THE HIEROCENTRIC STATE

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THE GREAT ASSEMBLY

IN HIS great history of Greek religion, Professor Nilsson comments on the neglect by scholars of an institution of first importance in the development of civilization and the state. That is the panegyria, the great assembly of the entire race to participate in solemn rites essential to the continuance of its corporate and individual well-being. The meleza was a tremendous affair (Pindar leaves us in no doubt about that), yet it was paralleled by equally great and imposing assemblies of other nations all over the ancient world. At hundreds of holy shrines, each believed to mark the exact center of the universe and represented as the point at which the four quarters of the earth converged—the navel of the earth—one might have seen assembled at the New Year—the moment of creation, the beginning and ending of time—vast concourses of people, each thought to represent the entire human race in the presence of all its ancestors and gods.

A visitor to any of these festivals would have found a market or fair in progress, the natural outcome of bringing people together from wide areas in large numbers, and the temple of the place functioning as an exchange or bank. He could have witnessed ritual contests: foot, horse, and wagon races, odd kinds of wrestling, choral competitions, the famous Troy game, beauty contests, and what not. He would note that all came to the celebration as pilgrims, often traversing immense distances over prehistoric sacred roads, and dwelt during the festival in booths of green boughs.

What would most command a visitor’s attention to the great assembly would be the main event, the now famous ritual year-drama for the glorification of the king. In most versions of the year-drama, the king wages combat with his dark adversary of the underworld, emerging victorious after a temporary defeat from his duel with death, to be acclaimed in a single mighty chorus as the worthy and recognized ruler of the new age. The New Year was the birthday of the human race and its rites dramatized the creation of the world; all who would be found in “the Book of Life opened at the creation of the World” must necessarily attend. There were

2 S. H. Hooke (ed.), The Labyrinth (London: 1937) and Th. H. Gaster, Thespis (New York: H. Schuman, 1950), see general references of the subject. See infra for other references.
coronation and royal marriage rites, accompanied by a ritual representing the sowing or begetting of the human race; and the whole celebration wound up in a mighty feast in which the king as lord of abundance gave earnest of his capacity to supply his children with all the good things of the earth. The stuff for this feast was supplied by the feasters themselves, for no one came "to worship the King" without bringing his titles and first fruits.\

Volumes would not suffice to trace the survival of present-day institutions throughout the world from the practices and rites of the ancient national assemblies. They were the general reservoir into which the myriad culture-streams of an earlier day eventually found their way, and from which are supplied in turn the mainstreams of our civilization. Space will not allow us to examine these magnificent gatherings one by one, nor is it necessary to draw the same identical picture a score of times. However, since no work on the subject has to our knowledge yet appeared (though the evidence is neither suspect nor difficult of access), it will be necessary to reinforce our claims by passing quickly from west to east over the ancient world, pointing out as we go some of the more important sources to which the student might turn for a description of a score of the more illustrious assemblies.

Beginning in the far northwest, we may take the great Things of Iceland as typical of the primitive assemblies of the whole Germanic North. The meeting place was a mound (the holy logberg, mountain of the law) in the center of a stone circle where the four quarters of the island met; the president of the meeting was a ritual king (the Gothi); attendance was compulsory; booths, feasting, games, markets, and the rest were never lacking. Identical though more imposing were the rites at Uppsala and at various Teutonic shrines on the continent. Typical of all Celtic nations was the Beltene fair of the Irish at Uisnech, held "at the turn of the year," at the hill where stood "the stone and umbilicus

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of Ireland... regarded as being in medius et meditellio terrae positum." There the king of the new age was established and the creation of the world was rehearsed. An inscription from Ancyla recording just such a fair of the ancient Galatians* reminds us that we are dealing with no
medieval innovations in the Irish fairs or in those of Britain and Gaul, which follow the same pattern.

In moving terms, Cicero has described the immemorial rites at Emna in Sicily: "It is the exact center of the island, and is called the navel of Sicily" where, at a sacred lake in the foot of a mountain there congregated once a year "a renowned assemblage of people not only from Sicily but from other nations and races." Rome itself was originally, and forever remained, a place of universal assembly. The old Roma quadrata was, or contained, a circular enclosure divided into four equal parts, at the center of which stood the lapis manalis, the seal of the underworld, marking the mundus—a term held by some to be identical with the Greek kosmos. At the end of the sacred roads stood the king's house on the holy mount. Hiither repaired the whole human race for the ius
saeclares, the universal birthday party from which no human being was permitted to be absent. On this occasion, the king acted as host to all the world; and having won a ritual contest with the powers of darkness, was hailed as father and king of the race for a hundred years."
The panegyris of the Greeks has already been mentioned. Delphi furnishes the best known, but by no means the only, example. There the god sat on his holy mound, "the middle omphalos, the navel of the earth," to bestow his blessing on the multitudes that came along the sacred roads to pay him homage on his birthday, and to live in booths and hold their feasts, games, and markets. Jane Harrison and others have fully demonstrated the royal combat, victory and coronation to be the original kernel of the rites.

Scholars have long noted the remarkable parallel between the Greek rites at Eleusis and those at the great Slavic shrine of Svantevit: aside from the death-and-resurrection motif of the mysteries, the Slavic assemblies resemble those of other nations in every particular. The great Egyptian assemblies that astonished the Greeks by their size and splendor were from the beginning New Year's gatherings to celebrate the coronation of the king; the place was the mountain of creation at the center of the universe, and all the essential aspects of the panegyris were conspicuous.

The Kaaba at Mecca is still thought to mark the exact middle of the earth and hub of the universe; it is surrounded by special shrines marking the cardinal points, and the roads that lead to it are holy, the main one being called the Royal Road. There at a set time the whole human race must assemble in one tremendous concourse, as it shall assemble on the Day of Judgment before the throne of God. It was common in the Middle Ages to represent Jerusalem on maps as the exact center of the earth, and to depict the city itself as a quartered circle. Long before the days of

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Footnotes:

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9 Idem, pp. 10, 12, 41 f.; C. Sauer, Horizonte. Het Melkmaansche Feest (Leiden: 1909); J. Wellhausen, Reise durch den Heiligenland (Berlin: 1891), pp. 56 f. Arabic literature is full of the great assemblies of men, gods, animals, etc., that the most impressive treatment of the theme is in the text edited by Fr. Omero, Duer und Mensch vor dem Koenig der Gumen (Leipsig: 1913).
the prophets, that place was the seat of a great assembly and of the royal year-drama, of which many echoes survived in the Bible. The records from Ras Shamra describe the same rites in ancient Syria, and early Christian writers tell of other great assemblies in the desert.

The most complete descriptions of the year-rites, as of the hiero-centric doctrine, have been supplied by the Babylonian investigators, to one of whom (Father Burrows) we are beholden for the term "hiero-centric," as that which best describes those cults, states, and philosophies that were oriented about a point believed to be the exact center and pivot of the universe. Dumont and Albright have collaborated to demonstrate the essential—prehistoric—identity of the earliest Babylonian rite with the greatest festival of India, the Aśvamedha. But perhaps the most brilliant of all the great assemblies took place at the Persian Nauroz—continuing the very ancient practices described in the Avesta and the Veddas—when all the world followed the Royal Road to the presence of the king to present their gifts and feast as his guest on his birthday, the New Year, the only day on which his glory was visible. The great annual assemblies at the courts of the Mongol Khans and the Chinese emperors, to which we shall refer below, follow the identical pattern. It also occurs in the New World and among primitive tribes.

The Kingly Calling

But granted that these great assemblies did take place, and that the rites were far too peculiar and elaborate to have been independently invented in a hundred different places, what then? The dominant posi-

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6 E.g., that at Abraham's Oak in Mamer, Somesin Hist. Ecl. II, 4 (Méina, Paean, Graec. 67, 914), and Exodus Viss Conventetum 15 (Ibem., Vol. 10, p. 1,16).


tion of the king in the hierocentric rites suggests the kingly office as the natural point of departure for further examination of the origin and survival of the system.

Within recent years a number of important studies have appeared treating of the sacral kingship as a single uniform institution throughout the Ancient East. The orthodox conceptions of kingship are not legion but only one, which is clearly restated by each monarch in his turn.

From the beginning Pharaoh is "ruler of all that which is encircled by the sun," he is "the son of God, none can resist him; all people are subject to him, his bounds are set at the ends of the earth," to him the gods "have promised world dominion." In Babylonia where "the earthy was a counterpart of the heavenly monarchy, but distinct," Naramsin called himself "King of the Four Regions" and "King of the Universe." Goethe says that the Weltreicht-Idee was first carried out in practice by those Semitic conquerors who made Akkad the Mittelpunkt der Welt at about 2600 B.C. Whether or not this actually was the first world empire, from that time on every state in the East erreicht sich theoretisch die Weltmacht. The Assyrian King duly called himself "King of the four quarters of the world, the sun of all peoples . . . conqueror of the faithless . . . whose hand conquered all who refused him submission . . . whose priesthood in the temple and rule over all peoples, Enil made great from days of old"; and described his divine calling and mission as that of forcing all the world "from the rising of the sun unto the setting of the same . . . to acknowledge one supremacy." The earliest kings of Elam and Susa also described themselves as "King of the four regions," and "exalted messenger and high-commissioner of heaven," even as the later Achaemenids, "lords of all people, from sunrise to sunset," felt obliged to conquer all the world for Ahura Mazda, to whose rule every enemy was invited to submit before being attacked. As late as 1739 a Persian shah could stamp upon his money: "O coin, announce

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Godd, Ideas of Divine Rule, p. 34.


Litttle, pp. 170, 185.


to all the earth the reign of Nadir, the King who conquers the world." 1
The Roman emperor is, from the first, virtutum rector of the world, salus orbis, Romae decus ... magnus parent mundi, 2 etc., after the pattern of the old sacral kings. 3 The basic doctrine of Hellenistic kings is that every true king is a universal king; the divine urge of kings cannot be satisfied with anything less than the world because Zeus the world-king is the only model for them. 4 The Byzantine emperor, bearing the titles and insignia of the Persian kings in conscious imitation, was "by definition the master of the universe." "Il a pour devoir ... de propager la foi orthodoxe à travers toute la terre habité, dont Dieu ... lui promet la domination," 5 and he tells his son that God has placed his throne "like the sun before Him. ... He hath given to thee as worthy His own dominion over all men." 6

Auscordat sollem, qui vult abscondere regem! cries a medieval panegyrist of the French king, 7 who claimed to be the true successor of the emperor and nothing less than "king of kings and the greatest of princes under heaven." 8 The great Attila called himself totius mundi principem in the firm conviction that the miraculous finding of the sword of Mars that he bore was a sign from heaven that he should rule the world. 9 He was greatly incensed when he learned that a Roman ambassador had declared him to be only a man, while Justinian was a god. 10 In the sixth century, the Khagan of the Turks declared that "all the earth from the rising to the setting of the sun is his inheritance, and all who have dared oppose the Turks have been duly enslaved." 11 A thousand years before, when Darius demanded that a Scythian king bring him earth and water, the latter replied that as a descendant of God he was the only legitimate ruler. 12 The ninth and tenth centuries of our era saw an epidemic

6. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrandae Imperii, trans. Migne Patrolog. CXIII 100, with much more to the same effect.
7. C. Gunder, cited in Dacier, Dissert. No. 5, p. 10, unconsciously quoting Ezechiel: "Where shall a fox go to escape the sun?" Luckenbill, Anc. Russ. II. 210, No. 53.
of world-kings in India, Cambodia, and Java, all of whom "ambitionnaire d'être vénéreux universels," mysteriously identical with the universal God humain, for whom they sent out their missionaries to win the world."

When the pope's legate, Ezelinus, announced at the court of the Great Khan that his master was "placed high above all the kings and princes of the world, and . . . is honored by them as their Lord and Father," his Mongoš hosts held their sides with laughter; the nonentity in the West was claiming to be exactly what their Khan obviously was in reality. The sky had ordered me to rule all nations," was the sincere pronouncement of Chings Khan, Siuto-Bogdo, the God-sent, "whose word was heaven's will." To his successor, he says: "Emirs, Khans, and all persons shall know that I have delivered over to you the whole face of the earth from sunrise to sunset. All who . . . oppose . . . shall be annihilated." At the same time the pontiffs of Rome were stating like claims in like words, and when the Pope's messenger told Kuyuk that all princes were subjected to his master, the latter answered: "The might of the Eternal Heaven had given the Khagan all lands from sunrise to sunset, and failure to obey his commands was a crime against God. . . . Any who made the slightest resistance would be annihilated and exterminated." His seal bore the inscription: "God in heaven, and Kuyuk Khan upon earth, the power of God: the seal of the emperor of all men."

When the Khan's emissaries bore this doctrine to the court of the Caliph (as the pope's legates had to his), the latter countered with the identical doctrine: "You have become in your own eyes the Lord of the Universe, and think that your commands are the decisions of fate. . . . Do you not know that from East to West those who worship God, from kings to beggars, are all the slaves of this court?" The corollary to this being the doctrine that "war against those who are not Moslems is a solemn obligation to God. . . . It is a duty to attack the infidels, even though they may have committed no act of aggression." All the world must be repeatedly invited to accept Islam, and whoever refuses must be wiped out by all possible means. By the end of the tenth century the Caliphs


had under Turkish influence and with the aid of the court theologians, the
prempted the tremendous titles of the Persian kings and announced that
"all the world must follow the guidance of the Commander of the
Faithful." 46

In China, the Ming emperors after the expulsion of the Mongol
"took over the claim to world dominion," and "sent embassies to ever-
country over which Kublai Khan had once held sway, demanding instant
submission." 46 At the other end of the Mongol world, Tamerlane sought
to fulfill the prophecy that he "with the might of his sword, will conquer
the whole world, converting all men to Islam." 47 Even then the Grand
Prince of Moscow was preparing to assume the might and glory of the
Golden Horde and to call himself God's chosen one and "the only ortho-
dox sovereign in the world." 48

All these sample claims, it will be noted, are one and the same. There
is no variety among them, no nuances or fine distinctions and shadings
such as one might expect. There are other royal claims, but this is the
common doctrine of the great conquerors. It is clear and unequivocal
in each case: (1) the monarch rules over all men; (2) it is God who has
ordered him to do so and, significantly, none claims authority as originat-
ing with himself, but even the proudest claims to be but the humble instru-
ment of heaven; 46 (3) it is thus his sacred duty and mission in the world
to extend his dominion over the whole earth, and all his wars are holy
wars; and (4) to resist him is a crime and sacrilege deserving no other
fate than extermination. The most obvious corollary of this doctrine is that
there can be only one true ruler on earth. "The eternal command of
God is this," wrote Mongu Khan to Louis IX, "in heaven there is one
eternal God; on earth there is no other master than Chingis Khan, the
Son of God." 49

In the great "provincial" cultures of Egypt, 50 India, 51 China, 52 and,
as we shall see, of Europe also, this doctrine of kingship appears not as
a local invention but clearly as an importation from the steppes of Asia.
That is true even of Islam. When, in 979 A.D., the king of the Turks

46 Fawdun, op. cit., p. 389. "According to Chinese political philosophy there could be in the world only
one rightful "Emperor," however many kings there might be." Thus W. M. McGovern, The Early
47 Fawdun, op. cit., p. 414.
48 Ibid., pp. 512-513.
explanation for this phenomenon.
50 William of Rubruck (Rubrouquis), chap. 58, in M. Komroff, ed., op. cit., p. 199 f.
52 Grousset, L'Asie Orientale, p. 92: "La notion du monarque universel ou shahanshahin ... provient des
vastes dominations de l'Asie Anterieure.
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and Deilemites kissed the earth before the feet of a newly elected caliph, a Moslem general standing by cried out in horror: "O King, is that God?" But the new caliph was much pleased by this custom of the plains, and in time this Central Asiatic king-worship became a permanent fixture in Islam as in Byzantium.

This peculiar but universal conception of kingship may be traced ultimately to Central Asia through, among other things, its close association in theory and practice with the hierocentric point. The universal type of hierocentric shrine bears many marks of its origin.

MOUNTAIN AND PALACE

At every hierocentric shrine stood a mountain or artificial mound and a lake or spring from which four streams flowed out to bring the life-giving waters to the four regions of the earth. The place was a green paradise, a carefully kept garden, a refuge from drought and heat. Elaborate waterworks figure conspicuously in the appointments and the rites of the holy place. The long ritualized wandering of the pilgrims through the desert, thirsting for the waters of life; the idea that the sacred place is a Vara outside of which all is a howling desert; the groves and the cultivated gardens where all creatures are at peace; the mighty central tree that gives shelter to all the creatures of heaven; the stories of a great snake (dragon) that haunts the place and frightens off those who come for the blessed water—all such things make it clear that our hierocentric shrines are supposed to represent an oasis, and forcibly bring to mind Pumpsely's theory that world civilization originated in the oases of Central Asia.

It is the water-mountain combination, artificially produced at so many important shrines, that most strongly suggests Central Asia, where the cattle-dependent nomads have always escaped the deadly drought of summer by driving their beasts to ancestral camp grounds at the source of a sacred river high in the valleys of a holy mountain. It is there that they elect their khans, and it is from there that their world empires take their rise. Throughout the world, those who come to the great assembly

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* Mer., op. cit., pp. 136, 130, 141.

* Works cited supra (notes 4 to 79 inclusive), nearly all mention this combination, but special treatment of the theme may be found in M. Gaster, Theogery, pp. 136, 109, 111, 181, 183, and by H. R. Hall in Inf. Eeg. Archael., Vol. X, pp. 15 if.

* Elton Smith and others have shown that the special business of all dragons is to prevent people from touching water. Can this otherwise unaccountable peculiarity be explained by the secret of amphibious monsters—snakes and serpents—to the shrinking water holes of a drought-ridden world, there to become a frightening obstacle to those who come there for the "wetness of life?"

* For the burial custom among the Mongols of today, H. H. Harland, Men and Gods in Mongolia (New York: Doubier, 1933), p. 146, 79; the election of Chingis Khan was at such a place. P. E. Klauck, Grotes Khan nach den chinesischen Rechnungen (Heidelberg, 1873), pp. 11, 14, 107, 28, 28, 57, it was that of the Mongol emperors of China, according to Marco Polo, Travels, II, vi. The Khamsat (Klauck, op. cit. p. 23) and Turks (E. S. Girece, History of
are supposed to drive cattle with them. The rites at Olympia and Delphi were founded when Heracles drove his cattle, dying of thirst, to three places. The Babylonian counterpart of this hero is himself a seeker for water, and is shown on early seals watering his cattle from an overflowing vase. In the north the cow Audhumla stands on the mound at the source of the four world-rivers. The Koran specifically states (Sura xxii, 28, 34, 36) that the rites of Mecca and all great assemblies are “over the cattle” which God has given men for sustenance; and indeed, the common cult symbol of the archaic assembly is the bull’s head. We are reminded of the wonderful prehistoric rock pictures which all over the world, depict the driving of great herds of cattle to holy water holes.

The seasonal aspect of the great assembly is but the beginning. The interval of a year between meetings was too much to assure firm government, and the sacred place was often too awkwardly located. So throughout the world we have a multiplication of “law-days” and “crown-days,” which are but the duplication of the year rites, while new and more useful assembly places supplanted the old. Thus the stone of Tara to which the ancient Irish would drive their cattle at the New Year was moved to Tailtiu when that became the capital, as the shrine of Delphi to which all men drove their hecatombs was later moved to Delos (Hyginus Fab. cxxi). William of Rubruck (chap. 18) tells us that while the real holocenter of the Mongols was the Ononkultai (the ancestral burial and assembly place on the holy Altai beside the equally holy Onon River), for purposes of administration it had been supplanted by Karakorum, a centrally located round-up center to which the tribute animals could be most conveniently driven from all parts of the empire. Chingis Khan’s great minister Yeliu-Ch’uts’ai had “insisted that such a fixed point was essential, so that the tribes might know to what place to send tribute, and

the Osmanl Ture (London: 1834-45), Vol. I, pp. 9 f.; Menander, in Patrel. Graec. CXIII, pp. 94, 169; the Golden Haide (Carpeia, chap. 25); the Aetnians (Moore of Cherson, ed.; Laver, Vol. II, 10 f., pp. 101 f.); Pytheas (H. Stieglitz-Brücke, Altertumskunde [Leipzig: 1831], Vol. II, 10 f.); Xenophon, Anabasis I., u. 7, as well as the ancient Indians (H. Bachhold-Steph, Handbuch der Aegyptischen Altertümere [Leipzig: 1831], Vol. VII, pp. 1418 f.; S. Hedin, My Life, etc., pp. 95 f., 127 f., 122); all held their great assemblies in such a setting. Hommel, Ethnol. u. Geogr., pp. 130, 940, compares the Indian with the Egyptian picture. The Assyrian kings built their palaces “like upon Mount Assurnis,” with special chambers “for the watering of horses,” Lückenbühl, Anc. As., Vol. II, pp. 161, 110, 183, 189. The Greeks met in such a place (Jordana, op. cit., chap. 91), as did the Scythinians before them (Hieronius, op. cit.); and the Arabs believe that Mecca was transported from Adam’s Mount in Calym, which is such a place (Marco Polo, Travels, III, xxv). Even the case of Ammon followed the plan, according to A. B. Cook, Zeus (Cambridge: 1893), Vol. II, p. 369, as certainly did the shrine of Dodona—the oldest in Greece—which was transferred from Ammon’s cove. The whole picture is given in certain Babylonian hymns, see Mesopotam. Babyl. and Assyriol., Vol. II, pp. 165, 167. The same in the ancient North, Gelehrsamkeit, iv., vi., vv.

12 Hommel, op. cit., p. 10 f.; Pindar, Olymp. Od. I. 1 ff., cf. I. 1 ff.; Michel, Satyr., I. 10, 11 ff.; Teutsch, Ad Hypneros ii. 10; Aquilinae, Civ. Dei vi. 7, 1; Flurers Quaest. Romanae, No. 3; Romulus, c. 4 f.


14 ibid., loc. cit.

15 ibid., Dissertations sup. St. Levis, Nov. iv. v.
come to regard it as a centre of administration."  Chingis Khan himself "fully realized the necessity of finding himself a safe refuge, a definite, if movable, centre, that might become a rallying point, a citadel, as it were, of his nascent empire," from which he might send out the "arrow messengers" with his orders to all the world.  Baghdad, says Al-Fakhri, was founded in a holy place by the "Khalif of all men" to be "the blessed city," and "the house of salvation"; but it was chosen as the most central spot in the empire to be reached with equal ease from all directions, and the tribes of the four regions were admitted to it, each by the appropriate gate.  Thousands of years before the Babylonian and Assyrian kings had observed the identical practice: "I founded a city in the desert, in a waste, and from its foundation to its top I completed it. A temple I builded and placed a shrine of the great gods in it . . . and I opened a road to it." Here we have a hierocentric point where the king on his throne could "receive the heavy tribute of the four regions in the city of Assur, son of Shalmaneser, King of the Universe . . ." "I opened a palace in the city of Tushhan, the tribute of the land of Nidrun . . . I received in the city of Tushhan." "I opened a palace in the city of Tiluli and received the tribute of the land of Kurmuhi." The names of the gates of such places—always facing "the four winds"—tell what they are for: when they are not proclaiming an abundance of water, they have such titles as "Bringing the Products of the Mountains," "The Gifts of the Sumu'anite and the Temite Enter Through It," "Door of the Products of the Lands," etc. The oldest temple complexes in the world, at Ur and Mohenjo Daro, were such places of gathering, it is supposed.

The Persians kept the system, covering the world with scale-models of the royal palace to serve as local collection centers. The oldest of such shrines and collection points would seem to go back to early hunters. Xenophon (Anab. v. 3, 1) tells of visiting a shrine of the Asiatic hunting goddess, where hunters would come to sacrifice and the lady would feast all who brought their tithes with bread, wine, and meat as they camped in their booths in the sacred enclosure. This shrine, he says, was an exact replica of the great central temple of the goddess at Ephesus. The picture of the prehistoric Anahita (the same goddess to whom Xenophon refers) is a genuine piece of Steppe-lore: clothed in magnificent furs and gold, the lady rides in her great wagon from one of her thousand castles to the next, each castle having a hundred windows and a throne for Anahita,
and standing in a cultivated oasis. Eyewitnesses have at wide intervals of time reported the activities of just such great ladies of the steppe, riding upon their wagons from castle to castle. In Asia, whoever will found an empire must first have a palace and a city. Xenophon himself was suspected of planning to have his soldiers settle down, and found a city which would be named after him, and from which he could spread abroad his dynamis in all directions (Anab. vi. 6, 17). This was long before Alexander the Great did the same thing. It is the inmorial Ashtian pattern. We are told that patriarchs of the race did it in the beginning; and, as late as the 1920's, the holy man Damban Jansang built a mighty fortress in the midst of the Gobi from which he actually dominated all of Central Asia. The "characteristic Central Asiatic city," according to a modern observer, is a cluster of buildings and tents about a super-palace, built to be the administrative center of all the vast empty spaces around. Archaeology has shown this to have been the normal order in prehistoric times, when the city was already but an appendage of the palace, and the palace was a combination for, shrine, and trading center, like any real hierocentric point. All organized society was centered at that place which bore the name of "the god, the tribe, and the capitol, where the ancestral power was concentrated." When this fell, the empire fell too; and so we have the concept of Babylon, founded by Nimrod, the mad hunter, the plunderer and enslaver of all the earth, full of "beasts and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves and the souls of men," that perishes in a day (Rev. xviii).

Kings as Hunters and Nomads

We have remarked elsewhere that "Kings must be Hunters." The royal hunt of Asia is a great battue in which all the animals are driven by a converging ring of soldiers to that spot in the very center of the contracting circle, where the king sits on his throne on a green mound. There the king slays the beasts he chooses and gives his "peace" to the rest,

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3 Thus Adam, Cain, and Noah, Book of Jubilees iv. 9, following the divine pattern, Schull. iii. 728, 750. God, Idea of Divine Rule, p. 6, comments on the strange persistence of building mounds in the earliest creation legends.
7 "The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. II (September, 1949), p. 34.
which thereby become sacrosanct under his protection. Human beings are treated in exactly the same way. A Persian king after viewing a tremendous animal drive significantly remarks to his officers: "... and when people regard us as enemies and neither send up soldiers nor tribute, we hunt them with all our might!" (Xen. Cyrop. II. 4, 19ff). Xenophon loves to dwell on the absolute identity of war and hunting in the Asiatic economy (a doctrine dear to the Mongols): the ruling nation is simply a moving army in the field; when it is not hunting men it is hunting animals, and vice versa. Carpini (chap. vi) tells how Chingis Khan "... became a mighty hunter. He learned to steal men, and take them for prey. He ranged into other countries taking as many captives as he could, and joining them to him," and so conquered the world. That is exactly how the kings of Babylonia and Assyria describe their own activities. There is no contradiction, incidentally, in a people being at the same time hunters and cattle raisers. Ammianus (31.2) notes, for example, that though the Persians, Scythians, and Alans drove their huge herds before them wherever they went "like perpetual fugitives," they still lived by hunting animals and plundering humans. Certainly the oldest kings of the East described their wars as super cattle and slave raids, in which wild beasts, domestic cattle, and human beings are driven in common herds to the holy palace and shrine of the god.

This is the old story of Nimrod, who revolted against God, "became a hunter of men," and founded that abominable state from which all the kings of the earth take their authority. Even Apollo was in the beginning a deadly hunter who came from the steppes of Asia (the land of the Hyperboreans) and slew the great serpent that guarded the holy spring of Delphi, so that he could gain control of the spot to which all the Greeks brought their tribute, and thereby became their ruler. So, too, Othinn is pictured in the beginning as a conquering nomad from the East, who rides into new lands to conquer them, hold games, and receive tribute; joining with the Asia-manna, "formerly called the Aesir" (the As or Alans), he built the castle, Sigrunir, and held his great assembly where those twelve judges officiated "who before had been at Troy and were of the Turkish race." All of which points again to the steppes.

A nomad origin alone can account for the most paradoxical aspect of all the hierocentric shrines, namely their universal mobility. Every great
shrine, while claiming to be the very point of origin of all things, had its founding legend telling how it was transferred through the air from some distant place.

Furthermore, the doctrine that the seat of world dominion, ever since it was sent down in the beginning from heaven, has moved from place to place among the nations, now centered in one city and now in another, is stated in one of the earliest Sumerian texts; and, following Persian patterns, enjoys great popularity among Jewish and Christian apocryphal writers. Related to this concept is the universal custom requiring the king at his coronation to found a new palace and a new city to be the center of the earth. This, again, seems the direct antithesis of belief in an ageless holy shrine marking the one and only center of the universe; but, again, it is a doctrine that the nomads of the steppes must subscribe to. If palace-temple complexes must be built as the only way of "binding down" the conquered and organizing the empire, the necessary mobility of the nomad conquerors would force them to shift their main center from time to time, thus producing duplication. "Les tribus allaient de place en place, tandis que les dieux restaient dans les sanctuaires. Il fallait s'y rendre", hence, of course, pilgrimage is still a general and natural institution, and not merely a ritual in Central Asia. The fact that all visitors to all hierocentric shrines must dress and act as pilgrims from afar is a clear enough indication of the nomadic nature of the institution.

As is well known, the oldest temples were tents or huts of reed matting or some other light material. The nomads of Asia still employ these light tent-temples which, like the ark of Israel, move about with them on their wanderings. As soon as such a temple is set up, it promptly becomes a center of pilgrimage.** Here we have a practical explanation for what, in the rest of the world, is purely ritual; namely, the setting up of a sacred booth to serve as the main shrine during the year-rites. Again, the fact that the Jewish writers describe the throne of God (certainly the most stable thing in the universe) as mounted on wheels is indeed perplexing, until one reads that the thrones of the Great Khans were likewise on wheels, so that they could be drawn along by horses or oxen when it came time to move the camp.** The apocryphal picture of God entering paradise perfectly reproduces the scene of the khagan arriving at the summer kunlaitai. The Almighty rides into the glorious meadows on a huge wagon which comes to a halt under the great central tree of life, while all the people sing joyful hymns of welcome.**

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** Dan. viii. 9; Book of Enoch xiv. 16; Mem. des legat., in Patrol, Gracc. CXIII, p. 883; Odoros d'Heraclea, Journal, chap. 12 (in Komorni, Commentia ad Marco Polo, p. 270).
** f Adam and Eve xvi. 1; Secrets of Enoch viii. 3.
Paradoxically enough, the idea of a hierocentric point is far more often brought to the minds of nomads than of sedentary people. The royal court of the Mongols is "called in their language horda," says William of Rubruck (chap. 21), "which signifies, the middle, because the governor or chieftain among them dwells always in the middle of his people." Every schoolboy knows (or once knew) that the Northern king who went into battle surrounded by concentric rings of warriors—the "shield-wall"—was an object of sacred trust; also that such an order of battle is a tactical absurdity—except on the open plains, where it has always been standard with the kings of Asia. Many observers have described the meticulous care with which the Asiatic nomads orient their camps to the four cardinal points—the basic hierocentric idea. And what is more natural than that wanderers over the featureless plains should be ever concerned with taking their bearings in the universe? Herodotus (iv. 158) tells us that when Asiatic colonists went out at the command of Delphi to found the kingdom of Libya, their leader pointed to the spot where the new capitol was to stand with the order: "Here we must stop for here is the axis of heaven!"

The institution of royal progress in which the monarch moves like the beneficent sun in a tireless round among his people is another Asiatic practice. The Persian kings were constantly on the move between their various summer and winter palaces, and medieval travelers have described how all of Central Asia migrated with the seasons. This is simply the necessary seasonal nomadism of the grass-seeking cattle people, and the royal progress is really royal nomadism.®

The proper business of all kings, when not sitting on the throne, is war and the hunt, both requiring the nomadic way of life. Tournaments and fairs are no less an occasion for camping out; and even when the king must live indoors, his palace halls, covered with tapestries and skins, are made to look as tentlike as possible.® Indeed the royal throne, like the royal bed (which in Asia is identical with it)® ordinarily stands under a canopy which is nothing but a "Turkish" tent.® "A recent discovery;"

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1 Jordanus, chap. 49 (the shield-wall duplicated in the funeral-song, ibid., chap. 40); Ammianus Marcellinus Bel. Get. xxii, 14, 2. 11; Xenophon Anab. 1, viii, 12; Huet and Delaporte, Iran Antiquite. p. 350. William of Rubruck, chap. 21, p. 134.
2 Arda moved constantly from palace to palace, accompanied by his mighty host, "in the manner of the Scythians," says Priscus, Persol. Grac. CXIII, p. 120. Cf. For the same picture, William of Rubruck, chap. 12, p. 56, § 2 Ammianus Bel. Get. xxii, 1.
3 Omeric, Journey, chap. 11 (p. 217), see note 103.
4 Arda sat on hopped-up rugs and cushions (Priscus, Persol. Grac. CXIII, p. 117), and his dining hall was hung with curtains and rugs "like a Greek or Roman bridal bed" (Ibid., 119). Rame's throne was "like a bed." (William of Rubruck, chap. 1, 21 (p. 81, 911), and Scutarii: "set upon his bed, holding his spear in his hand, and his wife sat by him" (Ibid., chap. 12, p. 75). Ibn Baute, Rasha, 161, actually calls the khan's throne a jir afsh (bed). Cf. the Osman, Ist. de Justice, etc.
5 The throne must be covered by a tent (Mendels, in Persol. Grac. CXIII, p. 119), and, indeed, "the camped throne is part of the original equipment of the primitive nomad tent temple," according to Haxthausen, op. cit., p. 25.
writes Gadd, "has revealed that the later Assyrians described their earliest princes as 'kings living in tents,' and the same phrase, occurring at the end of Babylonian history... indicates that this means chieftains of desert tribes." 104 This background the kings never lost. To the kings of Asia the royal tent is as much a part of the insignia as is the crown. Tamerlane in the West and the Chinese emperors in the East 105 built their magnificent palaces to resemble their ancestral tents. The tentlike character of the Achaemenid palaces was carried over into the mosques of the Near East and the cathedrals of Europe, so that the great domed structures that sprang up all over the world in the Middle Ages appear both in form and decoration to be reproductions of the great royal yurts of the plains. 106

The arts and treasures that royalty has always coveted are the arts and treasures of the nomads—textiles, jewelry, arms, animals, and slaves—all highly portable and instantly redeemable. 107 Louis XI, for all his absolutism, was despised by other monarchs as being "not royal," because as a European he saw where his true wealth lay. An Asiatic king, who must spend his whole life on the move, must carry the wealth of his kingdom on his back, so to speak, if he is to enjoy it; and this is the type of royal display that passed throughout the world as kingsly. The highest expression of royal splendor is the court with its endless feasting and hunting and its display of gorgeous looted bric-a-brac by a nobility whose whole life is a military campaign. It might even be said that the Renaissance was the rediscovery of the sedentary arts—painting, sculpture, pottery, books, architecture—as against the nomadic arts of the Middle Ages, such as bardic poetry, weaving, jewelry, arms, pageantry, etc.

It is in Central Asia alone that chivalry and feudalism, like court ritual, have survived to our day. 108 And they are found there in the beginning. From the first, the conquerors of Asia brought the conquered under control by forcing them to farm and by building castles to watch them. The only free men are the lords, who alone may hunt or even

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104 See, Pseudo-Mongol Empire, p. 411; Tamerlane built his palaces like pavilions, "using them for the same purpose as his ancestor's yurt tents." The palace at Peking was "supported" by two hundred silver crowns. Marco Polo, Travels I, ivii; vii, vi; cf. Oldroyd, Journey, chap. II, p. 132.

105 Ed. Meyer, Gest. d. Akh., Vol. IV, p. 131; Dr. Huber; 130, Bahr; Vol. I, p. 196; Hauert and Delattre, op. cit., p. 311. The same artisans who built St. Sophia also built the Mosque of Damascus. Ibn Batuta, Rel. R., Vol. I, pp. 35 ff. It has often been observed that domed tents are found originally only in Central Asia, where the royal white tent, covered with brilliant color and design, reached enormous proportions. It is hard not to see in the "golden dome" of the Grand Khan, Ibn Batuta, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 131, the prototype of those golden domes that everywhere rose above the heads of kings and the altars of cathedrals. Marco Polo, Travels II, vi, speaks of what can only be colored glass windows at the court of the Khan.


107 S. Hedin, My Life, etc., p. 102, notes that the court ceremonial of Sarmatia is exactly the same as described by Claviger and Herland. Men and Gods, etc., p. 31; observed in the royal camp of the Tatars. "Exactly the same tent arrangement as the one which Xenophon tells us was used 2,400 years before in the camp of Cyrus."
They are allowed freedom of motion because they are bound to the monarch by solemn oaths—the code of chivalry is an arrangement by which a nomadic aristocracy is recruited (often from conquered enemies) and kept in leash while being allowed its freedom and enjoying the service and support of grounded serfs. Goerz has shown that chivalry and feudalism are the normal products of Central Asian economy, whence all the great empires of the second millennium B.C. adopted them. The system was taken over in the West, along with the chivalric and heraldic devices that still betray their origin by their Asiacic nomenclature, at the time when Europe, overrun by the wild hordes of Asia, was itself simply a western extension of the great Asiacic system. It never worked very well in Europe, however, as Tennyson wisely observes, and whenever the Europeans came in contact with the real Asiacics, the latter were shocked and disgusted at the laxness, treachery, jangling and hypocrisy that made European chivalry, even for intelligent Europeans, a most obvious farce.

The typical royal court is Asiacic in its rites and appointments. In the western world those hunting parks which may not be missing from the seats of royalty are but feeble imitations at best of the stupendous paradises of the East. Europeans, familiar with the courts of the West, were simply overawed in the presence of the Great Khans. Their courts were crude and barbaric, but they were the real thing. The Khan himself sat uttering majestic and aloof on his high throne in the dim half-light of the great dome (and what else could have inspired the Byzantine emperors to have their thrones hoisted up by derricks to the ceiling?). "Upon the right hand of the great Khan sits his first-begotten son and heir . . . and under him sit all the nobles of the royal blood. There are also four secretaries, which put all things in writing that the emperor speaks. In his presence likewise stand barons and others of his nobility, with great trains of followers after them, of whom none dare speak so much as one word . . . except his jesters and stage-players, who are appointed of purpose to solace their lord . . . All his barons present themselves before him, with wreathe and crowns upon their heads . . . some are in green, the second in red, and third in yellow; each man holds a little ivory ticket in his hand, and all wear golden girdles half a foot broad, and they stand upon their feet keeping silence." At a given signal, all fall upon their faces and touch their foreheads to the earth. Around the walls the nobility are arranged in tiers of thrones or benches, proximity to the emperor being proportionate to rank. A host of musicians hymn the monarch's praise with ceaseless and terrifying din.111

110 Rosecrans, op. cit., Nos. 51, pp. 11, 13. Only the horse makes noble; camels, mules, etc., do not count—which shows the Central Asiacic origin of the code. See, Nos. 31, 32.

111 Goerz, Herbst, Chartier, and Anslett, pp. 40-41, 10-112.

If the king on his throne is doing his best to imitate God on His, we must allow the khans of Asia first place among earthly monarchs. Here is no sad and puerile Byzantine masquerading, but an expression of tangible power: the mechanical lions of Constantinople were real lions before the throne of the Khan. There can be no doubt that it is the Asiatic model that is followed in the apocryphal descriptions of the heavenly court, and the Byzantine court that served as the model for all of Europe was itself consciously copied from the East. The livery, for example, which is little more than a pretty conceit in the courts of Europe, has a profound significance among the nomads, as do the chivalric banners that go with it. When the Easter chorus in Constantinople joyfully announces that the heads of the emperor’s enemies are heaped up before his feet, it is not difficult to detect a wishful imitation of the Grand Khan, for the collection of heads and scalps for the king was immemorial routine on the steppes.

As the king sits in state at the New Year (and every throne-day is, but a repetition of the New Year’s rites), all the world must bring its tribute and lay it at his feet. In return the king must pour out rich gifts without measure, for he is the lord of abundance and all things are his. The staggering turnover of property in the form of gifts received and bestowed has been the ruin of many a European court; but it is sound economic policy in a nation whose whole existence is an endless campaign of looting, and where it is convenient to dispose of recent plunder to another in all possible haste. The normal economy of the “barbarians” runs down, says Jordanes (chap. 56), as soon as loot stops coming in; and Bar Hebraeus (Budge, Vol. I, p. 496) has given a vivid description of the ruin of a court when its noble members abandoned their customary raids and filibusters.

**The Two Kingdoms**

Highly characteristic of the hierocentric doctrine is an utter abhorrence of all that lies outside the system. The world inevitably falls into two parts, the heavenly kingdom and the outer darkness, a world of monsters and abortions. Whoever is not of the frithr is a nithung, without rights and without humanity. All who do not willingly submit to Alexander or Constantine are, according to Dio Chrysostom and Eusebius, mad beasts to be hunted down and exterminated. For the Roman, all the world is either *ager pacatus* or *ager hosticus*, says Varro (Ling. Lat. 1), the only

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112 *The colors red for the four quarters, Capitini, chap. 24; William of Rubruck, chap. 31 (p. 187); Story of Akbar, chap. VI, v. 1013.* (On western livery and Ducange, Dissert. V.)

113 Ducange, loc. cit.
alternative to submission being outrageous rebellion. Anyone who resents the Roman yoke is a guilty slave, says Claudian (Ger. 355), who should be consumed by remorse of conscience. For the Moslem, all the world is either Dar-al-Islam or Dar-al-Harb; the latter being any spot in the world that has refused to pay tribute and thereby made itself guilty of rebellion, because everything in the world without exception is the legitimate property of the Moslems. We have already noted the claim of the khans that whoever resisted them were guilty of crime against God. To Attila, those who resisted his yoke were runaway slaves (Jordanes, chap. 52), and the Assyrian kings constantly declare that whoever will not take and keep an oath to them must needs be exterminated as “wicked people” and “rebels.” In a word, “the world without the ‘Kingdom’ remains in its state of primordial rebellion,” and all who do not recognize the divine king are truly “children of destruction.”

Here we have the root of that dualism so characteristic of Asian theology and commonly associated with Persia. The doctrine is no mere abstraction, however: it is a condition of survival among the nomads of the steppes. Farmers may and must live in pax, i.e., agreement, pact, compromise, and, when they occupy a region, they divide off the land—annually and by lot, as a rule—and each proceeds to cultivate son jard in a way that absorbs all his thought and energy. But when nomads clash on the open steppe, one or the other must be utterly subjected. A beaten enemy at large is free to recoup his strength, bide his time, and by a lucky chance or ruse overthrow his erstwhile conqueror—a thing that has happened a thousand times in the history of the tribes. An independent chief is therefore aut Caesar aut nihil; the alternative to conquering is to be a slave. "Instant submission or annihilation" is the formula, and every pastoral lord sends forth his challenge to all the world: "either fight me or submit to me." By absorbing the armies of the enemy, enslaving some and binding others to him by sacred oaths, the world conqueror builds up his world-host; "I counted them among my people," is the Assyrian expression. For there must be one people only: "With the Mongols," says Bar Hebraeus (Chron., Budge Vol. I, p. 490), "there is neither slave nor free; neither believer nor pagan; neither Christian nor Jew; but they regard all men as belonging to one and the same stock... All they demand is strenuous service and submission which is beyond the power...." The alternative to one rule on the steppes is not only chaos but sheer nonsense. Nomads cannot be held to boundaries; and where more than one ruler...
exists, they follow whom they will and life becomes the intolerable anarchy to which each great conqueror boasts that he has at last put an end—seven invariably describing himself as the liberator of the human race from depraved pretenders, and the restorer of order in the world.

A natural product of this necessary absolutism is the notorious cruelty of the Asiatic princes which, often found in men of magnanimous and even gentle nature, seems to the Western mind nothing short of pathological. But what is one to do when a foe is not beaten until he has lost his mobility? Where oaths can be trusted, they suffice; where adequate supervision is possible, it is enough. For the rest, the only sure ways of immobilizing a dangerous enemy are by beheading, maiming, blinding, or mass transportation. The remarkable thing is that the great conquerors rarely harm a hair of anyone of whose submission they are certain, and always protest their preference for gentle and philanthropic methods. It is invariably the revolted cities and tribes, who have violated the trust and forfeited the faith of the king, that pay the terrible penalties. Moreover, the kings of Asia were sincere in believing that those who opposed them were less than human, and ages of experience justified their conviction that no creature on the loose is to be regarded as harmless while it is free to do harm if it will.

The conquering nomad must of necessity either carry all his loot with him or deposit it at guarded stations, in either case involving a serious problem of transportation and manpower. Yet whatever is left behind and unguarded may, and almost surely will, be used against the conqueror by some rival or rebel; so there is nothing for it but to destroy the stuff. The Mohammedan law (Rosenmueller, No. 17) orders that the prisoners and loot of war may not be left before or mutilated, but if they cannot be carried home must be destroyed—killed or burned. The Huns "obliterated and smashed everything that lay in their route," but they did so reluctantly, for they almost lost a battle with the Goths rather than give up the vast burden of looted goods that was impeding their motions (Ammiianus, xxxi. 3). Many have commented on the inconsistency of princes in combining a passion for collecting beautiful things with an absolute indifference to the destruction of beautiful things. It is clearly a heritage of the steppes, where the apparent paradox makes perfectly good sense. All observers have commented on the single-minded devotion of the Asiatic nomads to the accumulation of treasures (as nomads they are hungry for such things); but when their own survival is at stake, the stuff becomes dangerous impedimenta to be destroyed out of hand.

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This is exhaustively demonstrated by S. Lipkin, Monast Vizhukashnod (Sovetski Pamyati, 1917), a study of the Knights, in which the enemy chiefs are invariably incorruptible monsters, while the friendly ones are holy knights.
At any period of history the two top hierocentric states may be seen
damming each other as Antichrist, and resembling each other like two
peas. In the classic duel between Justinian and Chosroes, George of Pisidia
describes the court ceremonial of Persia as a carbon copy of that of Con-
stantinople, with the explanation that the Oriental version is but a hideous
parody of the real thing. Chosroes replied in kind. This doctrine of the
Two Kingdoms is already full-blown in the old Babylonian New Year's
hymn, Enuma Elish, in which the evil court of Tiamat is described as a
perfect reflection—in reverse—of the heavenly court of Anu. Emperors,
caliphs, shah-in-shahs, grand khans, popes, and kings were all at one time
or another paired off against each other as rival world-rulers; while each,
within his own sphere, "had to eliminate rival contenders" for his office.
Always, the drama is described by their constituents as the cosmic combat
between light and darkness, heaven and hell, between two opposing ide-
ologies, antithetical ways of life while, in reality, they are identical.

They are identical because they are hierocentric—and that is a concept
which seems almost incapable of any variety: it is always the same.

A Western Heritage

With the decline of the Roman Empire, Europe became a battle-
ground of the tribes: proper gallorum terras gravius inter se decerterati
sunt (Jord. chap. 55). Gibbon has told best of all the story of how the
"pastoral kings" of the steppes fought each other for the control of the
newly opened lands of the West, exactly as they had fought for their
Asiatic grazing lands; and how the native populations were either driven
like cattle (a favorite term with contemporary writers) or allowed to live
on as serfs, meekly submitting to one haughty lord after another. The
most powerful of these tribes, the Huns—expeditum indomitumque homi-
num genus (Ammian. xxvi, 2)—under the mighty Attila, barbariam totam
tenens (Jordanes, chap. 34), treated Europe simply as a western province
of their Asiatic empire. Attila's son Dintio did, on European soil, exactly
what every Asiatic aspirant had done before him in Asia; he rallied the
remnants of the tribes about him, and tried to seize a city in Pannonia in
an attempt to restore his father's Imperium (Islem. chap. 53). A later
descendant of Attila, Mundo, is even more typical, for he went into the
most desert part of Europe and there, like Tamerlane and Chingis Khan,
gathered a band of outcasts about him, no doubt making the most of his
descent. He had them proclaim him king and declared war on all the
world, choosing as his base of operations a tower on the Danube which
was called Hterra—obviously the later Mongol Horde, "the center" of
dominion (chap. 58). These men, typical feudal barons, were transplanting
the ways of the steppes into the West.

The West had long been preparing to receive them, too. Generation
of fighting against Alans, Gepids, Goths, and Huns, and of fighting with
them shoulder to shoulder, in alliance now with one and now with the
other, had transformed the Roman military state into the thing it had
been fighting. Narses consciously and successfully employed not Roman
but Hunnish tactics against the Franks, and the closing chapters of Jordanes
show a Roman army indistinguishable from any barbarian horde. The
last chapter of all makes the significant remark that the ultimate victor
to emerge from the world shambles was victor gentium diversarum Jus-
tinianus Imperator. It was in this man Justinian that the Huns won a
great and abiding victory over the West.

The Emperor Justinian displayed at all times a single-minded devotion
to the Huns that puzzles and dismays his historians.\(^{22}\) Apparently there
was nothing he would not do to please the Huns, even to the wrecking
of his own foreign policy (Procop. Anec. xi, 12) and the ruination of trade
and agriculture throughout the Empire (Ibid., xxi, 26, 28; xxiii, 30; xxv,
23). A passionate devotee of the factionists, he had worn their Persian
beards, Hunsish hair-do, Hunsish cloaks, Hunsish shirts, and Hunsish
shoes (Ibid., vii, 8, 10-14), the girdles and brooches of the steppes having
already supplanted the more civilized styles of the West (Ibid., vii. 18).

"The greatest destroyer of established institutions that ever lived" (Ibid.,
vii. 11), Justinian was determined to make the western world "completely
change its clothes" (Ibid., xi. 1); and he succeeded.

All the absurdities and contradictions in his policies vanish if we con-
consider that this Illyrian, who hated Greek things, was set upon becoming
a grand khan. He handed over the wealth of the state to the Huns "who
were always turning up" at court (a significant note) in ever increasing
numbers (Ibid., vii. 5). He would claim for himself all the private prop-
erty of the citizens, pretending that it was all being brought in to him as
gifts (Ibid., viii. 9), and then promptly give it all away again to the
Hunsish lords before his throne (Ibid., viii. 13f): a thing that made per-
fectly good sense to his visitors from the steppes, but appeared to his
Roman subjects as "a thing that had never happened since the beginning
of time" (Ibid., xxx. 24). What he did not thus throw away to the

Justinian showed this partiality even before he became emperor, according to Procopius, Anec. vii. 5.
narians, says Procopius (*ibid.*, xi. 3; xxxvi. 23) he wasted on absurdities, constructed simply to outshine all other emperors—a thing that Khian would have understood. This Hun-worship actually amounted to enslave the empire, say Procopius and Agathias, but that was Justinian wanted it. He insisted that all his subjects, from top to bottom, be called his slaves (*ibid.*, xxx. 26), and instituted the strictly Asiatic style of prostration and foot-kissing (*ibid.*, xxx. 23). He was averse to giving the impression of being a sort of super-shaman, and hence even adopted the well-known Mongol custom of making those who entered his presence step clear of the threshold (*ibid.*, xii. 25). In so doing, instead of acting like a Roman Emperor, he was the complete alien in language, dress, and thought” (Procop. xiv. 2). What more could one ask? The welcome barbarians poured into court from all directions, to the immense delight of the Emperor, who never failed to send away loaded with gold (*ibid.*, xix. 14), till presently “the barbarians’ salaam became complete masters of the wealth of the Romans” (*ibid.*, xi. 6). In the end, all the offices and officials of the state were supplanted by office—the royal court, and by two persons—the Emperor and Empress (*ibid.*, xxx. 30), for the new ascendency of the Empress, intensely detested by Procopius, was the crowning Asiatic touch.

Justinian’s weird innovations were no ephemeral thing. They were but the culmination of that process of Asianizing which had been deplored by poets of the Republic. And they were there to stay. In Justinian Diehls, the ancients themselves, see the perfect type and model of the Byzantine monarch, and his court became the model for every court in Europe. The sedentary populations of the empire, strictly forbidden from the wandering ways of the conquerors, were permanently saddled in an adventurous hunting and campaigning nobility. How utterly unlike the system was is vividly described by Fulcher, who shows how he led inevitably to the Crusades. In the Crusades we find the type of the West employing all the devices and insignia of the Asiatics accustomed familiarity, so that Edward I can arrange for a coordinated invasion operation with his Mongol allies down to the smallest details. The Europeans fully understood all the gadgets of the East and were enthusiastic for a life of raiding and adventure. But the Asiatic system completely escaped them.

Christianity added nothing to the hierocentric doctrine as such. The Christian theology was keenly conscious of all the imagery of hierocracy and ritual and above all to the contrast of the Two Kingdoms. Posters, the Apostolic Fathers, Dionysius, Tertullian and the Pastor is here, it is true, that there is a universal throne—but it is not

on the earth. The Devil is the "Prince of this World," which is no place for the children of the kingdom—they sojourn here as pilgrims and as
strangers. The conflict is not between contending parties here below, but
between "this world" and the other. Our heritage and kingdom he
beyond; "here we have no abiding kingdom."

Later Christian teaching adopted the old hierocentric doctrine with
enthusiasm; but it did not, as Ferrero boasts, make it more spiritual and
intellectual; the lofty ideal of the sacred universal empire is as abstract
and intellectual in Horace and Virgil as it is in Dante. The vision of the
universal ruler seated at the centre of the cosmos had been fully appreci-
ciated and ecstatically proclaimed by the theoreticians of Alexandria in
whose steps Roman emperors and Christian thinkers willingly followed.

Gilson, commenting on Pope John VIII's concept of the Church, says that
it was identical with the Roman Empire, having the same capital and the
same idea, only plus vaste. But what could be more vaste than the
ipsis aequan polia of the pagan panegyrist, equal to the universe itself?

Diehl sees in Christianity the addition of a profoundly religious element
to the old concept of the Imperium: the prince is "transformed into the
elect of God." But what Cosmocrator was ever anything but just that?

In describing the new World Church as an improvement on the old
system, each of these three authorities admits the Church's indebtedness
to that system. The absolute predominance of the emperor, "equal to the
Apostles" (iapostolos), God on earth, the supreme head of the Church
as well as the state; the great imperial councils, a thing new in the
Church but, as Gellner and Batiroll have shown, established usage in the
Empire; the investiture of churchmen by the emperor with insignia origin-
ally confined to the secular administration and borrowed from the
East; the new ritual and liturgy so closely akin to old court ceremonies—
the laudes echoing the old imperial acclamation and the liturgies praising
God in the same set terms which the panegyrists declaimed before the
emperor; the emergence of Christ, the ever-victorious crusher of his foes,
as an object of terror and dread—such are a few of the well-documented

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124 "Christianity and the soteriological Waghalb given by the East to the West," F. J. E. Rubey,
of the hierocentric universe from the Pythagoreans to Dante. Clemens, Homil. v. (Pat. Gr., Vol. II,
p. 349) is good description.
125 E. Gilson, La Philosophie au Moyen Age (Paris: Payot, 1944), pp. 251 ff.
126 C. Diehl and G. Marsail, Le Monde Orienuel, etc., pp. 487-495; Eusebius, Vita Constantini, passim
(Patrol Gr., 22); L. Duchesne, Early History of the Christian Church (London: Murray, 1931),
127 L. Duchesne, Origines du Culte Chretien (Paris, 1898), chap. II.
128 E.g., Liturg. S. Ignat., Patrol. Grac. V, p. 972. Of course, one spoke much of the monarch's all-
prevailing justice and compassion (F. Schelling, "The Throne of the Emperor Henry," in
not do the same?
indicates that the World Church of the fourth century was built upon the firm foundation of the old sacramental kingship. The Armenian monk Vartan says the Christians prostrated themselves before God as the Mongols did before the Grand Khan. A trip to Constantinople would have shown him that this pious prostration was not reserved for the Invisible God, but was really the old emperor-worship of Central Asia.

To Conclude

That it was the people of the steppes, engulfing the great “peripheral” civilizations in wave after wave, who imposed government upon the world Oppenheimer long ago made clear. What he failed to observe is that hunters do not always “work best alone or in small groups,” but on the boundless plains have been wont to operate in vast communal battalions from the beginning. More recently Goetz has completed the picture in describing how the Hurrians and their kind came out of the regions of the North at the end of the Third Millennium and taught the old city-states to become world empires, supplying them with the equipment for the task: the horse, the chariot, the mounted archer, and a thoroughly going feudalism.

In China, India, Egypt, and Europe the successive waves of nomad invasion have been like recurrent attacks of a disease, each effecting a permanent change in the organism and leaving a permanent deposit behind it. The invaded civilizations, having absorbed institutions and traditions of the invaders, become increasingly susceptible to the romantic appeal of the same, and in some cases (e.g. Russia) contact between the two worlds is never broken completely.

During the darkest period of its history, when all the works of established civilization were virtually destroyed, the West reverted to a state of primordial chaos indistinguishable from that which normally prevails on the steppes of Asia. At that fatal moment the liquified resources of the West were poured, as they had often been before, into the Asian mold. The obvious solution to the Asiatic predicament was the classic Asiatic solution: with appalling meekness the officials of the Empire literally kissed the earth before the feet of worthless and arrogant emperors, while pastoral conquerors settled down to establish their accustomed economy of theft and tribute on the newly won soil of Europe.

This is the dangerous heritage of the hierocentric state. Removed from those boundless land-spaces which gave it rise and which alone offer boundless empire the hierocentric ideal becomes in practice a pre-

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tentious ritual, pontificale et vide; but in theory a noble dogma, a pur
idea of such compelling logic, simplicity, boldness, and universal appeal
as to appear nothing short of a revelation from heaven. The great Greek
like the prophets and Apostles, saw through the imposing fraud: “God
never meant that one man should rule all of cattle-raising Asia,” said
the ghost of Darius, addressing at once the Eastern and Western worlds
from the stage at Athens. But the shallower minds of the schoolmen were
lost in ecstatic contemplation of the universal king around whom all
things revolve in perfect circles. No less to the schoolmen of the Middle
Ages, “cabin’d in the Absolute,” hypnotized by the overwhelming
authority of the One. And so too the schoolmen of our own day. Toyn-
bee is confident that “religion is likely to be the plane on which this
coming centripetal [we would say, hierocentric] counter movement will
first declare itself,” and recommends above all else the study of “the part
which the West has played in the unification of mankind.”

In the last chapter of his Histoire des Croisades, Grousset has shown
how Western Europe, at the peak of its intellectual splendor, utterly failed
to comprehend the enlightened world views of the Mongol khans who, strongly favoring Christianity in their own lands, were all but begging for
an alliance with the Christian West by which the two could crush
Islam. Significantly enough, it was the vision of world-rule itself that
frustrated action. The cardinals who cross-examined Rabban Sauma would
not hear of an alliance that might seem to march against the Antichrist
under any other banner—Nestorian or Mongol—than their own. In 297
A.D., the Emperor Galerius haughtily rejected a generous offer of the
Persians to divide the rule of the world as equals, East and West, and thus
preserve the peace; the Romans, says Petrus Patricius, simply could not
conceive of such a proposition as anything but sarcasm or malice. When
the Persian ambassadors pointed out the risk and folly of rejecting such
a golden offer, the furious emperor shouted: “The custom of my ancestors
has been to spare those who submit and make war on those who don’t!”
That was all. It would seem that nothing can so effectively block “the uni-
ification of mankind” as that very religious “centripetal counter-movement”
for which Toynbee yearns, and that the West has been less the author
of such unification than its consistent wrecker.

Men seem unable to leave the dream of a hierocentric state alone.
To recapitulate the six headings given above, we cannot blame people
if they yearn for (1) the grandeur, color, and unity of the great assembly,
(2) the lofty and uncompromising certainty of universal kingship, (3) the

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XVIII (1948), pp. 1-79; quotation from pp. 25 f.
141 Pet
ricius, De Legat. xii. in Petrol. Graec. CXIII, pp. 668 f.
sense of refuge and well-being in the holy shrine, (4) the high and independent life of a chivalrous aristocracy, (5) the luxury of hating all opposition with a holy hatred, and (6) the sheer authority of the institutions established and maintained by force. These are the strength of the hierocentric state. Its weakness is that it doesn't exist. That "son of the morning" who went up into the North, placed his throne upon the mountain of the assembly, and said, "I will be like the most high," only succeeded, we are told (Isa. 18:22 ff.) in "weakening the nations."