shahs of Persia, 157-159.

CHAPTER VI.—SACRIFICE OF THE KING'S

SON . . . . . Pp. 160-195

Temporary kings sometimes related by blood to the royal family, 161; Aun, King of Sweden, and the sacrifice of his nine sons, 160 *sq.*; tradition of King Athamas and his children, 161-163; family of royal descent liable to be sacrificed at Orchomenus, 163 *sq.*; Thessalian and Boeotian kings seem to have sacrificed their sons instead of themselves, 164-166; sacrifice of king's sons among the Semites, 166; sacrifice of children to Baal among the Semites, 166-168; Canaanite and Hebrew custom of burning firstborn children in honour of Baal or Moloch, 168-174; tradition of the origin of the Passover, 174-178; custom of sacrificing all the firstborn, whether animals or men, probably a very ancient Semitic institution, 178 *sq.*; sacrifice of firstborn children among many peoples, 179-186; the "Sacred Spring" in ancient Italy, 186 *sq.*; different motives may have led to the killing of the firstborn, 187 *sq.*; the doctrine of rebirth may have furnished one motive for the infanticide of the firstborn, 188 *sq.*; the same belief may explain the rule of infant succession in Polynesia and may partly account for the prevalence of infanticide in that region, 190 *sq.*; abdication or deposition of the father when his son attains to manhood, 191 *sq.*; traces of such customs in Greek myth and legend, 192-194; on the whole the sacrifice of a king's son as a substitute for his father would not be surprising, at least in Semitic lands, 194 *sq.*

CHAPTER VII.—SUCCESSION TO THE

SOUL . . . . . Pp. 196-204

Tendency of a custom of regicide to extinguish a royal family no bar to the observance of such a custom among peoples who set little value on human life, 196-198; transmission of the soul of the slain divinity to his successor, 198; transmission of the souls of chiefs and others in Nias, America, and elsewhere, 198-200; inspired representatives of dead kings in Africa, 200-202; right of succession to the kingdom conferred by the possession of corporeal relics of dead kings, such as their skulls, their teeth, or their hair, 202 *sq.*; souls of slain Shilluk kings transmitted to their successors, 204.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE KILLING OF THE

TREE-SPIRIT . . . . . Pp. 205-271

§ 1. *The Whitsuntide Mummers*, pp. 205-214.—The single combat of the King of the Wood at Nemi probably a mitigation of an older custom of putting him to death at the end of a fixed period, 205 *sq.*; the theory confirmed

## CONTENTS

xi

- by traces of a custom of periodically putting the representative of the tree-spirit to death in Northern Europe, 206; Bavarian and Swabian customs of beheading the representatives of the tree-spirit at Whitsuntide, 207 *sq.*; killing the Wild Man in Saxony and Bohemia, 208 *sq.*; beheading the King on Whitmonday in Bohemia, 209-211; the leaf-clad mummers in these customs represent the tree-spirit, 211; the tree-spirit killed in order to prevent its decay and to ensure its revival in a vigorous successor, 211 *sq.*; resemblances between the North European customs and the rites of Nemi, 212-214.
- § 2. *Mock Human Sacrifices*, pp. 214-220.—The mock killing of the leaf-clad mummers probably a substitute for an old custom of killing them in earnest, 214; substitution of mock human sacrifices for real ones in Minahassa, Arizona, Nias, and elsewhere, 214-217; mock human sacrifices carried out in effigy in ancient Egypt, India, Siam, Japan, and elsewhere, 217-219; mimic sacrifices of fingers, 219; mimic rite of circumcision, 219 *sq.*
- § 3. *Burying the Carnival*, pp. 220-233.—The killing and resurrection of a god not peculiar to tree-worship but common to the hunting, pastoral, and agricultural stages of society, 220 *sq.*; European customs of burying the Carnival and carrying out Death, 221 *sq.*; effigies of the Carnival burnt Italy, 222-224; funeral of the Carnival in Catalonia, 225 *sq.*; funeral of the Carnival or of Shrove Tuesday in France, 226-230; burying the Carnival in Germany and Austria, 230-232; burning the Carnival in Greece, 232 *sq.*; resurrection enacted in these ceremonies, 233.
- § 4. *Carrying out Death*, pp. 233-240.—Carrying out Death in Bavaria, 233-235; in Thüringen, 235 *sq.*; in Silesia, 236 *sq.*; in Bohemia, 237 *sq.*; in Moravia, 238 *sq.*; the effigy of Death feared and abhorred, 239 *sq.*
- § 5. *Sawing the Old Woman*, pp. 240-245.—Sawing the Old Woman at Mid-Lent in Italy, 240 *sq.*; in France, 241 *sq.*; in Spain and among the Slavs, 242 *sq.*; Sawing the Old Woman on Palm Sunday among the gypsies, 243 *sq.*; seven-legged effigies of Lent in Spain and Italy, 244 *sq.*
- § 6. *Bringing in Summer*, pp. 246-254.—Custom of Carrying out Death followed by a ceremony of bringing in Summer, represented by a tree or branches, 246 *sq.*; new potency of life ascribed to the effigy of Death, 247-251; the Summer-tree equivalent to the May-tree, 251 *sq.*; the Summer-tree a revival of the image of Death, hence the image of Death must be an embodiment of the spirit of vegetation, 252 *sq.*; the names of Carnival, Death, and Summer in these customs seem to cover an ancient spirit of vegetation, 253 *sq.*
- § 7. *Battle of Summer and Winter*, pp. 254-261.—Dramatic contests between representatives of Summer and Winter in Sweden, Germany, and Austria, 254-258; the Queen of Winter and the Queen of May in the Isle of Man, 258; contests between representatives of Summer and Winter among the Esquimaux, 259; Winter driven away by the Canadian Indians, 259 *sq.*; the burning of Winter at Zurich, 260 *sq.*

- § 8. *Death and Resurrection of Kostrubonko*, pp. 261-263.—Russian ceremonies like those of Burying the Carnival or Carrying out Death, 261; death and resurrection of Kostrubonko at Eastertide, 261; figure of Kupalo thrown into a stream on Midsummer day, 262; funeral of Kostroma, Lada, or Yarilo on St. Peter's day (29th June), 262 *sq.*
- § 9. *Death and Revival of Vegetation*, pp. 263-265.—The Russian Kostrubonko, Yarilo, and so on probably in origin spirits of the dying and reviving vegetation, 263 *sq.*; grief and gladness, love and hatred curiously blended in these ceremonies, 264; expulsion of Death sometimes enacted without an effigy, 264 *sq.*
- § 10. *Analogous Rites in India*, pp. 265 *sq.*—Images of Siva and Pârvatî married, drowned, and mourned for in India, 265 *sq.*; equivalence of the custom to the spring ceremonies of Europe, 266.
- § 11. *The Magic Spring*, pp. 266-271.—The foregoing customs were originally rites intended to ensure the revival of nature in spring by means of imitative magic, 266-269; in modern Europe these old magical rites have degenerated into mere pageants and pastimes, 269; parallel to the spring customs of Europe in the magical rites of the aborigines of Central Australia, 269-271.

NOTE A.—Chinese Indifference to Death . Pp. 273-276

NOTE B.—Swinging as a Magical Rite . Pp. 277-285

ADDENDA . . . . . P. 287

INDEX . . . . . Pp. 289-305