

DOWNLOAD PDF THE GOLDEN BOUGH: A STUDY IN MAGIC AND RELIGION. PART VI

Chapter 1 : The Golden Bough a Study In Magic and Religion by Frazer, James George

The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion (retitled The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion in its second edition) is a wide-ranging, comparative study of mythology and religion, written by the Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer.

The Nature of Osiris 1. Through all the pomp and glamour with which in later times the priests had invested his worship, the conception of him as the corn-god comes clearly out in the festival of his death and resurrection, which was celebrated in the month of Khoiak and at a later period in the month of Athyr. That festival appears to have been essentially a festival of sowing, which properly fell at the time when the husbandman actually committed the seed to the earth. On that occasion an effigy of the corn-god, moulded of earth and corn, was buried with funeral rites in the ground in order that, dying there, he might come to life again with the new crops. The ceremony was, in fact, a charm to ensure the growth of the corn by sympathetic magic, and we may conjecture that as such it was practised in a simple form by every Egyptian farmer on his fields long before it was adopted and transfigured by the priests in the stately ritual of the temple. The details of his myth fit in well with this interpretation of the god. He was said to be the offspring of Sky and Earth. What more appropriate parentage could be invented for the corn which springs from the ground that has been fertilised by the water of heaven? It is true that the land of Egypt owed its fertility directly to the Nile and not to showers; but the inhabitants must have known or guessed that the great river in its turn was fed by the rains which fell in the far interior. Again, the legend that Osiris was the first to teach men the use of corn would be most naturally told of the corn-god himself. Further, the story that his mangled remains were scattered up and down the land and buried in different places may be a mythical way of expressing either the sowing or the winnowing of the grain. The latter interpretation is supported by the tale that Isis placed the severed limbs of Osiris on a corn-sieve. Or more probably the legend may be a reminiscence of a custom of slaying a human victim, perhaps a representative of the corn-spirit, and distributing his flesh or scattering his ashes over the fields to fertilise them. In modern Europe the figure of Death is sometimes torn in pieces, and the fragments are then buried in the ground to make the crops grow well, and in other parts of the world human victims are treated in the same way. With regard to the ancient Egyptians we have it on the authority of Manetho that they used to burn red-haired men and scatter their ashes with winnowing fans, and it is highly significant that this barbarous sacrifice was offered by the kings at the grave of Osiris. We may conjecture that the victims represented Osiris himself, who was annually slain, dismembered, and buried in their persons that he might quicken the seed in the earth. Possibly in prehistoric times the kings themselves played the part of the god and were slain and dismembered in that character. Set as well as Osiris is said to have been torn in pieces after a reign of eighteen days, which was commemorated by an annual festival of the same length. According to one story Romulus, the first king of Rome, was cut in pieces by the senators, who buried the fragments of him in the ground; and the traditional day of his death, the seventh of July, was celebrated with certain curious rites, which were apparently connected with the artificial fertilisation of the fig. Again, Greek legend told how Pentheus, king of Thebes, and Lycurgus, king of the Thracian Edonians, opposed the vine-god Dionysus, and how the impious monarchs were rent in pieces, the one by the frenzied Bacchanals, the other by horses. The Greek traditions may well be distorted reminiscences of a custom of sacrificing human beings, and especially divine kings, in the character of Dionysus, a god who resembled Osiris in many points and was said like him to have been torn limb from limb. We are told that in Chios men were rent in pieces as a sacrifice to Dionysus; and since they died the same death as their god, it is reasonable to suppose that they personated him. The story that the Thracian Orpheus was similarly torn limb from limb by the Bacchanals seems to indicate that he too perished in the character of the god whose death he died. It is significant that the Thracian Lycurgus, king of the Edonians, is said to have been put to death in order that the ground, which had ceased to be fruitful, might regain its fertility. Further, we read of a Norwegian king, Halfdan the Black, whose body was cut up and

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buried in different parts of his kingdom for the sake of ensuring the fruitfulness of the earth. He is said to have been drowned at the age of forty through the breaking of the ice in spring. What followed his death is thus related by the old Norse historian Snorri Sturluson: Eventually it was settled that the body was distributed in four places. The head was laid in a barrow at Steinn in Hringariki, and each party took away their own share and buried it. The natives of Kiwai, an island lying off the mouth of the Fly River in British New Guinea, tell of a certain magician named Segera, who had sago for his totem. When Segera was old and ill, he told the people that he would soon die, but that, nevertheless, he would cause their gardens to thrive. Accordingly, he instructed them that when he was dead they should cut him up and place pieces of his flesh in their gardens, but his head was to be buried in his own garden. Of him it is said that he outlived the ordinary age, and that no man knew his father, but that he made the sago good and no one was hungry any more. Old men who were alive some years ago affirmed that they had known Segera in their youth, and the general opinion of the Kiwai people seems to be that Segera died not more than two generations ago. Taken all together, these legends point to a widespread practice of dismembering the body of a king or magician and burying the pieces in different parts of the country in order to ensure the fertility of the ground and probably also the fecundity of man and beast. To return to the human victims whose ashes the Egyptians scattered with winnowing-fans, the red hair of these unfortunates was probably significant. For in Egypt the oxen which were sacrificed had also to be red; a single black or white hair found on the beast would have disqualified it for the sacrifice. If, as I conjecture, these human sacrifices were intended to promote the growth of the crops "and the winnowing of their ashes seems to support this view" redhaired victims were perhaps selected as best fitted to personate the spirit of the ruddy grain. For when a god is represented by a living person, it is natural that the human representative should be chosen on the ground of his supposed resemblance to the divine original. Hence the ancient Mexicans, conceiving the maize as a personal being who went through the whole course of life between seed-time and harvest, sacrificed new-born babes when the maize was sown, older children when it had sprouted, and so on till it was fully ripe, when they sacrificed old men. Osiris a Tree-spirit BUT Osiris was more than a spirit of the corn; he was also a tree-spirit, and this may perhaps have been his primitive character, since the worship of trees is naturally older in the history of religion than the worship of the cereals. The character of Osiris as a tree-spirit was represented very graphically in a ceremony described by Firmicus Maternus. A pine-tree having been cut down, the centre was hollowed out, and with the wood thus excavated an image of Osiris was made, which was then buried like a corpse in the hollow of the tree. It is hard to imagine how the conception of a tree as tenanted by a personal being could be more plainly expressed. The image of Osiris thus made was kept for a year and then burned, exactly as was done with the image of Attis which was attached to the pine-tree. The ceremony of cutting the tree, as described by Firmicus Maternus, appears to be alluded to by Plutarch. It was probably the ritual counterpart of the mythical discovery of the body of Osiris enclosed in the erica-tree. In the hall of Osiris at Denderah the coffin containing the hawk-headed mummy of the god is clearly depicted as enclosed within a tree, apparently a conifer, the trunk and branches of which are seen above and below the coffin. The scene thus corresponds closely both to the myth and to the ceremony described by Firmicus Maternus. It accords with the character of Osiris as a tree-spirit that his worshippers were forbidden to injure fruit-trees, and with his character as a god of vegetation in general that they were not allowed to stop up wells of water, which are so important for the irrigation of hot southern lands. According to one legend, he taught men to train the vine to poles, to prune its superfluous foliage, and to extract the juice of the grape. In the papyrus of Nebseni, written about B. The ivy was sacred to him, and was called his plant because it is always green. Osiris a God of Fertility AS A GOD of vegetation Osiris was naturally conceived as a god of creative energy in general, since men at a certain stage of evolution fail to distinguish between the reproductive powers of animals and of plants. Hence a striking feature in his worship was the coarse but expressive symbolism by which this aspect of his nature was presented to the eye not merely of the initiated but of the multitude. At his festival women used to go about the villages singing songs in his praise and carrying obscene images of him which they set in motion by means of

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strings. The custom was probably a charm to ensure the growth of the crops. A similar image of him, decked with all the fruits of the earth, is said to have stood in a temple before a figure of Isis, and in the chambers dedicated to him at Philae the dead god is portrayed lying on his bier in an attitude which indicates in the plainest way that even in death his generative virtue was not extinct but only suspended, ready to prove a source of life and fertility to the world when the opportunity should offer. Hymns addressed to Osiris contain allusions to this important side of his nature. It would be to misjudge ancient religion to denounce as lewd and profligate the emblems and the ceremonies which the Egyptians employed for the purpose of giving effect to this conception of the divine power. The ends which they proposed to themselves in these rites were natural and laudable; only the means they adopted to compass them were mistaken. A similar fallacy induced the Greeks to adopt a like symbolism in their Dionysiac festivals, and the superficial but striking resemblance thus produced between the two religions has perhaps more than anything else misled enquirers, both ancient and modern, into identifying worships which, though certainly akin in nature, are perfectly distinct and independent in origin. Osiris a God of the Dead WE have seen that in one of his aspects Osiris was the ruler and judge of the dead. To a people like the Egyptians, who not only believed in a life beyond the grave but actually spent much of their time, labour, and money in preparing for it, this office of the god must have appeared hardly, if at all, less important than his function of making the earth to bring forth its fruits in due season. We may assume that in the faith of his worshippers the two provinces of the god were intimately connected. In laying their dead in the grave they committed them to his keeping who could raise them from the dust to life eternal, even as he caused the seed to spring from the ground. Of that faith the corn-stuffed effigies of Osiris found in Egyptian tombs furnish an eloquent and un-equivocal testimony. They were at once an emblem and an instrument of resurrection. Thus from the sprouting of the grain the ancient Egyptians drew an augury of human immortality. They are not the only people who have built the same lofty hopes on the same slender foundation. A god who thus fed his people with his own broken body in this life, and who held out to them a promise of a blissful eternity in a better world hereafter, naturally reigned supreme in their affections. We need not wonder, therefore, that in Egypt the worship of the other gods was overshadowed by that of Osiris, and that while they were revered each in his own district, he and his divine partner Isis were adored in all.

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Chapter 2 : James Frazer. The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion Abridged Edition. | eBay

The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion is a wide-ranging comparative study of mythology and religion, written by Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer ().

May 03, Gabriel Vidrine rated it it was ok This was a very hard book to get through. I tried to read this once before and had to put it down. Basically, this book is a collection of myths, superstitions, and religious and folk practices. But Frazer sucks all of the interest out of the stories not only by his writing style, but the manner in which he treats the material. According to Frazer, anyone who believes in magic, has a religion, or otherwise participates in folk or re This was a very hard book to get through. According to Frazer, anyone who believes in magic, has a religion, or otherwise participates in folk or religious customs is the lowest of the low in terms of culture and intelligence. He has the very colonialist view of "savages" as less than human. Yet, throughout the first third of the book and throughout the rest he continually insults primitive peoples. The book eventually devolves into a listing of myths. They say this about corn. They burn corn in honor of the corn spirit on Midsummer. These other people of Southern Germany believe this about corn. These people in France believe this about corn. These other people in France also believe this about corn If Cut and Paste had existed in his time, it would have been used in at least a third of the book. Some parts are nearly word for word the same. I scanned those sections, and that was the only reason it did not take me another month longer to read this book. The book is also full of silly errors and contradictions, such as an entire chapter being devoted to whether the bonfires of May Day and Midsummer were for purification or to increase the power of the sun. He argues for the purification route, and then continues to refer to them as sun-charms. Everything in this book amounts to the subject and discipline of my interest since I first started reading. Yet, somehow, this book never crossed my desk. Frazer presents a somewhat flawed argument with a clear agenda and a clear bias. This is problematic, because it points to a bias through which historical and anthropological evidence has been delivered. One such problem is with the starting assumption of the author that superstition and magic cannot possibly hold the place against intellection. I believe this is a problematic perspective because magic as a concept may represent the unity of the body and mind as a source of divine connection and another way of "knowing. And logic as the only way of being. This author presents several biases in which he cannot entertain even the self awareness that intellection may not be the only way of being, or the only way of being connected to divinity. I do have to wonder though how he was able to research so many cultural identities with any veracity. There has to be an element of "the other "in this scenarioâ€¦ And I was not always convinced of the author self awareness in that regard. I am suitably impressed. Just, hyper aware of potential problems in this perspectiveâ€¦

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Chapter 3 : The Golden Bough by James George Frazer

The golden bough: a study in magic and religion *The golden bough: a study in magic and religion.* by Frazer, James George, Part IV Volume 2.

If that has been so, the practitioners of the art must necessarily be personages of importance and influence in any society which puts faith in their extravagant pretensions, and it would be no matter for surprise if, by virtue of the reputation which they enjoy and of the awe which they inspire, some of them should attain to the highest position of authority over their credulous fellows. In point of fact magicians appear to have often developed into chiefs and kings. Let us begin by looking at the lowest race of men as to whom we possess comparatively full and accurate information, the aborigines of Australia. These savages are ruled neither by chiefs nor kings. So far as their tribes can be said to have a political constitution, it is a democracy or rather an oligarchy of old and influential men, who meet in council and decide on all measures of importance to the practical exclusion of the younger men. Their deliberative assembly answers to the senate of later times: The elders who in aboriginal Australia thus meet and direct the affairs of their tribe appear to be for the most part the headmen of their respective totem clans. Now in Central Australia, where the desert nature of the country and the almost complete isolation from foreign influences have retarded progress and preserved the natives on the whole in their most primitive state, the headmen of the various totem clans are charged with the important task of performing magical ceremonies for the multiplication of the totems, and as the great majority of the totems are edible animals or plants, it follows that these men are commonly expected to provide the people with food by means of magic. Others have to make the rain to fall or to render other services to the community. In short, among the tribes of Central Australia the headmen are public magicians. Further, their most important function is to take charge of the sacred storehouse, usually a cleft in the rocks or a hole in the ground, where are kept the holy stones and sticks churinga with which the souls of all the people, both living and dead, are apparently supposed to be in a manner bound up. Thus while the headmen have certainly to perform what we should call civil duties, such as to inflict punishment for breaches of tribal custom, their principal functions are sacred or magical. When we pass from Australia to New Guinea we find that, though the natives stand at a far higher level of culture than the Australian aborigines, the constitution of society among them is still essentially democratic or oligarchic, and chieftainship exists only in embryo. Thus Sir William MacGregor tells us that in British New Guinea no one has ever arisen wise enough, bold enough, and strong enough to become the despot even of a single district. If a chief imposed a fine, it was paid because the people universally dreaded his ghostly power, and firmly believed that he could inflict calamity and sickness upon such as resisted him. As soon as any considerable number of his people began to disbelieve in his influence with the ghosts, his power to levy fines was shaken. Thus among the Wambugwe, a Bantu people of East Africa, the original form of government was a family republic, but the enormous power of the sorcerers, transmitted by inheritance, soon raised them to the rank of petty lords or chiefs. Of the three chiefs living in the country in two were much dreaded as magicians, and the wealth of cattle they possessed came to them almost wholly in the shape of presents bestowed for their services in that capacity. Their principal art was that of rain-making. The chiefs of the Wataturu, another people of East Africa, are said to be nothing but sorcerers destitute of any direct political influence. Again, among the Wagogo of East Africa the main power of the chiefs, we are told, is derived from their art of rain-making. If a chief cannot make rain himself, he must procure it from some one who can. Again, among the tribes of the Upper Nile the medicine-men are generally the chiefs. It is therefore small wonder that men more cunning than their fellows should arrogate to themselves the power of producing it, or that having gained such a reputation, they should trade on the credulity of their simpler neighbours. Rain-making chiefs always build their villages on the slopes of a fairly high hill, as they no doubt know that the hills attract the clouds, and that they are, therefore, fairly safe in their weather forecasts. When he wishes to produce rain he plunges the stones in water, and taking in his hand a peeled cane,

which is split at the top, he beckons with it to the clouds to come or waves them away in the way they should go, muttering an incantation the while. Or he pours water and the entrails of a sheep or goat into a hollow in a stone and then sprinkles the water towards the sky. Though the chief acquires wealth by the exercise of his supposed magical powers, he often, perhaps generally, comes to a violent end; for in time of drought the angry people assemble and kill him, believing that it is he who prevents the rain from falling. Yet the office is usually hereditary and passes from father to son. Among the tribes which cherish these beliefs and observe these customs are the Latuka, Bari, Laluba, and Lokoïya. In Central Africa, again, the Lendu tribe, to the west of Lake Albert, firmly believe that certain people possess the power of making rain. Among them the rain-maker either is a chief or almost invariably becomes one. The Banyoro also have a great respect for the dispensers of rain, whom they load with a profusion of gifts. The great dispenser, he who has absolute and uncontrollable power over the rain, is the king; but he can depute his power to other persons, so that the benefit may be distributed and the heavenly water laid on over the various parts of the kingdom. In Western as well as in Eastern and Central Africa we meet with the same union of chiefly with magical functions. Thus in the Fan tribe the strict distinction between chief and medicine-man does not exist. As to the relation between the offices of chief and rain-maker in South Africa a well-informed writer observes: Some chiefs allowed no one else to compete with them, lest a successful Rain-maker should be chosen as chief. There was also another reason: The Rain-maker exerts tremendous control over the people, and so it would be most important to keep this function connected with royalty. Tradition always places the power of making rain as the fundamental glory of ancient chiefs and heroes, and it seems probable that it may have been the origin of chieftainship. The man who made the rain would naturally become the chief. In the same way Chaka [the famous Zulu despot] used to declare that he was the only diviner in the country, for if he allowed rivals his life would be insecure. The unbounded fear which the magician inspires and the wealth which he amasses in the exercise of his profession may both be supposed to have contributed to his promotion. But if the career of a magician and especially of a rain-maker offers great rewards to the successful practitioner of the art, it is beset with many pitfalls into which the unskilful or unlucky artist may fall. The position of the public sorcerer is indeed a very precarious one; for where the people firmly believe that he has it in his power to make the rain to fall, the sun to shine, and the fruits of the earth to grow, they naturally impute drought and dearth to his culpable negligence or wilful obstinacy, and they punish him accordingly. Hence in Africa the chief who fails to procure rain is often exiled or killed. Thus, in some parts of West Africa, when prayers and offerings presented to the king have failed to procure rain, his subjects bind him with ropes and take him by force to the grave of his forefathers that he may obtain from them the needed rain. The Banjars in West Africa ascribe to their king the power of causing rain or fine weather. So long as the weather is fine they load him with presents of grain and cattle. But if long drought or rain threatens to spoil the crops, they insult and beat him till the weather changes. On the Grain Coast the high priest or fetish king, who bears the title of Bodio, is responsible for the health of the community, the fertility of the earth, and the abundance of fish in the sea and rivers; and if the country suffers in any of these respects the Bodio is deposed from his office. He, too, must know how to make rain and drive away the locusts. If he and his medicine-men are unable to accomplish this, his whole existence is at stake in times of distress. On a certain occasion, when the rain so greatly desired by the people did not come, the Sultan was simply driven out in Ututwa, near Nassa. The people, in fact, hold that rulers must have power over Nature and her phenomena. If rain does not come at the proper time, everybody complains. More than one petty king has been banished his country because of drought. But often they kill him. In many other parts of the world kings have been expected to regulate the course of nature for the good of their people and have been punished if they failed to do so. It appears that the Scythians, when food was scarce, used to put their king in bonds. In ancient Egypt the sacred kings were blamed for the failure of the crops, but the sacred beasts were also held responsible for the course of nature. When pestilence and other calamities had fallen on the land, in consequence of a long and severe drought, the priests took the animals by night and threatened them, but if the evil did not abate they slew the beasts. But as the kings were also high priests, and were

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supposed to make the food grow, the people became angry with them in times of scarcity and killed them; till at last, as one after another was killed, no one would be king, and the monarchy came to an end. Ancient Chinese writers inform us that in Corea the blame was laid on the king whenever too much or too little rain fell and the crops did not ripen. Some said that he must be deposed, others that he must be slain. Among the American Indians the furthest advance towards civilisation was made under the monarchical and theocratic governments of Mexico and Peru; but we know too little of the early history of these countries to say whether the predecessors of their deified kings were medicine-men or not. Perhaps a trace of such a succession may be detected in the oath which the Mexican kings, when they mounted the throne, swore that they would make the sun to shine, the clouds to give rain, the rivers to flow, and the earth to bring forth fruits in abundance. Certainly, in aboriginal America the sorcerer or medicine-man, surrounded by a halo of mystery and an atmosphere of awe, was a personage of great influence and importance, and he may well have developed into a chief or king in many tribes, though positive evidence of such a development appears to be lacking. In all tribes their doctors are conjurers "are magicians" are sooth-sayers, and I had like to have said high-priests, inasmuch as they superintend and conduct all their religious ceremonies; they are looked upon by all as oracles of the nation. In all councils of war and peace, they have a seat with the chiefs, are regularly consulted before any public step is taken, and the greatest deference and respect is paid to their opinions. In the absence of any definite system of government, the word of a shaman has great weight: But sometimes if it happens that these pages do not tell the truth, and things turn out otherwise than they predicted, the people make no scruple of killing them as unworthy of the title and dignity of pages. In virtue of his office he has to make many presents, so he seldom grows rich and is generally more shabbily clad than any of his subjects. For these services he is well paid, and by them he acquires a position of great influence and authority. Throughout the Malay region the rajah or king is commonly regarded with superstitious veneration as the possessor of supernatural powers, and there are grounds for thinking that he too, like apparently so many African chiefs, has been developed out of a simple magician. At the present day the Malays firmly believe that the king possesses a personal influence over the works of nature, such as the growth of the crops and the bearing of fruit-trees. The same prolific virtue is supposed to reside, though in a lesser degree, in his delegates, and even in the persons of Europeans who chance to have charge of districts. Thus in Selangor, one of the native states of the Malay Peninsula, the success or failure of the rice-crops is often attributed to a change of district officers. The Toorateyas of Southern Celebes hold that the prosperity of the rice depends on the behaviour of their princes, and that bad government, by which they mean a government which does not conform to ancient custom, will result in a failure of the crops. The Dyaks of Sarawak believed that their famous English ruler, Rajah Brooke, was endowed with a certain magical virtue which, if properly applied, could render the rice-crops abundant. And when he entered a village, the women would wash and bathe his feet, first with water, and then with the milk of a young coco-nut, and lastly with water again, and all this water which had touched his person they preserved for the purpose of distributing it on their farms, believing that it ensured an abundant harvest. Tribes which were too far off for him to visit used to send him a small piece of white cloth and a little gold or silver, and when these things had been impregnated by his generative virtue they buried them in their fields, and confidently expected a heavy crop. Once when a European remarked that the rice-crops of the Samban tribe were thin, the chief immediately replied that they could not be otherwise, since Rajah Brooke had never visited them, and he begged that Mr. Brooke might be induced to visit his tribe and remove the sterility of their land. The belief that kings possess magical or supernatural powers by virtue of which they can fertilise the earth and confer other benefits on their subjects would seem to have been shared by the ancestors of all the Aryan races from India to Ireland, and it has left clear traces of itself in our own country down to modern times. And the crops of the husbandmen spring up, each as it was sown, and the children die not, and no misshaped offspring is born. In the Middle Ages, when Waldemar I. It was the belief of the ancient Irish that when their kings observed the customs of their ancestors, the seasons were mild, the crops plentiful, the cattle fruitful, the waters abounded with fish, and the fruit trees had to be propped up on

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account of the weight of their produce. A canon attributed to St. Perhaps the last relic of such superstitions which lingered about our English kings was the notion that they could heal scrofula by their touch. Queen Elizabeth often exercised this miraculous gift of healing. On Midsummer Day , Charles the First cured a hundred patients at one swoop in the chapel royal at Holyrood. But it was under his son Charles the Second that the practice seems to have attained its highest vogue. It is said that in the course of his reign Charles the Second touched near a hundred thousand persons for scrofula. The press to get near him was sometimes terrific. On one occasion six or seven of those who came to be healed were trampled to death. The cool-headed William the Third contemptuously refused to lend himself to the hocuspocus; and when his palace was besieged by the usual unsavoury crowd, he ordered them to be turned away with a dole. The kings of France also claimed to possess the same gift of healing by touch, which they are said to have derived from Clovis or from St.

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Chapter 4 : The Golden Bough - Wikipedia

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First, however, Aeneas must find the oracle known as the Sibyl of Cumae pronounced KYOO-mee , who will lead him to the land of the dead. Aeneas locates the oracle, who informs him that he cannot pass through the underworld safely without the Golden Bough. When Aeneas enters the forest to look for the sacred branch, two doves lead him to an oak tree that shelters the bough of shimmering golden leaves. Aeneas gets the Golden Bough and returns to the Sibyl of Cumae. Together Aeneas and the Sibyl enter the underworld. With the Golden Bough in his possession, the hero is able to pass safely through the various dangers and obstacles there. There Aeneas finds the spirit of his father. The Golden Bough also appears in other legends, particularly in connection with the goddess Diana. According to some accounts, it was a custom among worshippers of Diana for a slave to cut a branch from a sacred tree and then kill the priest responsible for guarding the tree. Virgil describes the Golden Bough as being sheltered by an oak, much as mistletoe grows as a parasite on many trees, including oaks. In addition, mistletoe has a long history of supernatural associations in different cultures. Ancient Romans may have believed that mistletoe was dropped from the heavens and landed in the trees where it grew, which suggested that it would contain divine powers. In this way it protects Aeneas from darkness and death while in the underworld. In the legend of the priest of Diana, the Golden Bough represents the sacred duty of the order that watches over it. It also represents the endless cycle of death and rebirth, as the priest who guards it is killed and replaced by a new priest, who will eventually meet the same fate. The Golden Bough in Art, Literature, and Everyday Life Although mentioned as part of a minor story in the Aeneid, the Golden Bough has become especially well known among modern scholars. A Study in Magic and Religion, a multivolume study of religion and mythology published in This landmark work has in turn inspired many works of both fiction and nonfiction, and is the main source of the Golden Bough myth for modern readers. The Assassin Tree, an opera based on the myth of the slaves and the priest guarding the Golden Bough, was created by Stuart MacRae and Simon Armitage and premiered in Read, Write, Think, Discuss.

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Chapter 5 : The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion - James George Frazer - Google Books

The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion by James George Frazer. The Golden Bough is the best-known work of James George Frazer. It went through a number of editions. The first edition came out in 2 volumes in , and the second came out in 3 volumes in

He became a fellow of the college in and remained at Cambridge for the rest of his life. Throughout his career he made little or no direct contact with the remote peoples who figure so extensively in his writings, and much of his simplification of their ideas which explains some of his popular success may be attributed to this absence of personal experience. He himself appears to have anticipated the obsolescence of his work when he stressed that firsthand observation of foreign societies would furnish the science of man with a solid foundation which could never be shaken, and which would endure when many of the theories of his time, his own included, were forgotten or remembered only as curiosities. And with a characteristic skepticism that may now appear sententious he wrote that magic, science, and religion are nothing but theories of thought. And as science has supplanted its predecessors, so it may hereafter be itself superseded by some more perfect hypothesis, perhaps by some totally different way of looking at the phenomenaâ€”of registering the shadows on the screenâ€”of which we in this generation can form no idea. The advance of knowledge is an infinite progression towards a goal that for ever recedes. He treated Christianity as comparable with pagan religions and thus, at least by implication, deprived Christianity of its uniqueness, but he did so too tactfully to give real offense. He undermined rather than attacked the doctrinal convictions of his contemporaries. He was rewarded in his lifetime with public and academic honors, among them a civil list pension granted in for services to literature and anthropology. It is interesting to note that he received his honorary D. His wife was single-mindedly devoted to his reputation; indeed, R. Marett likened her to the guardian-wife of a priest of ancient Rome. To his admirers Frazer appeared as a modern seer, a role that he accepted. He was revered by colonial administrators and missionaries as few anthropologists have been, and his extensive correspondence with them, together with his published questionnaire , produced firsthand information about many peoples of the world. Men of letters Kipling, Tennyson, T. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and D. The development of the psyche. Frazer posited three elements in the development of the human psyche, and in the spirit of the evolutionary thinking of his time, he saw these as characterizing three stages in human mental advance: Magical thought assumed that the universe is regulated by impersonal and unchanging laws in this respect, Frazer believed, magic is like science. These laws were known to the magician through his art and applied by him in a quasi-technical way to control events. But magical beliefs and procedures unlike scientific ones were derived from faulty reasoning by analogy and from superficial associations: Although Frazer oversimplified the problems of symbolic thought that such beliefs now present to anthropologists, his distinctions continue to have some elementary taxonomic value. In this phase superhuman beings were thought to control the world. The uniformity of nature ceased to be taken for granted, since the occurrence of natural events was assumed to depend upon the will of conscious personal agents. Man sought to gain the help of these agents by acts of supplication and propitiation. Finally, recognizing more clearly the limits of his own powers of control and applying logicoexperimental methods, man achieved the scientific stage. Frazer greatly overstressed the part played by deliberate reasoning in religious and magic belief and created a primitive man whose intellectual ambitions and processes of thought were those of a scholar like himself. Often Frazer preached the dangers of misinterpretation that he himself had failed to avoid. Moreover, lacking knowledge of local languages and cultures, they were satisfied to take reports of isolated customs and beliefs quite out of their social context, and in this process they sometimes distorted even such evidence as they had. The divine king, according to Frazer, has a vitality that is believed to be the source of vitality in society and nature, and therefore, when his powers fail, he must be put to death so that a vigorous successor may continue to ensure prosperity. As Evans-Pritchard points out, there is very slight evidence for the actual ritual killing of the kings of Shilluk,

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while there is considerable evidence for the important role played by political conflicts within the ruling house. But the significance of Frazer does not depend finally upon his anthropological theories. What he did was to introduce a comparative approach to the study of human social institutions. His self-deceived magicians and priests were also agents of human progress, the ablest and most intelligent of their time. In keeping with his own political philosophy, he also commended them for establishing intellectual despotism—and any statesman of his time who agreed with Frazer in principle was thereby accepting comparison with savages. And on various occasions he stressed not only the common qualities of the thought of savage and civilized men but the positive contributions the former have made to the latter. And in *The Golden Bough* he wrote that of [all] the benefactors whom we are bound thankfully to commemorate, many, perhaps most, were savages. For when all is said and done, our resemblances to the savage are still far more numerous than our differences from him; and what we have in common with him, and deliberately retain as true and useful, we owe to our savage forefathers who slowly acquired by experience and transmitted to us by inheritance those seemingly fundamental ideas which we are apt to regard as original and intuitive. Without him, the struggle to introduce anthropological knowledge and anthropological viewpoints to authorities in academic and public life would have been longer and harder. In an essential way, he made modern anthropology possible. *A Study in Magic and Religion*, 3d ed. *Essays, Addresses, and Reviews*. Cambridge Philological Society, Proceedings Nos. Cite this article Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

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Chapter 6 : The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion

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Sir James George Frazer's comparative study of anthropology, folklore, and myth has been an influential work for writers and a standard text for scholars since its original publication, in several volumes, in the early part of the 20th century.

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Chapter 9 : The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Vol 1 by James George Frazer

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