

## MAN AND THE BULL

It is some 900 years before Christ that we find the most ancient traces of two innovations which were to have incalculable consequences for the future of mankind. The evolution of civilization has, in fact, been marked by a clean break located at the era when man discovered the rudiments of agriculture and animal husbandry and began to produce his own food. Whereas for the three million years during which he had to provide for his needs exclusively through hunting, fishing and gathering, his progress was extremely slow, the adoption of a new way of life based on agriculture and animal husbandry allowed man to transform himself in less than twelve thousand years from deer hunter into astronaut.

Agriculture was invented independently and in various manners in a period of only a few centuries in several regions of the globe quite distant one from another: the Asiatic Near-East, South-East Asia, the high plateaux of Mexico, Peru and probably also the southern Sahara before it became desert. From these "core-zones" the "neolithic" way of life progressively spread over increasingly vast territories. The most ancient of these zones is the Near East, and it is from there that the slow neolithisation of Europe, Egypt, North Africa and of all the

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Middle East began. This essay deals uniquely with that vast region.

Except for the dog, who was tamed shortly after the end of the ice age by groups of hunters as a helper for hunting in the forests, the first animals to be domesticated were goats and sheep. The most ancient sites where domesticated ovi-caprine bones were discovered date to about 8900 B.C. We must not forget, however, that paleontologists cannot determine domestication except as based on certain anatomical mutations which occurred only some two centuries at least after actual beginnings of domestication. The transition from hunting to breeding animals followed several stages. In the eleventh and tenth millennia, certain groups of the Near East practiced a specialized hunt, limited to one or two species of game. It is for this reason that 75-80% of the bones found in sites of this period (Wadi Madamagh, Beidha, El Khiam) belong to wild goats. This implies a certain symbiosis between the hunter and his preferred game, and a knowledge of the latter's ethology. The following stage was that of the selective hunt, still practiced today by African tribes. To avoid the decrease and progressive disappearance of game, hunters kill only elderly animals and surplus males; they do not attack either young or female animals. From there it is an easy step to pastoral activities. A period of semi-liberty within vast enclosures may have preceded domestication as such.

The most ancient traces of agriculture date to the ninth millennium as well, and they are concentrated in the coastal zones of Palestine and Syria. This region offered to communities living there in the tenth millennium a large range of nutritional resources. A varied vegetal nourishment (roots, seeds, leaves, fruits, buds) was gathered there by the women while the men were off hunting, and this played an increasing role in their subsistence. Quickly they realized that certain plants, such as the Gramineae, contained a nutritional value greater than others. And so they concentrated their attention on these. They learned to know the phases of the natural cycle of their lives (the fall of the seed to the earth, germination, growth, ripening). A first human intervention consisted in sowing seeds on land near human dwellings to obtain a greater concentration of these plants on a reduced surface. To achieve a more abundant harvest they began

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to weed out other varieties growing near the "sown" plants and to bury lightly the seeds, using a pointed stick, in order to protect them from the birds. And so, gradually, "fields" were born. The passage from one stage to another in the birth of this primitive agricultural technique was probably spread over several centuries. Human intervention in the natural cycle of plant life produced hybrids and mutants in plants which enable paleobotanists to determine which plants were cultivated. These mutations only occurred long after the first human intervention.

Here we will not deal with the consequences which the introduction of animal husbandry and agriculture had in a wide variety of areas; we will limit ourselves to the influence of the new way of life on the social position of women and to the consequences in the area of religion. Primitive agriculture, invented by women, remained for a very long time essentially a woman's task. Raising small animals, an innovation due to hunters, was likewise entrusted to women, for the men had to devote themselves to the hunt which still played a considerable role in the subsistence of these first peasant communities. Finally, the making of pottery, invented shortly after the beginning of agriculture, was also a woman's task. Women occupied a much more important position in the first farming groups than they had previously. It seems that the matriarchy which we find later among many peoples, had its roots in the social organization of the oldest agricultural communities.

This predominant role of the woman is reflected in the religion of those distant eras. Belief also felt the influence of this new way of life. Despite their enormous diversity, all neolithic religions, from those of the Near East to those of Europe and of China, are fertility cults based on the divinization of two opposing and complementary principles; the masculine principle representing the sun, the sky and fertile waters (rain, rivers) and the feminine principle personified by the earth which receives seeds and the rain and which gives birth to the harvests. Let us recall the primordial importance granted in archaic China to Yin, the feminine principle (the moon, the cold, winter) and to Yang, the masculine principle (the sun, heat, summer). However, among the first farmers the feminine principle is largely dominant, reflecting the social position of women. The masculine principle

is not absent, but phallic or solar representations are rare. On the other hand, we are struck by the abundance of female idols, ancestors of the great fertility goddesses of oriental or classical pantheons, such as Cybele, Ishtar, Aphrodite, Demeter, Persephone and so many others. These early goddesses not only personified earth and fertility, carnal love and sexuality, but beyond that they took on the role of funerary goddesses. Just as plants die in winter to come to life again in the spring in the bosom of the earth, they believed that the dead, whose remains are entrusted to the Earth-Mother, would be born again thanks to her in a new life in a mysterious beyond.

Toward the middle of the sixth millennium, more than two thousand years after the domestication of the goat and the sheep, man succeeded in taming the aurochs, ancestor to our cow. This brought about fantastic upheavals in many areas.

In our times big game hunters are unanimous in considering the buffalo as the most dangerous of all African animals. How much more dangerous still was the aurochs, the *Bos primigenius* of the paleontologists, the *urus* of the latin authors. It was an enormous beast, about 1.75 m. high at the shoulders, with a horn span of one meter and weighing more than a ton. Caesar, in *De bello gallico*, described the aurochs of the Hercynian Forest as being only slightly less in size than an elephant. He admired its strength, its speed and its aggression.

The aurochs already occupied a major place among the game hunted by the Neanderthals of the middle paleolithic era. Beginning with the later paleolithic era it occupied a not unimportant place in the metaphysical concepts of *Homo sapiens*. It is frequently represented in wall paintings in French and Spanish caves which, according to the seductive hypotheses proposed by Annette Lamine-Emperaire and by André Leroi-Gourhan, were sanctuaries on whose walls were represented the ideas of prehistoric man concerning the natural and supernatural organization of the living world, perhaps based on the alternation, the complementarity or the antagonism of male and female values.

We can recognize that hunters who had the courage to confront and to kill one of these terrifying monsters enjoyed from then on great prestige. This was still the case much later among the

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Germans of the first century B.C., as the already-cited text of Caesar has shown.

The first traces of domestication of the aurochs go back to the middle of the seventh millennium. These traces were found at Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia on the Konya plain which sheltered numerous herds of wild cattle. Çatal Hüyük, spread over thirteen hectares, is today the largest neolithic site of the Near East. The site offers a stratigraphy of fourteen levels of which only the twelve upper levels have been dug. They date from about 6250 to about 5400 B.C. The two lower levels, not dug, were also neolithic. Vestiges found in level XII, the most ancient of those which were dug, exhibit characteristics which are not found in the same era in any other neolithic site of the Near East. There can be found traces of the most ancient irrigation works which allowed the intensive growing of several kinds of cereals and legumes as well as various fruit trees. The aurochs was already entirely domesticated here, which allows us to suppose that its taming goes back to levels XIII or XIV (not yet dug). This animal already provided about 90% of the meat consumed. In addition, crafts and commerce occupied a much more important place than elsewhere. It is thought that at the time of level XII, the conglomerate was already surrounded by a solid wall and numbered from 5-6000 inhabitants. It is evident that several millennia before the invention of writing, Çatal Hüyük had reached a very advanced pre-urban level. Scattered among the houses, a rather large number of small sanctuaries attest to the existence of a cult in which the bull played a predominant role. Several other male animals likewise fulfill a cultic role, without approaching the importance of the role of the bull. A number of these chapels shelter steles topped with aurochs' horns as well as benches (intended for the officiants or for the faithful) in which were embedded several pairs of these horns. The walls were decorated with relief representations of the heads of bulls and also with the representation of a goddess giving birth to a bull. Other walls were covered with paintings: abstract motifs borrowed from tapestries; landscapes; pairs of confronting animals; dance scenes; jousts with bulls, stags, boars, bears and leopard which are a kind of prefiguration of the cultic games of Minoan Crete which we will come to later. The role of the bull in this

cult should hardly astonish us, nor should the fact that myths were created about the bull (as suggested by the image of the fertility goddess giving birth to the divine bull). In fact, the domestication of the aurochs must have strongly impressed the people of this era. If the hunter needed an exceptional courage to attack the great wild bull and kill it, it was necessary to be covered by almost divine protection to succeed in taming an animal with such strength, such courage and such virility. And so the bull quickly became a part of the fertility cult and furnished one of the essential elements of the masculine principle there. Considered as a solar animal, it became the symbol of creative virility and was even considered as an incarnation of the great creator god.

The domestication of the aurochs had quite unexpected consequences of great import for the social structures, especially for the eviction of woman from the privileged position which up until then had been hers in neolithic society. If the raising of small animals could easily be attended to by women, raising bulls (which even today, after thousands of years of domestication, is still a dangerous animal) could only be a job for men. Moreover, the taming of the aurochs coincided with major improvements in agricultural techniques: the invention of irrigation and draining was to make cultivable regions which before were too dry or too swampy to permit the practice of rudimentary agriculture. The valleys of the Nile, the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Indus: there were to be born and to flourish the most ancient high civilizations. The digging of great drainage and irrigation canal networks was obviously a masculine task. Several centuries later the swing plough was invented, a primitive plough which replaced the simple pointed stick and the hoe, and to which the ox was attached. The raising of large animals, irrigation and drainage work, hard labor: these were the elements which separated women from agriculture and animal husbandry which from this time on became the exclusive privilege of men. The social position of women was considerably diminished; from now on she was relegated to domestic tasks, and society took on a patriarchal character. Among certain peoples vestiges of matriarchy persisted in a fossilized form, but society was from this time on largely dominated by men.

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This transformation of social structures did not hesitate to make itself felt in religion. The cult of the great fertility goddesses continued, but alongside this were to be found from now on male divinities, incarnations of the masculine principle. These gods of the sky, the sun and the storm now occupy the dominant positions in the various pantheons. After its domestication the bull was accepted in these pantheons and played a primary role there. Çatal Hüyük offers us the until now oldest known example, but there are numerous others. These taurine cults are found with innumerable variants, but there are several major general traits. Obviously the impressive strength and the inexhaustible virility of the bull were the most striking to man's imagination. The bull became in the cult a divine animal, personification of the great male principle which rules the universe. He incarnates the supreme god, the sun-god, creator of all things and dispenser of all benefits. In the early States of the Near East, the kings were considered first of all as the stewards of the supreme god, but quite quickly they became their living incarnations. And so they assumed symbolically the taurine character of the god, proclaiming themselves "wild bull," "divine bull," as it appears in their official titles as well as in the symbolism of their figured images. The power and the courage of the bull likewise inspired a warrior god, needed by the kings and the military caste who borrowed from the bull certain of his most notable attributes, especially his horns. Horned helmets are found in the most diverse eras and among the widest variety of peoples. Divinization of virility and consequently of life, the bull-god quite naturally became a funerary god, protector in the beyond of the deceased to whom he ensured survival. As psychopomp he led the souls of his faithful to the sojourn of the blessed. Finally, it was as god of virility and of life that he had to protect his believers against bad luck and evil charms. This is why quite often the bucranium or more simply the horns were used as an apotropaic or as an amulet against evil spells. Finally, the last characteristic which we find in a number of taurine cults is the sacrifice of the bull (quite often preceded by cultic games). This sacrifice of the divine animal, followed by the eating of its flesh or its sperm, is in no way a contradiction of taurology. We know many other religions where the sacrifice of a divine being

is supposed to have beneficent consequences for the community of believers and where the consumption of the god's flesh permits a participation in his divine nature.

Let us begin now a long excursion through the ancient world in order to establish the principal characteristics of various taurine cults. Then we will sketch the fortunes of the bull-god in the late Roman Empire when it was violently attacked by Christianity triumphant. Many relics indicate, however, that still, fifteen centuries later, the divine beast lives on.

Between the era of Çatal Hüyük and that of the first States in Lower Mesopotamia, more than two thousand years intervened which have left us with but few traces of the bull-god, perhaps only some representations of bucrania on painted neolithic vases of the Near East. It is nevertheless during this period that the theogonies and myths relative to the divine bull were created. Already in the civilizations of Uruk and of Djemret Nasr which immediately preceded the "historic" period in Lower Mesopotamia, cylinder seals engraved with mythological scenes show the bull-god among the major divinities. This carved art is explained by religious texts of the first Sumerian and Akkadian kingdoms. In the pantheons of these States we find almost everywhere a bull-god at the summit of the hierarchy. The various taurine divinities probably represent the avatars of a single multi-purpose god who took on, according to the city where worshipped, different names and more specialized attributes. All these gods have as one of their epithets *rimu* (aurochs). Among others we can note Enlil of Nippur, the creator of the world who imposed his law on the entire universe. Other *rimu*-gods are Anu of Uruk, god of heaven; Ea of Eridu, god of fertile waters and creator of man; Adad, god of storms; Nergal, god of the underworld; Ningirsu, great god of Lagash. We see that the attributes of these gods are specialized but still partially overlap (for example, the attributes of Enlil and Anu). To explain them, a complete theogony was worked out which assembled the bull-gods in "families" (Ningirsu is thus presented as the son of Enlil). Some historians of Near East religions have doubted, wrongly we think, the original taurine nature of these gods. According to them the epithet *rimu* had only a symbolic significance meant to emphasize the impetuous nature, the vigor,



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the combativeness of the god; the bull was simply the animal sacred to these divinities, their symbol, their mount, their companion. A whole collection of elements confirms just the opposite, that in the beginning it was the animal itself which was divinized and adored, and that only very progressively was it anthropomorphized. Moreover, the female consort of the bull-gods are cow-goddesses. They have the epithet *rimtu* (the feminine form of *rimu*) and they rank among the major goddesses of fertility and sexuality; for example, Ninlil, companion to Enlil, and Ishtar, consort of Anu. A temple of the Sumerian era at El-Obeid, dedicated to one of these *rimtu* goddesses, was decorated with two bas-reliefs, the first representing a frieze of fifteen bulls inlaid with copper, the second also of fifteen bulls inlaid with mother-of-pearl. None of these images has the slightest trace of anthropomorphism yet. A little later, however, appear images (statues, reliefs, carvings) of a bull-god with a bearded human head crowned with a tiara formed by three pairs of horns. This became, *pars pro toto*, the symbol of the bull-god. He is even sometimes symbolized by the horned tiara placed on a throne. The first Sumerian and Akkadian kings proclaimed themselves representatives on earth of the supreme god. Sargon, the first Akkadian king, calls himself Enlil's "tenant farmer." To affirm the divine origin of his power, he wears a horned helmet (derived from the horned tiara) and has as epithet "wild bull." Quite quickly these kings considered themselves incarnations of the god. Naram-Sin, grandson of Sargon, is a living god, incarnation of Enlil. On the Louvre stele, where he is represented leading his troops to victory, he is wearing the horned helmet. This latter, an attribute of the divinity, has become in that way the emblem of royal power and divine consecration. The image of a half-human, half-animal head, bearded and horned, acquires at about this same epoch an apotropaic value; it is found in the form of statuettes, amulets, seals.

All the elements of these taurine cults of the third millennium were picked up by religions of subsequent epochs. Among the Amorites of Babylon, toward the beginning of the second millennium, the great god Marduk is, as his name indicates ("young bull for the day"), both a bull-god and a sun-god who had inherited all the attributes of Enlil and who had become a part

of ancient theogony by becoming the son of Ea. It is to Marduk, "bull of light," that Hammurabi dedicated his famous legislative code.

Other impressive vestiges of taurine cults in Babylon are the great bulls on the gate of Ishtar which formed part of the city wall. This wall fell into ruins in the Hittite era, but it was rebuilt about 600 B.C. by Nebuchodonosor, and the bulls were restored with bricks varnished in blues, yellows and blacks. They played an apotropaic role and were meant to protect the city both against its enemies as well as against evil spirits.

It is also at the time of the ancient kingdom of Babylon that we find the most ancient versions of the Gilgamesh Epic, a collection of tales which deal with a legendary king Uruk who supposedly reigned about 2500. This epic enjoyed an extraordinary success throughout the Near East. Among its principal episodes, the one which deals with the heavenly bull interests us here. Gilgamesh, the king, was half-man, half-god. He rejected the amorous advances of the goddess Ishtar. Mortified, she begged Ana to send a heavenly bull to avenge her. However, with the help of his companion Enkidu, Gilgamesh succeeded in killing the animal. Ishtar then cursed the two heroes and assembled the priestesses and the sacred prostitutes of her temple in order to mourn the death of the bull. Gilgamesh, however, celebrated his victory by attaching the horns of the bull to the altar of the god Lugalmarada.

As for the Assyrians, close relatives of the Babylonians, their religion in many respects was only a copy of that of the Babylonians. Their national god Assur took the place of Marduk (just as he in turn had usurped the prerogatives of Enlil). Assur retained quite clear traces of his original taurine nature. He is often pictured wearing the horned helmet and standing up on a reclining bull. As for the *cherubim*, bulls with a bearded human face and a horned tiara, they have here become winged, but they have retained their apotropaic role. Protector-genies of the threshold, they were meant to ensure the security of the monumental gate of cities and palaces. Everyone is familiar with those of Khorsabad, whose impressive majesty has been admired by all visitors to the Louvre.

In Egypt, in the Neolithic civilization of Badari (fifth mil-

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lennium), tombs in which bulls were ceremoniously buried might indicate the existence of a taurine cult from this era. From the beginning of the dynastic era, the bull occupied an important place in religion. He appears as a solar divinity, god of creation and of fertility, and also as a funerary divinity. Since the Pharaoh was an incarnation of the divinity, it is hardly surprising that he was sometimes represented in the form of a bull. Already on the famous palette of Hierakonpolis which celebrates the victory of the first king of the First Dynasty, Narmer-Menes, over Lower Egypt and the unification of the kingdom, the king is represented in the form of a bull attacking an enemy citadel. In the Pharaonic titles we find epithets such as "heavenly bull," "powerful bull."

The taurine nature of Atoum-Rê, sun-god in the heliopolitan theology, comes out plainly in a passage of the Pyramid Texts relative to the daily birth of the sun. According to this myth, Nout, goddess of heaven, known as a cow-goddess, each morning gives birth to a sun in the form of a golden calf which grows up to become Arou-Rê, the Bull of Heaven. Arou-Rê must then impregnate the heavenly Cow so that she can bear, the following morning, a new sun.

Of all the taurine cults in Egypt, it is clearly that of Apis which is the best known. It goes back at least to the First Dynasty and had an eminently popular quality. Theologians integrated it into the different cosmogonies known to official religion. Apis was in this manner brought into relation with several of the major gods, thus showing the complexity of the attributes of this bull-god. As sun god, Apis is represented bearing the solar disk between his horns, decorated with the uraeus, symbol of his divine nature. Apis maintained close relations with Atoum-Rê who himself is a bull-god. Renowned for his creative power, Apis is a god of virility, of fertility and of creation, which explains his relations with Ptah, god of creation. The high priest of Ptah presided at installation ceremonies for each new Apis, ceremonies which were opened with a visit of Apis to the Nile sanctuary on the Isle of Roda. Like Apis, the divinized Nile was a god of fertility because of its fertile waters. Finally, Apis had close relations with Osiris, not only because this was the god of vegetation, but especially because Apis, like Osiris and like men, was subject to death. At

his death, Apis became Osiris and went to heaven while his earthly remains were buried according to Osirian rituals. A distinction was made between Apis-Osiris (the living bull) and Osiris-Apis (the dead bull), and this distinction was taken up again in the Ptolemaic period which saw the beginning of the celebration of the cult of Serapis, a local god of Sinope in Anatolia, which Ptolemy II assimilated into Osiris-Apis (Ouser-Hapí, Hellenized as Serapis) and which he made the supreme god of the State religion. Apis, mortal, quite naturally became a funerary divinity, and Serapis, represented in the form of a bull, had a role of psychopomp. He accompanied the deceased into the beyond for a rebirth in the other world. The cult of Serapis later enjoyed a certain popularity in the Roman Empire, and Hadrian had a very special devotion to him.

Egypt knew other taurine divinities (Merour/Mnevis at Hieropolis, Min at Coptos, etc.); but we will not spend any more time on them.

Asia Minor—where, at Çatal Hüyük, the most ancient traces of a taurine cult are found—was occupied in the second millennium by the Hurrians and Hittites, tribes of Indo-European stock. Among their principal divinities was Teshub, a bull-god, god of thunderbolts and storms. First represented in taurine form, as in a relief at Alaya Hüyük, he was progressively anthropomorphized. In reliefs and cylinder seals found at Hattushash, capital of the Hittites, he is always shown wearing the horned helmet, standing beside one or two bulls or leading a bull on a leash or astride the back of a bull. The son of Teshub, Sharruma, is called the “divine calf of Teshub.”

In Anatolia, in the Levant and in Syria, the cult of Adad, whom we have already met among the Sumer-Akkadian *rimu*-gods, was widespread in the second millennium. He was represented in human form but with his head decorated with divine horns and most frequently standing on the back of a bull holding a double lightning bolt in one hand and an axe in the other. His principal sanctuary was located at Doliche, and much later he was assimilated to Jupiter, the Jupiter Dolichenus, still represented standing on a bull, who was to conquer the Roman Empire and arrive even in the West. This Adad was obviously assimilated to Teshub, but also to occidental Semite bull-gods,

for example to El (a name which means simply “god”), supreme sun god of the Canaanites, often represented in the taurine form, and to the son of El, Ba’al (“lord”), god of rain and storms, represented horned and waving a thunderbolt. The Canaanite religion was in great part taken over by the Phoenicians, and it is probable that the Phoenician Ba’al was also a bull-god. This Phoenician Ba’al has as consort Astarte, who is none other than the Mesopotamian Ishtar, originally a *rimtu*-goddess. The cult of Ba’al and of Astarte was spread by the Phoenicians in their western Mediterranean colonies, e.g. to Carthage and Spain.

Before becoming strictly monotheistic, the Hebrews also practiced taurology. Later they carefully eradicated all traces of this in their sacred texts, but there are still vestiges in passages of the Bible dealing with Jacob, Joseph and Moses. A passage in Exodus speaks of Moses as being “horned” (and a horned Moses is represented in the famous statue by Michelangelo in the church of St. Peter in Chains in Rome). Could this be an allusion to the horned helmets of the gods and kings of the Near East which the Hebrew leaders borrowed? And what should we think of the winged “cherubim” which decorated the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle? They apparently must have been related to the Assyrian *cherubim* whose taurine nature is certain. But clearly it is the episode of Moses on Mount Sinai and Aaron with the golden calf which is the most undeniably explicit. It is not important to know if the golden “calf” was originally a Hebrew divinity or if the Hebrews had borrowed it from one of the Egyptian taurine cults. The fact is that when they left Egypt, the Hebrews were evidently bull-worshippers.

During the first millennium, Persian Iran witnessed the development of another taurine cult, that of Mithra. An Indo-European divinity mentioned in both the pantheon of the Hurrians of Mitanni as well as that of the Aryas of India, Mithra’s cult was contaminated in Iran by indigenous cults. Mithraicism did not find its full development until much later in the Roman Empire. We shall come back to it below.

The Persians had borrowed the winged *cherubim* from the Assyrians. Produced in enameled bricks, they decorated palaces, while the capitals of the columns bore the heads of bulls.

Development of taurine cults in Pakistan and in India involved

long developments which the scope of this essay does not allow us to examine. Let us note simply that the first traces of these go back to the Harappa civilization which flourished in the Indus Valley during the second half of the third millennium. Later this cult was fused with the religion of the Aryas who had settled in the north of India during the first half of the second millennium. Several divinities of the Aryas were bull-gods: Parjanya, god of storms; Indra, god of heaven and the sky; Rudra the destroyer. These divinities mentioned in the Vedic hymns were progressively identified with local divinities, giving birth to Hinduism, in which several major gods, such as Çiva and Krishna, still show clear taurine characteristics. Of all major religions of the contemporary era, it is without doubt Hinduism which has retained the clearest traces of the ancient taurine cults.

Let us return to Europe and more particularly to the Mediterranean region. There Crete was one of the major centers of the cult of the divine bull. Traces of the domestication of the aurochs are here almost as ancient as at Çatal Hüyük, found already at Knossos around 6000 B.C. We do not know if in this there already existed a form of taurolatry, but in the third millennium the cult of the bull occupied such a place in the Minoan religion that we must admit that it had already had a long formation period behind it. Later this cult was adopted by the Myceneans during the second millennium after their conquest of the island, and spread to mainland Greece. We can consider it as one whole without distinguishing between vestiges from the Minoan era and those of the Mycenaean era. Archaeological data (frescoes, statuettes, painted vases, rhytons, cups in precious metal, jewels, seals, gems, etc.) are complemented by legends and myths of classical Greece. These myths probably go back to the Minoan era, but the Greeks modified and altered them before inserting them into the framework of their own mythology. Despite their often delicate interpretation, this data allows us to rediscover the broad outlines of the religion of Crete and of its rituals.

The Cretan pantheon is dominated by two divinities incarnating the two opposed and complementary principles of every fertility cult. On the one hand there is a fertility goddess personifying the earth; she is represented in human form, clothed in a

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bell-shaped skirt and a tight, low-cut bodice which emphasizes her bare breasts. This was the ceremonial costume of Cretan women. However, we recognize the goddess from the fact that she is brandishing two snakes or that two snakes are wrapped around her forearms. Perfectly Chthonian animals, these reptiles emphasize the nature of the earth-goddess. On the other hand, the masculine principle is incarnated by a bull-god, god of heaven, of the sun and of thunder. He is often seen represented in the form of a bull, especially on libation vases in the form of a bull's head. We are all familiar with the black steatite rhyton with gold horns found in the "small palace" at Knossos, and the silver rhyton where the bull's forehead is embossed with the solar disk from the fourth Mycenaean tomb. Later the city of Gortyn was to coin money with the image of the god: a bull's head surrounded by a nimbus of sun rays. Divinity of thunder, this same god is often represented in a symbolic form by a double axe with two symmetrical cutting edges. This *labrys* figures in representations of scenes of sacrifice where the celebrants are priestesses. We might ask if the earth-goddess in Crete was the consort of the bull-god. This goddess is never represented as a cow-goddess, but it is not impossible that she was the companion of the bull-god. In fact, in Greek myths relative to Crete, we find mention of two unions between a supernatural bull and a woman. Let us briefly analyse these myths. The Greeks had assimilated the Cretan bull-god to their own Zeus, but a Zeus who had taken on the form of a bull for the occasion. Obviously we are referring to the legend of the rape of Europa by Zeus transformed into a bull. It is interesting to note that Europa, often represented as a Phoenician princess, in another version is a Beotian Chthonian goddess; the legend could thus be an account of a theogamy. Zeus took Europa to Crete where she gave birth to Minos. Minos, protected by his father, became king of the island where he ruled with wisdom. According to the Greek legend, Minos was not a god but a hero. However, it is not impossible that, just like Sumero-Akkadian kings, the kings of Minoan Crete had sublimated their divine ancestry and emphasized their relation to the bull-god. Let us come back to the legend. The god of the sea, Poseidon, as a sign of his esteem for Minos, sent him a white bull which the king was to sacrifice to

him. Minos, however, let the animal live. To punish his disobedience, Poseidon caused Pasiphaë, wife of Minos, to fall in love with the bull. With the help of Dedalus, she disguised herself as a cow and had relations with the animal, giving birth to the Minotaur, a hybrid being with a human body and a bull's head. Minos enclosed it in the Labyrinth, built by Dedalus. As vengeance against the Athenians who had killed his son Androgeos, Minos forced the Athenians to send him alternatively each year seven young men and seven young girls to feed to the monster. The third year the Minotaur was killed by the Athenian Theseus, with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of Minos. As for Poseidon's bull, it was tamed by Heracles (the sixth of the twelve labors) and taken to Marathon where it was finally killed by Theseus. After his death, Minos became, along with Rhadamante and Aeacus, one of the three judges of the Underworld. This Greek legend preserves distant echoes of the period when the Minoan thalassocracy dominated the Aegean world (the role of Theseus symbolizes the liberation of Athens from under the Cretan yoke). It confirms the importance of the bull-god in Crete and allows us to suppose that the kings of this isle (of which Minos is the proto-type) were identified with this god or at least emphasized their relation to him. The Labyrinth (in which we find the word *labrys*, the double axe which symbolized the god) was probably a sanctuary of the god to whom human sacrifices were possibly offered. These barbaric customs must have profoundly shocked the Greeks who then pictured the god in the monstrous form of the Minotaur. Finally, the role of Minos in the Underworld shows that in Crete, as in many other regions, the bull-god also assumed the role of funerary divinity.

Ceremonies in honor of the Cretan bull-god seem to have begun with an aurochs hunt in which the animal was meant to be captured alive. Such a hunt is seen on the famous gold goblets from Vaphio, near Sparta. Then came the cultic games in the course of which young men and women performed dangerous leaps over the back of the wild bull, seizing its horns at the moment when the animal charged them; other participants attempted to seize the horns of the aurochs and to make it fall by twisting its neck. The Minoan frescoes at Knossos and the My-



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cenean frescoes at Tiryns allow us to envisage these ancient "corridas." These games served as fertility rites; by touching the body and particularly the horns of the animal, participants believed they could receive, like some sort of nerve impulse, a part of the vigor, the virility and the fecundity of the animal. Then the bull was solemnly sacrificed to the bull-god, as is seen in a painting on a sarcophagus of Hagia Triada. The animal was bled at the jugular, and the blood was collected in a vase. Participants then drank the blood and ate the raw flesh. At the time of Euripides these rituals were still in practice in Crete as we learn from a fragment of *The Cretans* by the playwright. According to the text, "The feasts of raw meat brought the faithful to the sacred ground." It is not excluded that these (annual?) ceremonies were terminated by a ritual coitus of the king, incarnation of the bull-god, and the queen.

We will not leave Crete without having mentioned the "consecration horns," very stylized representations of bulls' horns which appeared at the top of facades of Minoan palaces and which played an apotropaic role quite similar to that of the Assyrian *cherubim*.

Sardinia also had taurine cults, already in the third millennium. In the Ozieri civilization, *domus de janas* were dug into the earth, hypogea in which the funerary chamber, carved into the rock, often reproduced the interior of a house of living people with a relief image of the door frame and lintel and even of the roof beams. Female idols have been found in these hypogea which apparently personify the great earth-goddess in her role of funerary divinity, and also the heads or the horns of bulls in relief, placed above the door or on the walls of the funerary chamber. The bull here fulfills a double role: as funerary divinity he guards the deceased in the tomb; protective divinity of the house, he preserves it from evil charms. We will come back to the apotropaic role of the head and horns of the bull, still today considered a powerful talisman. Let us note once more that, just as in Crete, we find here united the two complementary elements of the fertility cult, the female goddess in anthropomorphic form, the masculine principle in the form of a bull.

About 1500 in Sardinia began the civilization of the *Nuraghi* with its monumental vestiges which fascinate all visitors to the

island. Was this the culture of the mysterious *Shardana*, one of the "Peoples of the Sea" who made several raids in Lower Egypt at the time of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties and who were to give their name to Sardinia? The *Nuraghi* people seems to have practiced a taurine cult also. Among the many bronze statuettes which have been left to us, there are figurines of bulls, reproductions of boats with a bull's head as prow figure, supernatural beings with two pairs of eyes and four arms wearing the horned helmet, military chiefs with the same head-dress. Let us recall that in the Near East this helmet was the attribute of the anthropomorphized bull-gods and of the divine kings. However, it seems clear that the "Peoples of the Sea" originated on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It is not to be excluded, then, that the *Shardana* contributed to the westward extension of this sacred head-dress. Moreover, it is quite possible that the original meaning of this helmet was changed, modified, or even lost altogether along the way. Let us note that in Sardinia the horns, both on the bull figurines as well as on warriors' helmets, often underwent a modification: their tips terminate in a sort of spherical form. We do not know the exact meaning of these "round-tipped horns" which we will find later in Gaul. From Sardinia the horned helmet moved to Corsica where, in the *Torres* civilization, several menhir statues also represent warriors wearing the horned helmet. The *Torres* civilization is quite closely related to that of the Sardinian *Nuraghi*. An argument in favor of identifying the *Nuraghi* and the *Torres* peoples with the *Shardana* is drawn from the fact that in Egyptian reliefs representing battles between Egyptians and the "Peoples of the Sea" (at Medinet-Abou for example), the latter are shown wearing the horned helmet. This helmet spread from the Mediterranean to the North. It is also found among the Celts as well as the Germans, all the way to Scandinavia.

The Balears also practiced a taurine cult which goes back to the period of the *Talayot* civilization (first half of the first millennium). This cult was perhaps born from the influence of the Carthaginians who occupied the islands of Ibiza and Formentera and came often to Mallorca and Minorca to recruit mercenaries, or from the influence of the Greeks who stopped in the Balears when they came to trade with the Iberians. Among vestiges of

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this taurine cult must be mentioned three superb bull's heads in bronze, life size, found in a sanctuary at Costitx, and the enormous bull's horns in bronze of Son Corro, of Cova Monja and of Son Mas. Bull's heads decorated bronze ritual vases, and numerous statuettes of bulls have come down to us. Some were discovered in tombs, for example at Son Creta, Lluchmayor. Here too the bull-god fulfilled a funerary role.

In the Iberian peninsula the taurine cults reached their full development only towards the middle of the first millennium. At this time a large coastal zone, from Cadiz in the south up to the Pyrenees in the north-east, was inhabited by the Iberians, while the rest of the peninsula was occupied by the Celts. The Iberians were profoundly influenced by Greek and Punic colonies which sprang up along the Mediterranean coast, and we can wonder if these taurine cults were not due to these influences. In any case, they are perhaps to be seen in relation to the existence among the Iberians of large herds of animals, predecessors to present-day *ganaderias*. A war ruse made them famous. During the first Punic War, the Iberians won a victory over Hamilcar Barca by sending against the Carthaginian troops a herd of bulls to whose horns they had attached burning torches to frighten them. During the Second Punic War, the Iberian mercenaries of Hannibal repeated the stratagem against the Romans.

Diodorus of Sicily (second half of the first century B.C.) expressly mentions the taurine cult of the Iberians and puts it in relation with the legend of Heracles and the oxen of Geryon. After Heracles had stolen these oxen on the isle of Erythia (which the legend locates off the coast of Cadiz), he went through Spain and through Gaul on his return to Greece. While he crossed through the south of Spain, he gave several bulls and several cows of his flock to the king of Tartessos. At the time of Diodorus, the descendants of these sacred animals were still raised for sacrifice in a sanctuary dedicated to Heracles. A number of large stone statues of bulls (such as those at La Albufereta, Cotijo de Alamo, Obulco, etc.) attest to the popularity of the taurine cult. Five of them were found in the ruins of a large building—probably a sanctuary for the worship of the bull—at Rojales. Others such as those at El Molar, El Cabecico de Tesoro, etc., come from necropolises, which shows that among the Iberians

also the bull was a funerary divinity. But it was also a solar divinity, as indicated by the bronze bull of Azaila whose forehead is stamped with a solar rosette. A special mention should be made of *Bicha* of Balazote, a statue of a bull with a bearded and horned human head, which indicates a nascent anthropomorphism of the divine bull. The formal source of this image must not be sought in Mesopotamia, for it is difficult to see how the Iberians could have known the Assyrian *Cherubim* which are to be found neither among the Phoenicians nor among the Carthaginians. Instead we must think of Greek influences: the Greeks sometimes represented their fluvial divinities, such as Acheloos, as androcephalous bulls. We find such images of Acheloos on Sicilian coins (e.g. at Gela and at Catania) and also on Spanish coins at Numantia and Emporiae (Ampurias). We should also mention bull figurines of bronze and of ceramic and several paintings on Iberian vases representing bulls whose bodies are covered with solar symbols or even ritual dances (where one dancer is seen whose forearms are plunged into the bull's horns) and taurine games (comparable to those already mentioned in Crete).

In the Celtic pantheon can be found several theriomorphic gods: the wild boar-god, the ram-god, the horse-god, the deer-god, and also one or several bull-gods. A taurine cult developed among the Celts from the Iberian peninsula, probably under the influence of the Iberians. A great number of bull statues in stone have been found in their territory, with a concentration in the center-west of the peninsula. Many tourists have admired the group of five bulls from Guisando. Let us also mention two votive or cultic objects coming from Portugal; these are flattened rods which end in a bull's head and to which have been attached animal figurines (goats, sheep, pigs) and figures preparing to sacrifice these animals. In Gaul numerous statuettes of bulls in bronze have been discovered. These date for the most part from the Roman era, but apparently they prolong native Celtic traditions. Certain of these bulls have the forehead marked by a solar disk, others have round-tipped horns (a phenomenon already noted in Sardinia), still others have three horns. The Celts attributed a magic meaning to the number three. We find among the Celts a tricephalic god; the *Matres* (fertility goddesses)

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are frequently shown in groups of three; some statuettes are triphallic, and in Celtic art we often find a triple repetition of certain motifs. In the eyes of the Celts, these ternary combinations possessed marvelous virtues and intensified the magic power of the being or the object represented. This has been referred to as "repetition of intensity."

A more important monument was found in Paris, the pillar erected by the *nautae Parisiaci*, the boatmen of the city of the *Parisii* under the rule of Tiberius where are represented, together with the great gods of the Roman pantheon (Jupiter, Vulcan, Mercury, Venus), four Celtic divinities: Esus, Cernunnos, Smertorios and the bull-god *Tarvos Triganarnus*, the bull with three cranes. While Cernunnos, originally a stag-god, was shown in human form and retained only his stag's antlers from his original nature, *Tarvos* was still represented in his animal form. We do not know the meaning of the three (note once more the number three!) cranes which are perched on his head between his horns and on his back. It is probably part of a myth whose meaning escapes us. Another Celtic myth is represented by the famous vermeil cauldron found at Gundestrup in Denmark, a masterpiece of Celtic toreutics dating from the second or first century B.C. It was probably made in Gaul, but motifs of oriental inspiration are not lacking (elephants, griffons, etc.). On one of the interior plaques of the cauldron is shown (repeated three times!) a scene of a bull sacrifice, a scene which also is seen, although in much more detailed manner, on the round plaque which covered the bottom of the cauldron. About thirty years ago we suggested that this is a Celtic interpretation of the myth of Mithra (which will come up again later), a myth which the Celts were able to know during their migrations in the Danube basin and in Anatolia. The Celts also knew the horned helmet. On the Gundestrup cauldron we find even a helmet with round-tipped horns as in Sardinia, and on the arch of Orange horned helmets bear a solar disk between the horns. Finally the bull appears in numerous places names (such as *Tarvenna*/Thérouanne, *Tarba*/Tarbes), in the names of tribes (*Taurini*, *Taurisci*) and in the names of people (*Brogitaros*, *Deiotaros*, *Donnotaurus*, *Tauricianus*, *Taurilla*, etc.). We know the religious importance attributed to the choice of a name given to new-born babies, as well as the name given to

areas where settlements were made. These numerous personal names and place names also attest to the importance of the taurine cult among the Celts.

After this tour of proto-historic Europe, let us move finally into the Greco-Roman world. At least three of the gods of the Greek pantheon—and not unimportant ones since they are Zeus, Poseidon and Dionysus—were probably bull-gods originally.

Zeus, master of heaven and of storms, was anthropomorphized quite early, but traces of his original nature remain. A stele in the museum of Istanbul, dedicated to Zeus Olbis, is revealing. The god is shown in human form, but he has the horns of a bull. Moreover, on the pediment of the monument, the god is shown in the form of a bull's head. In many texts Zeus has epithets which recall his taurine nature: *Kérastès*, *Kerasphoros*, etc. In the legends Zeus more than once took on the form of a bull, especially for his amorous adventures, for example his affair with Io, who changed into a calf. This explains the ease with which he was identified with the Cretan bull-god in myths dealing with Europa, Minos and the Minotaur. Let us recall that in these same legends Poseidon also played a leading role; it is he who sent the white bull to Minos with whom Pasiphaë was to fall in love. And Poseidon was also a taurine divinity, as indicated in his epithets *Tauros*, *Taureios*, *Taureos*, etc. He was sometimes represented in the form of an androcephalous horned bull. At the festivals of Poseidon at Ephesus, the cupbearers were called *Tauroi*, and in other cities festivals in honor of the god of the sea were called *Tauria*. At Larissa in Thessaly and even elsewhere cultic games were organized in honor of Poseidon similar to those practiced in Crete. Participants in these *Taurokathapsiai* excited the bull by means of a red cloth (the most ancient mention of the *muleta*!), performed acrobatic leaps over the back of the animal at the moment of its charge and, finally, when it was sufficiently exhausted, they killed it with a sword or a dagger, or even by seizing its horns and twisting its neck in order to break its cervical vertebrae. Even clearer still is the taurine nature of Dionysus, god of life, of fertility, of vegetation. His epithets are eloquent: *bull-god*, *horned god*, *son of the bull*, and they are explained in certain texts, as for example in the *Bacchae* of Euripides. At Cyzikos, Dionysus is shown in his temple in

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the form of a bull. We will not linger over the passionate and orgiastic character of the ceremonies of the cult of Dionysus—Bacchanales, Anthesteries—during which wine and sexual excesses put the participants in a trance and brought them to what Euripides calls “divine madness.” At Athens the high point of the Anthesteries was a theogamy between the queen (later replaced by a priestess) and the divine bull; this ritual intercourse took place in the Boukoleion (“Palace of the Bull”). As god of vegetation (which dies in autumn to be reborn in the spring), Dionysus had obviously acquired a funerary character as well. In the necropolis of Keramikos at Athens, a large taurine statue in marble was placed on the tomb of a certain Dionysus of Kollytos who, because of his name, had become a follower of the cult of Dionysus. This statue shows both the taurine nature of the god and his funerary aspect.

Was Apollo also a bull-god? At Delos an altar to this god, made of interwoven bull’s horns, was famous. In the sanctuary of Apollo, Demetrios Poliorcetes had built the “stoa of the bulls,” a large hall intended to shelter a warship offered in homage to this god. But the most astonishing vestige of a taurine cult in Greece is the life-size statue of a bull found in 1939 at Delphos under the pavement of the Sacred Way. It was made of silver sheets whose units were assembled by strips of bronze, all of which were attached to a wooden carcass framed by silver nails. The horns, ears, forehead fur, sex and hooves were golden. The work dates to the sixth century, but the “Treasury” which sheltered it burned during the fifth century, and what remained of the votive offerings was placed in a hiding place under the Sacred Way, safe from robbers.

The Greeks also depicted certain river divinities with the features of androcephalous bulls. The relation between rivers and the bull-god can be easily explained. The fertile waters are one of the male elements of fertility rites, just like the bull. Moreover, the tumultuous and roaring waters of torrents at the time of the melting of the snow recalled the wild and impetuous spirit of the bull. The river-god most often shown in the form of a bull is Acheloos, the god of the Aspropotamos. His legend is the source of a taurine symbol which has been perpetuated down to our own times, the horn of plenty. Acheloos and Hera-

cles both wished to obtain the favors of Deianira. During their combat, Heracles pulled out one of the horns of his rival and gave it to the Nymphs. This *cornucopia* magically filled itself with whatever the Nymphs could desire. Later the *cornucopia* became the habitual attribute of all divinities of fertility and abundance. This image became more and more popular, and it is still frequent in our days.

More than once we have already referred to the sacrifice of the bull. This ceremony played a major role in the Greco-Roman world. The bull chosen as sacrificial victim had to meet certain criteria (age, color of fur, lack of physical defects, never having been attached to a plow, etc.). He was sacrificed only to certain divinities (Zeus, Poseidon, Heracles) or on the occasion of the principal state ceremonies (the Dipoleia and the Panathenea at Athens, the *suovetaurilia* at Rome). The animal, with gilded horns and decked in garlands and ribbons, was led to the altar where a priest slaughtered it with a blow of an axe. The fat and certain consecrated parts were burned on the altar and then the priests and the faithful drank its blood and consumed its flesh. In the most ancient times its skull was hung above the door of the temple as an apotropaic talisman against evil spirits. Later the real skull was replaced by the bucranium, an image of the skull and horns of the animal. Bucrania were often represented on religious edifices and altars. At Rome the bucranium rivaled the phallus as talisman. In fact, the phallus was, just as the bull, a symbol of fertility, virility and life, and it formed a powerful protection against death and the powers of evil. The bucranium is found especially on religious monuments, the phallus on civil monuments (for example above the gates of cities) and on private buildings.

Italy was so profoundly affected by the Greek influence that we can ask if the taurine cults which we meet among the Latins and other Italiot tribes on the one hand, and among the Etruscans on the other, are indigenous or represent borrowings from the Greeks. It is not excluded that the Italiots knew an indigenous taurine divinity; in fact, during the great revolt against Rome in 91-89 B.C., the confederated Italiot tribes minted coins on which a bull, a symbol or a divinity of the Italiots, is shown eviscerating the Roman wolf.



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Among the Etruscans we find the bull as funerary divinity (image of bulls in the *Tomba dei Tauri* at Tarquinia, two skulls of bulls hung over the door of a burial chamber at Cerveteri) and as apotropaic (numerous antefixes in *terra cotta*, coming from various sanctuaries, showing the bearded and horned head of an androcephalous bull). A pitcher in *bucchero nero* from Chiusi, whose neck is shaped like the head of a bull and on whose body is shown an image of a man holding a bull by one horn and by one foot (a motif which is repeated five times), probably had a cultic function, but the meaning of the scene escapes us.

For Rome, there is no indication of the existence of an indigenous taurine cult, but in the course of the centuries, the Romans accepted into their pantheon foreign divinities whose original taurine nature cannot be placed in doubt, for example, Jupiter Dolichenus and Serapis.

The cult of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, the *Mater Deum*, introduced in Rome in 240 B.C., originally had no bull-worshipping aspect. However, towards 160 A.D., the ceremony of the *taurobolium* had been added to the cult of Cybele, a taurine sacrifice the nature of which has been much discussed. The *taurobolium* is already mentioned during the second half of the second century B.C., but at that time there was not yet a relation between the ritual and the cult of Cybele. Judging from the etymology of the word, the *taurobolium* consisted originally in a ritual hunt, such as had been common in Crete, followed by the sacrifice of the captured animal. In the course of the sacrifice, the bull's genitals were buried in the earth impregnated by its blood; thus it is clear that we are dealing with a fertility rite. Once associated with the cult of Cybele, the *taurobolium* evolved more, and its meaning was modified. Perhaps under the influence of Christian baptism (or vice-versa, for there are sharp controversies on this point) the *taurobolium* became a rite of purification and initiation. It is described in detail in its final form by Prudence, a Christian poet, around 400 A.D. The *tauroboliatus* descended into a pit covered by an open grating floor on which was immolated a bull in such a way that the blood flowed into the pit and completely drenched the believer who was thus washed of his sins and reborn to a new life (*in aeternum renatus*).

Still more important was the role of the bull in Mithraicism. We have already referred in passing to Mithra, an Indo-European god worshipped by the Hurrians of Mitanni as well as the Aryas of India. In Persia Mithra was one of the gods of Mazdeism. However, it was later among the Romans that the cult of Mithra knew an extraordinary development. It had been introduced in the west by merchants and especially by soldiers who had come to know of it in the course of campaigns of the Roman army in the east.

Through the effects of syncretisms, the cult of Mithra had been subject to many contaminations, in Persia (where Mazdeism was stamped with elements of Babylonian astrology) as well as in the west (where the gods of Mazdeism were assimilated to the divinities of the Greco-Roman pantheon). Mithra himself, however, retained many of the traits of his original nature as god of the solar light, mediator between men and the great unapproachable and unknowable gods. His myths go back to a quite distant past. Mithra, there, had more the character of a *hero* (in the Greek sense of the word) than of an all-powerful god. Born mysteriously of a rock, Mithra had first of all to prove himself to the Sun. Later Ormazd, supreme god of heaven, ordered him to take possession of a terrifying aurochs, the first living being which Ormazd had created. After innumerable episodes and trials (which symbolize the trials and sufferings of human existence) Mithra conquered the bull and led it into the cave where he lived. Here we find a very clear echo of the enormous impression made in the distant past by the domestication of the aurochs and of the prestige acquired by the one who had performed such a deed. Only a divine hero was capable of that! Later the Sun ordered Mithra to kill the bull, to which he had in the meantime become quite attached. Much against his will Mithra began to pursue the bull who had escaped and he killed it by plunging his knife into its throat. From the victim's body then sprang all plants which are useful to man: wheat was born of the spinal cord, grape vines from the blood. Ahriman, god of darkness and of evil, then sent his demons (in the form of a scorpion, an ant and a serpent—three chthonian animals) to poison the vital forces from which the miracle arose: the blood and the testicles of the bull. Thanks

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to the intervention of Mithra's dog, they did not succeed. From the sperm of the bull then were born all animals useful to man. And so, thanks to the sacrifice of the bull, Mithra the bull-conqueror became humanity's great benefactor. At Rome Mithraicism was the last pagan religion, and its success was such that it has been said that, if the west had not become Christian, it would today be Mithraic.

We should add a word on the Roman's passion for bullfights. These were introduced in Rome at the time of Caesar, perhaps on the emperor's initiative; they were incorporated into the games of the amphitheater. Caesar even brought aurochs from the Hercynian Forest for these combats. From Rome the bullfight vogue spread to the provinces, especially to Gaul, to Spain and to Africa. In Spain, where taurine cults existed even before the Roman era, their success was huge, as is proven by the images on lamps and sigillated vases, inscriptions, literary texts. Martial—who was Spanish!—used this as subject for a number of his epigrams, and the *venator* Carpophorus, whose deeds he celebrated, was as popular in the first century A.D. as are the Manoles and Belmontes of our day.

The bitter struggle of paganism and Christianity in the fourth century terminated in 391 with the banning of the pagan cults by Theodosius. Because of their importance, the cults of Cybele and of Mithra were especially targeted. Even though at this time the games of the amphitheater had lost entirely their original religious and cultic significance, they were drawn into the ban; the Christians had too often seen the martyrs of their religion die therein. With regard to the bullfights particularly, the role of the bull in the cults of Cybele and of Mithra had made of the animal a diabolic incarnation in the eyes of the Christians. It was so when the Council of Toledo in 427 issued an "official" description of the devil: a gigantic being with horns on its head, cloven-hoofed, with the ears of an ass, a hairy body, claws and an enormous phallus, a description which makes us think of the androcephalous bulls which we have so often encountered. The ban on bullfights in the decree of Theodosius met with only little resistance in Italy and in Gaul, but the combats were so deeply rooted in Spain that the Church was forced to relent. In keeping with its traditional policy of "christianizing" pagan

customs which were impossible to eradicate, the Church adopted bullfights in Spain by placing them under its own protection and by having them take place on the day of the great annual *Feria*. It is obviously not part of our intentions to sketch the history of the Spanish *corrida*. It suffices to recall that the Spaniards passed on their passion for bullfights to all inhabitants of the peninsula, to the Vandals and Visigoths as well as to the Moors. Having become an entertainment whose original religious significance has been completely eradicated, the bullfight has played no less important a role in Iberian culture and civilization. We need only think of the famous canvases of a Goya or of a Picasso, of the poems of Federico Garcia Lorca. We cannot resist the pleasure of a barbed anecdote. Although the primitive Church had banned bullfights from Rome, it was a pope of Spanish origin, Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI, who re-introduced the *corrida* into the Eternal City toward the end of the fifteenth century.

From Çatal Hüyük to today's *corridas* more than nine thousand years have passed, and during this entire period the powerful animal has never ceased fascinating man and inspiring in him a kind of religious awe. So it is scarcely surprising that the *corridas* and the rodeos of the American West are by no means the only surviving elements of the ancient taurine cults. The identification of the king with the bull-god left its traces at least until the end of the fifth century, as is proven by the tomb of the Frankish king Childeric who died in 481. Among the rich objects left in his tomb, a small bull's head of gold and garnets was found whose forehead was embossed with the solar disk. Childeric certainly did not identify himself with a solar divinity, but it is generally recognized that this solar bull's head was an emblem of his royal power.

As fertility god the bull still plays a major role in Spanish legends and folklore. We will restrict ourselves to two examples. There is first of all the procession of the "bull of St. Mark." The day of the Evangelist's feast day (his symbol is the bull!), a bull covered with garlands is led through the streets of numerous Andalusian villages; all along the route which leads to the church, the women caress it in order to have many children. The *encierra* of Pamplona also seems to be a fertility rite. The day of the *Feria*

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bulls are released in the streets; they are excited by the cries of the crowd and stampede while the men attempt to touch the animals without being trampled or gored. This *encierra* certainly recalls the Cretan games of long ago where participants also tried to touch the horns of the bull in order to receive a share of his virility.

And finally it is in Italy where we find the clearest remnants of the apotropaic role of the bull. More than once we have seen in the Abruzzi region bull's skulls, with the horns still intact, nailed above the doors of farms and barns to protect them from the *jettatura*, an evil spell. We know how lively still today is the belief in the *jettatura* and the *malocchio* among the common people of Italy. When someone is suspected of having the evil eye and of being able to cast an evil spell, two gestures are thought to have sure apotropaic value: the phallus gesture (the thumb placed between the index and the middle finger) and the horn gesture (the thumb, middle and ring fingers bent and the index and little fingers outstretched to represent bull's horns)—two gestures whose origins go back at least three thousand years!

Man and the bull: a relation which has not yet ceased to astonish us.

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