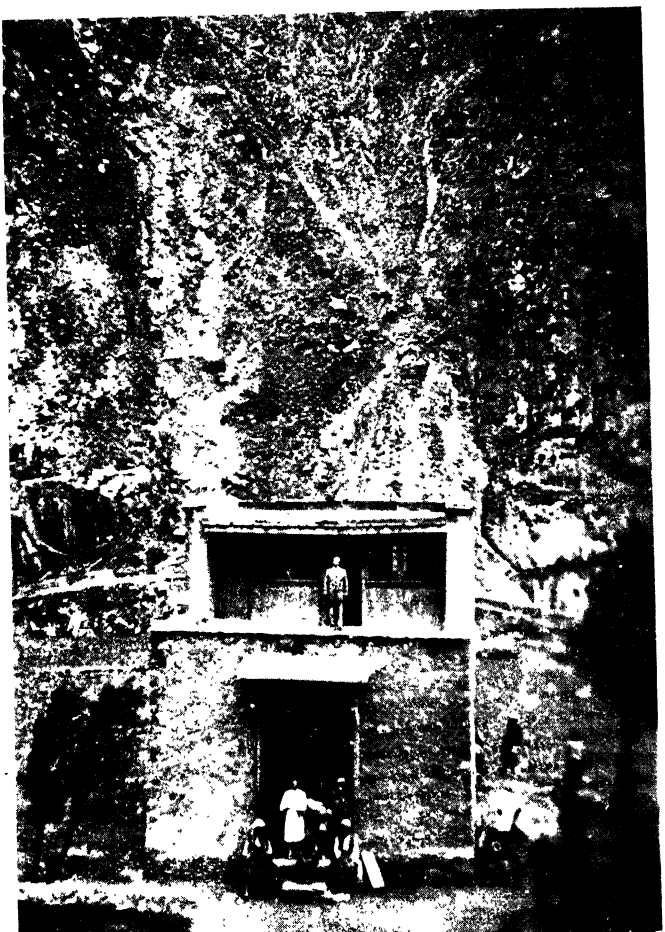
CHINA'S FIRST MISSIONARIES

Ancient Israelites



THE FIRST CHIANG CHURCH — DONGMENWAI

Frontispiece

CHINA'S FIRST MISSIONARIES

Ancient Israelites

By

REV. T. TORRANCE, F.R.G.S.

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FOREWORD

By REV. G. A. FRANK KNIGHT, D.D., F.R.S.E.
General Secretary of the National Bible Society of Scotland

MR. TORRANCE is to be warmly congratulated on having made a discovery of outstanding importance. Fascinating indeed is it to learn from him, as a result of his personal explorations, that tucked away in the great mountain and river system of Western China there is a race of men who are the descendants of the tribes of Israel who inhabited Palestine centuries before the Christian Era.

Reading the successive chapters of this book, one is struck with the steady accumulation of evidence that these tribes-people of the twentieth century are perpetuating to-day the very customs, ritual, modes of thought, and domestic and religious practices of the Israelites who were the contemporaries of Elijah, Amos, Hosea and other Old Testament prophets. Remarkably striking are also the facts he brings forward as to the extreme antiquity of many of those rites, which tend to strengthen the traditional view of the development of the Old Testament religion as against that of modern opinion. Abundant fresh light is also cast on many an obscure Biblical allusion.

The parallels of the customs of the Chiang people to those of the Israelites are extremely remarkable, and altogether Mr. Torrance has given us a book of exceptional interest, which may well have a wide effect in modifying many hasty and ill-grounded hypotheses.

G. A. FRANK KNIGHT.

MINUTE 243

of West China Union University General Faculty

Oct. 3, 1934

WHEREAS, the Rev. Thomas Torrance, one of the few remaining pioneer missionaries of West China, is about to leave us, Be It Resolved that this University Faculty record its appreciation of Mr. Torrance and of the labours he has performed as a preacher of the gospel of Christ, and as a tireless distributor of the Bible and advocate of its use.

As a University we are particularly indebted to him that he has sought out, preached to and introduced us to the Chiang people concerning whose life and customs he is doubtless the best informed person who has ever been among us.

We also record Mr. Torrance's great service in the building up of our Museum, especially in the finding and evaluating of bronzes and porcelains. Among the priceless objects in the Museum not a few bear the name of Thomas Torrance, and many more have been secured through his agency. As he leaves us we wish him Godspeed and the happiest days of life yet to be.

PREFACE

THE purpose of the following chapters is to describe the customs and religious observances of a colony of people descended from Israelitish settlers who came to the Western Borderland of China several hundreds of years before the time of Christ.

The writer for many years laboured as a missionary in West China. In the course of his travels and explorations among various races living in the mountainous region between China proper and Tibet he found this interesting people. To-day they are mostly known under the general name of Chiang-Min, though once known, at least in one region, as the Baelan-Min. It was their Jewish-like appearance combined with their characteristic Old Testament religion that drew his attention markedly to them. "Who indeed were they?" he asked. As their habits were studied, their traditions learned, their religious observances interpreted to him from one and another over a wide area, and as finally Christian converts came forward to corroborate what he discovered, their identity became undeniably established.

That the Chinese had been indebted to Western races for much of their religious and philosophic outlook, was soon seen by Christian missionaries. The Rev. J. Edkins, D.D., in his *Early Spread of Religious*

Ideas, Especially in the Far East, a work issued by the R.T.S., drew attention to this as far back as 1893. He and others of his day drew aside the veil from the growth of Chinese religious conceptions, letting it be known that China had not lived her life as much in the isolation of independence as many had supposed. Yet it was not suspected by anyone that she had benefited considerably by the direct influence of a colony of Israelites on her Western frontier. But these pages point to this fact, and arouse interest in the question of how far this influence helped to mould the trend of those moral and religious ideas which the sages of the Chou and Han Dynasties bequeathed to posterity.

The surmise had long been made that "the Jews had made their way to China several centuries before the Christian era. Dr. McGowan, in a paper read before the British Association in 1860, stated that he found evidence of the existence of a numerous colony of Jews in the City of Chintu (Chengtu) about a century before the Birth of Christ, and that in all probability some of them had made their way to the mountainous region lying between China and Burmah. He was also of the opinion that they were either their progenitors, or that through them the Karens derived their Old Testament traditions" (*Modern Missions*, p. 90). These pages now serve to substantiate Dr. McGowan's statement of the early presence of Jews in West China, though it is only right to add that we knew nothing of his discovery until very recently. At present no colony of them exists in Chengtu: the nearest is several

days' journey away to the north-west of this capital city.

Attention has before now been drawn by the writer to the Chiang-Min. In 1920 he printed a monograph on "The History of the Customs and Religion of the Chiang". An article called "The Religion of the Chiang" was printed in the *Journal* of the China branch of The Royal Asiatic Society, for January, 1923. "Notes on the West China Aboriginal Tribes" appeared in the records of the West China Research Society for 1934. And in the same year a lecture was given at the West China Union University on "The Basic Spiritual Conceptions of the Chiang Religion". The present work follows with a general description of the life, manners and religious practices of the people, giving details previously withheld until such a description as this could be written, so that the reader might the better be able to judge of the value of the contribution rendered to the study of the Old Testament from the far West of China.

It remains to add that this announcement is in part the fulfilment of an earnest charge given the writer by an eminent Chiang Christian to tell the Western Churches of their presence in far West China. This man fell a martyr to his faith in the summer of 1935. To his help in securing introductions to Chiang leaders and priests of note, in our quest for independent information, much of this work is due.

This man was won by the reading of the Pentateuch. At once he claimed its five books as the title-deeds of the immemorial religion of his people. The

resemblances of their ritual to the observances of the Tabernacle were too many and too intimate to be mistaken. Besides, the religious conceptions in both were identical. The sweet reasonableness of the Gospel in consummating the substance of the Messianic promise set forth in both, convinced him straightway of the truth of Christianity.

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APRIL, 1937

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Chapter I

"OUTCASTS OF ISRAEL"

At the close of the Old Testament Canon the Israelites for the most part remained scattered among the nations. Many continued to live in Persia and other parts of the East. In the second book of Esdras there is an interesting mention of them: "these are the Ten Tribes which were led away out of their own land in the time of Osea the King whom Salmanasar the King of the Assyrians led away captive, and he carried them beyond the River,[1] and they were carried into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes which they had not kept in their own land. And they entered by the narrow passages of the river Euphrates. For the Most High then wrought signs for them, and stayed the springs of the River, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half; and the same region is called Arzareth."[2]

Some historians identify Arzareth with Afghanistan and believe that the Afghans are of Hebrew descent.

[1] *c.f.* 1 Kings xiv. 15.
[2] 2 Esdras 13: 40-45

Others again think or allege, as do the Jews of Bokhara, that numbers also went further east than Afghanistan and settled in the unexplored regions of China; possibly some may yet be found in Tibet, where they will remain until Jehovah "shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11. 12).

Where precisely the outcasts of Israel did all settle, or where remnants of their descendants may now be found, will never be determined, but in the course of the writer's missionary work in the far West of China, a surprise came nineteen years ago in the finding of a colony of ancient immigrants whose religious observances resembled very closely those of the Old Testament. At the time of the discovery, and for a number of years afterwards, it did not occur to us that these people might be of the seed of Abraham. While it was plain that they hailed originally from Asia Minor, because their customs, laws, architecture, demeanour and physiognomy made it certain, the surmise was rather that they sprang from another Semitic line, and that their religious practices revealed a type of religion anterior to that of the Israelites. But with an increased knowledge of their traditions and a better understanding of their religious mysteries, the conclusion was forced on us slowly that they were indeed descendants of ancient Israelite settlers. Whether or not they are sprung from those who were carried away beyond Babylon because of "bearing the tabernacle of Moloch and Chiun" (Amos v. 26; Acts vii. 42, 45) no one can, of course, say; the fact remains simply

that they retain unquestionable marks of being members of the Israelitish branch of the Semitic race.

By the Chinese they are called Chiang or Chiang-Min, i.e. the Chiang people. The name they themselves pronounce Chieng. Their own tongue or language they have forgotten and they have lost their primitive script. They now are bilingual, and speak a language of the same root as Tibetan and Chiarong in addition to Chinese.

Their habitat lies in the middle West, between China proper and Tibet. The region is famed for its rare flora and fauna. A Paradise to the naturalist and the hunter, it is also a happy field of research to the ethnologist. For here are found besides this people, various tribes of aborigines, all of non-Chinese stock. There are the Hsifan, the Bolo, the Hehshui, the Chiarong, the Wasze, the Nosu or Lolo, and the Nahsi, but the Chiang are diverse in laws and customs from them all. The Nahsi come nearest in speech and customs, and, if not partly related, seem to have come early under Chiang influence.

To-day the majority of the Chiang are found to the west of the Min river, in fort-like villages often built high up on the mountains, in the districts of Wenchuan, Lifan, Monghsien, and Tiehchi. Two colonies of them are found still further west, and small remnants in other localities. Once they were a prosperous and strong ethnic group, dominating a long stretch of territory from Kansu in the north to Yunnan in the south.

What records there are of their doings in Chinese local and general histories make it plain that they came to what is now Western Szechuan long before

the Chinese did. Western Szechuan as late as 316 B.C. formed the independent Kingdom of Shuh[1] or Sou. Then the Chiang were in force to the west of Shuh as well as in the lands to the north-west and south-west. By geographical necessity they came to group themselves into three main divisions. The first was in Southern Kansu and South-west Shensi, with its capital or centre at Wutu. The second was to the west of Shuh, and known as the Ranpang country; its ruling city was Wenkiang the present Monghsien. The third was to the south-west of Shuh in the Yuehsi region; its "capital" was Chiongtu, now the city of Ningyuen.

This much is certain. But in tracing their history further back the difficulty is in the Chinese nomenclature; it is not specific enough. Border races are confused and the term Chiang applied too generally. There is doubt also if the ideograph used for it was always written in the same way: the "Chiong" of the Yuehsi region is almost certainly the "Chiang" of the Ranpang. Moreover, Chinese references to their origin plainly conflict in statement. They are variously said to be related to the Uiguirs and the Tibetans, or again supposed to be sprung from the Sanmiao aborigines of China, while yet other records classify them as part of the Western Rong; presumably the Chiarong. But historical maps of the Han dynasties[2] do confirm that these three spheres were indeed occupied by them, and make their domain also extend to the north-west of Kansu. Then it is further established that the names respectively of

[1] The Shuh people belonged to the Ti or Tai race.

[2] 206 B.C.-A.D. 220.

their three divisions were the Fierce Wolf Chiang, the White Horse Chiang, and the Ploughing Ox Chiang.

The Chiang themselves maintain that they are immigrants. Their tradition is that they came of old from a far country and are emphatic that the trek occupied three years and three months. On the way they encountered great difficulties crossing rivers.

The Chiang, it is said, had no king, yet fought against the Sienpi barbarians of the far North and defeated them.

One of the Shuh kings married a Chiang lady from Wutu. The latest date that can be ascribed to the event is 400 B.C. The high mound of Wutanshan in Chengtu which covers the vault of her tomb is still one of the historical sights of the province of Szechuan. Such an allusion, though in itself of a scrappy nature, goes to corroborate that the Chiang were strongly established in these parts at a very early date. Naturally it required a considerable length of time for their numbers to increase to such an extent.

Mortuary goods from tombs in Chiang territory have been found with Panliang coins of approximately 250 B.C. Painted and unpainted pottery indicate a still earlier date. A water jar especially resembles a Palestinian model. Its concave base shows that it was carried on the head.

Certain " Chou " dynasty[1] pottery remains reveal that they had been shaped in moulds lined with cloth. This particular make of cloth is still worn by the Chiang.

[1] 1122-255 B.C.

To-day the Chiang are sadly reduced in numbers. The Wutu group became absorbed into the great Chinese race. Descendants of the Yuehsi group exist still, but are few and poor near the Szechuan-Yunnan border. Perhaps the Nahsi in North Yunnan may be proven to be half-caste relatives. Only in Szechuan have the Chiang continued in fair numbers. They are found in the districts of Wenchuan, Weichou, Lifan, etc., as already stated.

Their preservation from extinction they owe to the mountainous nature of these ridings. The rivers there flow through great erosions or glens. The mountain-sides are precariously steep. Access to high farm lands and grazing plateaus is often extremely difficult. The moving of a body of troops involves great risk. Even if a force could make an ascent, manœuvring is an impossibility. A few resolute men, by rolling stones down the mountain-side, can hold a regiment at bay. So the Chiang chiefs managed for many centuries to hold their own. Their recognition of Chinese sovereignty was never more than nominal, and only just enough to save the Chinese prestige and give them the least amount of trouble.

When China's rulers were good, the Chiang made no fuss; when they were evil they knew how to retaliate. Between the two races there was continual watchfulness. The Chinese lived along the banks of the rivers, the Chiang on the high lying lands overlooking them. Neither trusted the other. Both kept themselves ready for conflict at short notice. The enmity between the two was such as to admit of no compromise. The Chinese despised the Chiang as barbarians, the Chiang looked with disdain on the Chinese as idolaters. The feud was chronic.

TYPICAL VIEW IN THE CHIANG COUNTRY (THE TWO VILLAGES SEEN ARE LARGELY CHRISTIAN)

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The Chinese erected chains of forts through the valleys, and blockhouses at the entrances of every lateral valley. Villages had high massive walls built around them, and often protected military roads between one another. Beacon stations stood on headlands to give warning of impending danger in any quarter. China might rule in name, but at the expense of prodigious labour and monetary outlay.

It is questionable if the Chinese could ever have conquered the monotheists by main force had the latter not slowly allowed their forests to become largely depleted. The contraction of the timber reserves reduced the rainfall, curtailed farm produce, lessened the general opulence and exposed their lands to easier attack. During the reign of the Emperor Chien Long, A.D. 1736-1795, came the end of their independence. They joined the Chiarong at that time to gain greater freedom from the exactions of Chinese officials. It took China years to crush the movement, and she succeeded only after she had emptied her national chest of many millions of taels in the task.

Afterwards, the erection of idol temples on the Chiang Mountains was imposed on the conquered. It was a tacit and unmistakable confession that the strength of the Chiang had been recognized to lie in their monotheistic religion. That must be destroyed if their submission was to be permanent. Buddha was given them to worship instead of the Father Spirit, or Most High God.

Chapter II

THE FIRST MISSIONARIES TO CHINA

The discovery of these descendants of ancient Israel in West China naturally brought in its train many interesting reflections. The greatest, of course, was that God had not been unmindful of these Eastward migrations of primitive peoples which in process of time came to coalesce into the present Chinese race. Even they had to be told of the Law promulgated at Mount Sinai with its attendant Jehovistic sacrifice, and He sent His well-instructed servants to do the telling. Since He had made of one blood all races of men, none could be left, not even the wanderers who found their way to the ends of the earth, to remain without a revealed knowledge of His will. To give authority to moral action, to strengthen the admonitions of conscience and provide an incentive to well-doing, men required to know the nature of the Creator of heaven and earth. The best in life, now and hereafter, could be found only as they dealt righteously with one another and served with holy fear the Giver of all good. "For such is the propensity of men to vice, so numerous are the temptations to relaxed and immoral conduct that stronger restraints than those of mere reason are necessary to be imposed on man. The sense of right and wrong, the principle of honour, or the instinct of benevolence, are barriers

too feeble to withstand the strength of passion. . . . A Divine Legislator, uttering His Voice from Heaven; an Omniscient Witness beholding us in all our retreats; an Almighty Governor stretching forth His arm to punish or reward, disclosing the secrets of the invisible world, informing us of perpetual rest prepared hereafter for the righteous and of indignation and wrath awaiting the wicked: these are the considerations which overawe the world, support integrity, and check guilt."[1] The advent in the far East, therefore, of such disseminators of the Law was entirely in keeping with His gracious purpose that all nations should share in His spiritual bounty of instruction and saving grace even as they lived under His temporal beneficence. The Father of all under the sun ruled equally over all; He was no respecter of persons. The scattering of Israel among the nations was not a mere episode in their history, marking his judicial displeasure of their transgressions, it was also a dispensation of righteousness that, being scattered abroad, they might everywhere preach the Word. In the working of His infinite wisdom their fall served thus early, as it did again later for the riches of the world, and their diminution for the riches of the Gentiles (Rom. xi. 12).

China then had not been left to herself. Here was proof of the foolishness of the supposition that she, from the first, had lived her own hermit life, was cut off from the rest of the world and separately worked out her distinctive form of civilization.[2] The notion resembled that other of an equally erroneous nature

[1] Professor John Blair, D.D., *Sermons*.

[2] See note at end of this chapter.

that the annual spring and summer rise of the waters of the mighty Yangtsze river, or " son of the ocean ", was solely due to the melting of snow in the great Tibetan Tablelands. But when it was found that these waters grew muddier the higher they rose, and that their rise was coincident with the coming of the local season's rain, one had to admit the inadequacy of the information given by our Western school books. Similarly, when we learnt that Nestorian missionaries had come to China in the seventh century A.D., and perhaps before that, it was plain that China had not lived her religious life at least so much apart from others as had been imagined. For over two hundred years Christianity was preached in her borders. During this time a Christian church was erected in every " Chou " or departmental city in the Empire. The influence of the Court behind the missionaries made this possible. Thus we see that if Europe, Africa, and Western Asia were given the Gospel message, so were the Chinese. Neither were their religious views delivered over to the counsels of mere reason ; they, as these others, were given the opportunity of finding the way of eternal life. God did not leave them without witness of His saving grace through His Son Jesus Christ.

It was indeed a pleasing surprise that the Gospel had been proclaimed thus early in China, nevertheless it hardly prepared us, such was the weakness of our faith in God's goodness, for the greater surprise that a witness of divine truth had come to the land with the arrival at its doors of Israelitish immigrants several hundred years before the time of Christ. But when finally persuaded of its actuality, it was

CROSSING A RIVER BY MEANS OF A BAMBOO CABLE

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impossible not to pause and consider the appropriateness of its coming at such a time. It was near to the formative period when Confucianism and Taoism left their impress on the moral and religious thought of the Chinese mind, and before the arrival of Buddhism with its blighting influence. A new spirit then stirred in the land. The great progressive Chou dynasty, from which China's authentic historical records are dated, had come to its ascendancy.

The several States under its sway were realizing a heightening tide of new life. Art had become well advanced, the decoration of its fine bronzes being marked by lines of rare beauty and wonderful simplicity. It was the age of painted pottery and the casting of lofty moral maxims. Though ancestral worship obtained favour with many, and spirits imaginary or real were often placated, such beliefs, in this land of contradictions, could not undo the rational worship of Shang Ti, The Most High. He was also known under the name of Tien, the ideograph of which Professor Giles reminds us was originally written as "a simple anthropomorphic picture to denote the Powerful Being in the Sky who took a marked interest in human affairs". The primal religion of China was a simple Monotheism. To Shang Ti the Chinese Emperor offered sacrifice for his people. Hence China formed in many ways a suitable field for evangelization. She was to be given a higher conception of righteousness than she had, a deeper consciousness of Sin and an assurance that God was the Saviour of the penitent as well as the inexorable Judge of the evil-doer. Would she respond to the claims of revealed religion? Whether

or not, yet in the fulness of time the fuller light of the truth from Heaven came to the land to augment the light that by creation was within man, and no one hereafter dare say that she had not been given the opportunity of entering into the blessings of a higher religious life.

The following chapters describe briefly the life and customs of the descendants of the messengers of Jehovah who came to knock so loudly on China's door. Let it be remembered that, like their countrymen everywhere, they have suffered cruelly in their day. Time has left its mark on them. They are not what they once were. The feebleness of old age shows in a declension of their observances, while the decimation of many wars has led to a mingling of alien blood with their own. Nevertheless they are beloved for their fathers' sake. The reader will find much that is instructive in what they retain of their habits and faith. Especially he will see that the limpid, sparkling streams of their monotheistic faith contrast sharply with the turbid and unpalatable rivers of China's religious systems of to-day.

N.B. "China at the dawn of her history," declared Professor Chi, "was neither so beautiful as the classicists depicted nor so ugly as the evolutionists imagined. Both culturally and materially she had already reached a comparatively high state of development.

"Ancient China was not developed in isolation. The idea that China was all by herself until the time of Marco Polo was absolutely erroneous. She was

already hopelessly entangled with all sorts of foreign relations as far back as the prehistorical time, partly her own seeking, partly imposed on her. The cultural and political history of China had been a continuous adjustment to an everchanging environment, and a continued effort at a new synthesis of external and internal forces from the very beginning."

Excerpt from a lecture given at Minto House, Edinburgh, on "Ancient China in the Light of Recent Archaeological Discoveries" by Professor Li Chi of the Academica Sinica, and reported in the *Scotsman*, February 26, 1937.

Chapter III

CHIANG VILLAGES AND TOWERS

The Chiang generally live grouped together in villages. These are called forts, for such indeed they are, or were. Twenty to fifty or more dwellings are built solidly and compactly together for mutual safety. In older forts it is not uncommon to see the houses in such close juxtaposition that their back walls make an undivided rampart. Lanes are narrow, the house-tops flat. Where a village is erected on level ground the surface of the roofs looks like an elevated floor. The advantage of that in resisting an attack is obvious : lanes are easily bridged by planks and passage from house-top to house-top made quickly effective.

The sites are chosen for the sake of easy defence. A rocky eminence, a plot of ground above a precipice, a mountain spur or a bold mountain shoulder make equally for safety. Perched thickly through the mountains their appearance resembles that of mediæval castles multiplied indefinitely. The prospect from these retreats sweeps the hillside or the long road up the valley. The higher the situation, and the more impregnable the rock, the greater is the feeling of security. A sense of exaltation holds the spirit and intimacy with unsullied Nature makes the dwellers exult in their free open life.

A TOWER AT OIR

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The outstanding feature of these forts, so called, is the presence of tall defence towers. Every fort has or once had these. They rise from fifty to one hundred feet in height. The majority are rectangular. Square at the base, they may taper to half the size at the top. From a distance they are not unlike factory chimneys.

Towers may stand like huge sentinels in line with the outward side of a fort or separately in commanding positions. Others serve to guard passes, act as blockhouses, or stand in command of a strategical highway.

Entrance to them was, as a rule, by a doorway eight to ten feet above the ground level. This device made it difficult for an enemy to force his way in. Each tower used to have seven or more floors. Small apertures at each one of these let in light. The openings are sometimes in the form of crosses. Ladders led from one floor to another until the flat roof was reached. The roof made a platform for armed men. In front, half-way round, ran a low parapet. At the back rose a high battlement as a shield from arrows, fired from higher ground behind. The advent of modern artillery has rendered the towers useless in a regular siege, but against predatory robbers they still have their value.

The towers stored grain, valuables, armour and weapons of war (Compare Song of Solomon iv. 4; Ezek. xxvii. 11). They served also as places of refuge. In times of attack women and children, especially, fled to them for safety. From the top, stones were cast on the heads of assailants, and arrows shot at lurking foes.

The corner lines in many towers are as straight as on a printed diagram. Their masonry gives a fine exhibition of the skill used in their erection.

There are also hexagonal towers. Each of the six sides presents a concave surface. Inside, the shape is round. These are strong towers indeed, into which the righteous might run and be safe.

The similarity between the Chiang towers and those of Biblical interest there is little need to indicate. The Rev. Garrow Duncan, D.D., in his *Digging up Biblical History*,[1] gives a good description of an Amorite tower exposed by archæologists at Beth-shemesh, a town which covered an area of seven acres. "As in all Amorite forts, the walls were strengthened by towers. At the north-east corner, a rectangular tower, built on the rock surface, was found which measured thirty feet long. It projects twenty feet on the east side, thirteen on the west. Altogether it was about thirty feet deep, including the thickness of the wall, and it joined the wall by a straight joint.

"The south gate had two towers, the entrance passing straight through between them as in the south gate of Gezer. The western tower had one room, with a door giving access to it. In the east tower of this gate there were two rooms, each ten feet square, with no trace of a door to either. The room in the west tower was larger. These two towers were also rectangular, and projected both outward and inward. They measured each about twenty feet in length of face and thirty in depth. Forty yards west of this gate, at the south-west corner, was

[1] Vol. I. 126 (1931).

A TOWER AT ISAYTO

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A DONGMINWY VILLAGE

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another similar tower, thirty feet long and about twenty to twenty-four feet deep, projecting fifteen feet on the west side and ten feet on the east. At another point a buttress was found, over sixteen feet in length, but projecting only thirty inches from the wall.

"It seems likely that this wall had a series of towers all round it, certainly one at each corner of the fort, but these are the only towers that were traced."

Had this description been read to us and the name of the place withheld, we should have said at once that Dr. Duncan was giving the particulars of a Chiang fort, so closely does it apply to their architecture. The rooms spoken of at the east gate tower we surmise had their entrance from above, as the door in the Amorite tower was probably high above the ground level.

Many Chiang villages have several towers. A fort, consequently, at a distance presents to an Occidental the appearance of a factory town in the wrong place. But the aspect changes as one approaches. It becomes threatening and formidable. Curious eyes on the battlements watch every movement of the stranger. A dread creeps irresistibly over the spirit. A stone thrown from the top of one of these mighty sentinels would come with terrifying force. "The 'city' is great and walled up to heaven and, moreover, the sons of Anak are there" (Deut. 1. 28).

Within the fort there is no such trepidation. Assurance reigns. The heart is encouraged by the strength of its defences. The feeling is that of exultant security. The dweller is set up on a rock; he feels as

if hidden in a tabernacle. His head is lifted up above his antagonists. Whom shall he fear? Of whom shall he be afraid? When his enemies and his foes come upon him to eat up his flesh they stumble and fall. Though an host should encamp against him he shall remain confident (Psalm xxvii. 1-3).

The flat-roofed dwellings are built mostly of unhewn stone. So strong are the walls and so good is the workmanship that they last for centuries. The masons who built them leave their character in the walls.

They stand two or three storeys high. To make the roof, thick morticed boards are laid over heavy rafters. On the boards is spread a layer of brushwood or mountain bamboo. Thorns[1] are sometimes included to keep out rats. A thick layer of clay is packed on the top. The surface is now beaten hard and smooth. Occasionally a concrete of powdered and finely-broken earthenware mixed with lime is added. A very slight incline drains away the water. A low fencing parapet makes for safety and provides a seat (Compare Deut. xxii. 8). No matter how heavy the rain a good roof rarely leaks. At the back end of the roof some houses have a low, narrow open shed for the temporary storing of grain and straw. It is on the roof that the flail thrashes the wheat, and all the winnowing is done. In good weather the people move aloft here to sit in the sun, weave their fabrics,

[1] N.B.—W. M. Thomson, D.D., in *The Land And the Book*, p. 342, 1913 edition, speaking of the construction of house roofs in Lebanon says: "The materials now employed are beams about three feet apart, across which short sticks are arranged close together, and covered with the thick-matted thorn bush called *bellan*. Over this is spread a coat of stiff mortar, and then comes the marl or earth which makes the roof."

KAGU, A CHIANG VILLAGE

assemble for social intercourse and rusticate generally.

On the ground floor are pens for sheep or goats, and stables for ponies, donkeys and cattle. These open into a small courtyard. On the second and third floors are the living and store rooms. The hearth is in the centre of the upper end of the largest room. Around it sit the members of the family in the evening. A large iron ring with three legs stands over the log fire. On it rest cooking vessels. A kettle in "the smoke" (Psalm cxix. 83) hangs suspended from the roof. There is no chimney. The creosote of the smoke dyes the wood of the ceiling a dark ebony colour and prevents decay.

A disadvantage in the houses is the smallness of the windows. The rooms are dark (Luke xv. 8). The exigencies of defence necessitated the contraction of these latticed ventilators. Yet after being abroad in the intense light of a summer day the eyes find relief in the shade.

At the entrance of the house, half-way up in the wall, there is a square hole by the side of the door. Before admitting any one, the householder will glance through it to see who is there, friend or foe. If a friend, a wooden key is inserted into the bar or lock to free it, and the door is opened. The wooden key is carried on the person when the inmates go forth into the fields. The door is thus locked until their return. For convenience sake during the day when someone is at home the key is left in the bar-lock so that the members of the household, or intimate friends, may themselves insert the hand in the hole of the door to open it. This is done exactly as in the Song of Solomon v. 4, 5, 6. On retiring for the night the

handle-key is removed. This is what the bride had done on the evening she slept with her heart awake. In her reverie she heard her beloved knocking and saying: "Open to me my sister,—my love." He had put in his hand by the hole at the side of the door to get the handle, and found that she had withdrawn it.

The unique type of ladder in the Chiang home catches the eye at once. It is a notched tree-trunk, strong and sure. It leads from the courtyard below to the living rooms above. Ascent and descent is a fine art. But the ease with which the people go up and down elicits surprise.

To stand at the bottom of the ladder and see the lord of the house appearing at the top to welcome you is an original experience. At his behest attendants hasten down to assist, and others rush up to prepare your way. The scene prints itself indelibly on the memory. One thinks at once of Jacob and his dream. His vision, that night, as he lay in the "sanctuary" at Bethel was that of a house and a ladder, and the Lord of the house standing above the ladder hastening help to him in his hour of need. Jehovah used the homestead scene which Jacob knew so well, to speak of higher things.

If the house of every Chiang man is his castle, it is as much his sanctuary. On the roof in the centre of the back parapet stands an altar of incense. This provides his spiritual defence and salvation.

A more unconventional or surprising altar could not be found. It encloses a cubic aperture with a round, flat stone in it, on which are burned cypress twigs. On the altar stands a piece of white rock as a

THREE CHIANG FRIENDS AT THE VILLAGE OF HOPEENG

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symbol of Deity—not of a Deity, but The Deity. Behind the altar are two projecting, perforated slabs for the insertion of a green branch of a tree. Beneath these stones, built into the wall, is the mark of a cross.

A lamb without blemish is slain and its blood sprinkled. The ceremony of sacrificing is called " the paying of vows ". When the blood is sprinkled, the incense fumes of the burning twigs ascend and prayer is made.

Every home is thus linked with " The Giver of all good ". The earthly house prefigures the abiding tabernacle in the heavens, just as the rock over the altar reminds the worshipper that He is the eternal refuge of His people in times of trouble.

This religious conception the sixty-first Psalm expresses at length. " Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." " O prepare mercy and truth for my preservation." " I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever." " I will trust in the covert of Thy wings." " I will sing praise unto Thy Name." Two petitions and three attestations of faith.

The mark of the cross is not now found on every house, but on older houses it can be seen.

While there is a general similarity in Chiang architecture, the plans of buildings vary. But on the roof of every true home stands " the altar and the rock " as an infallible witness of the owner's nationality and faith.

Chapter IV

CHIANG LIFE AND CUSTOMS

To enter the Chiang country for the first time is an unforgettable experience. The European especially, after living for a time among the Chinese, rubs his eyes and wonders if what he sees is a delusion or not. He seems to be in the Near East instead of the Far East, the villages are so Biblical-looking and their inhabitants so dissimilar in appearance and manner to their neighbours. The people are of an exotic stamp. Their white garments, diverse ways, their looks and demeanour proclaim them as Asia-Minor folk. What a long way they seem from home !

First impressions again prove to be the best. The more one mixes with the Chiang the more he finds they are a unique race in West Szechuan. They differ both from the Chinese and others close to them. The Chiang man is, as it were, a Jew on the border. His peculiarities classify him as a being by himself. Even when he is of mixed blood—which is frequently true —he can scarcely be hidden.

The purer sort have unmistakably a Semitic cast of features. Let one of them enter a mixed concourse and he can be recognized. So near in reality is the appearance of some to their long lost relatives that were they clad in foreign dress and set down in

A CHIANG FARMER

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London or New York, they should be taken at once as Jews.

Head measurements as a means of identification cannot be trusted, in their case entirely. The mixed strain in their blood militates against certainty. It is not enough to conceal their foreign descent, but sufficient to confuse their exact kinship. But where one science fails the investigator, another must guide him.

Each district or clan used to have its own Chief. Under the Chinese policy of absorption, however, these have been removed one by one until few remain. Near Lifan there is the residence of a Chief where the character of the olden time Chieftainship can still be learnt. It is that of a magistrate's court, a castle and a farmhouse in one. Where else could such a blend be found ? To see it carries the visitor back to the days of the Patriarchs. The wand of the Ruler, the beating sticks of judgment, are set out in the entrance of the same building that houses agricultural implements. One step only and we are living again in the book of Genesis. Here are the customs of hoary antiquity, still in vogue without apparent loss of efficiency or joy. The people have never left the simple life and have no call, therefore, to revert to what the rest of us have lost.

Life among the Chiang is very primitive and free. They are farmers, shepherds and hunters. It is when left alone that they thrive best. No happier country scene can be imagined than a band of them working in the fields. They hoe and laugh. They rejoice and they help each other. Men and women mingle freely and innocently together.

Chiang singing heard once can never be mistaken. Theirs is the spirit of the lark. Its thrill in the open fields, as a group of them work together, would stir the heart of a poltroon. And their song in the evening, when they forgather indoors to husk corn, raises an irresistible impulse to rush and join the happy labourers. The appeal in their inducing notes and responsive cadences cannot be overcome. The music, even if elementary, has the true soul of rhythm and harmony. It arouses the best in the listener.

So close is its peculiar modulation to the sing-song of Palestinians to-day, that to hear the one is to recall the other.

For responsive singing in its merriest mood one has to attend a folk dance. How beautifully pure it is, though provocative of the greatest mirth! There is nothing to offend the most sensitive moral sense. A line of men and a line of women stand facing each other. The first in the line leads the song. His fellows join and keep time with graceful bending, bowing, and gyratory movements of the body. As the men finish, the first in the line of women leads the response with corresponding bodily movements. The dance, with intervals, continues for two hours or more. Incidents are related, heroes praised, sentiment expressed and witty impromptu verses rendered. Thus cares are forgotten in the happy outlet of the social soul and everyday life is sensibly sweetened.

But the finest music is said to be at the dancing following great religious festivals. The rejoicing is then in the mercy and goodness of God.

A CHIANG FARMER

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At meal times they can be seen in the fields bunched ogether in a ring, eating their bannocks of barley, uckwheat or maize, the perfect picture of con- ntment. It is interesting to note in comparison the haic practice in Ruth. "And Boaz said unto her, meal times come thou hither and eat bread and p thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside e reapers, and he reached her parched (corn) and e did eat and was sufficed."[1] Chiang bannocks e roasted at home on a concave iron plate, and when ken abroad are warmed up at a fire or in its hot hes, before being eaten.

Commentators describe "vinegar" as "sour ine". It is such the Chiang use. It is sucked by eans of straws inserted into the serving vessel.

As a race they are famed for their loyalty and ve to each other. The staunchness of their character s a byword. But this staunchness and loyalty can nake them fierce towards any person who maltreats ne of their number. The traveller does well who pproaches them cautiously. They are often as shy is the deer or cattle on their mountains. Ages of ppression have made them suspicious of outsiders. f you find one that drives a hard bargain in trade, let the same man see your kindness and you will be surprised at his gratitude. No other takes such delight in showing generosity—and the generosity is genuine.

In Palestine white and green are sacred colours. Among the Chiang white is peculiarly sacred; green is not especially mentioned. The people for the most part still wear white garments. Once all did. But over the white robe a fur waistcoat is common.

[1] Ruth ii. 14.

The men have also a dark brown mantle which they don during colder weather. Whiteness to them denotes purity and holiness. A white man is a good man, and anyone not dressed in white, or who has not purified himself by bathing, dare not join a company of worshippers in their approach to the Deity. The Israelites had ideas of necessary religious procedure closely corresponding to these of the Chiang. At Mount Sinai the Lord said unto Moses: "Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow and let them wash their clothes; and be ready against the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai . . . and let the priests also which come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them" (Exod. xix. 10, 11, 22).

The Babylonians, notwithstanding their general decline into polytheism, held similar conceptions. What Sir E. Wallis Budge writes of their dress and ideas of purity, he might in all truth have written of the Chiang. He says: "The colour of the outer garments was of a sombre character, black, blackish brown or blue—black being commonest: the innermost, which in later times was made of linen, was undyed, and probably cream-coloured. The apparel won on high days and holy days was white. The well-to-do Babylonian, like all Orientals, loved a change of apparel, and enjoyed sitting in a clean place. His religion demanded cleanliness of person, and no man would dare to make supplication to his god in a dirty state or wearing dirty garments."

The only word in this description not applicable is

[1] *Babylonian Life and History*, p. 169. (1925.)

A CHIANG FARMER. (*Photo by* T. E. PLEWMAN)

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" linen ". The Chiang wear garments of hemp, cream-coloured when new, but which change to whiter hue.

The women, in some places, wear a semi-circlet or half-moon tire of silver rings over the head, as Ramalleh women wear silver coins in Palestine to-day (*c.f.* Isaiah iii. 18). Their head-dress is often an elaborate affair. With ear-rings and other ornaments, a maiden's face is not her only fortune. Bracelets are much prized. A few sport a silver hoop around their necks,—so large that it rests on their shoulders. The aim, it is said, is to amass a competency before marriage. Hence these rings manifest her preparedness, and signify something of her tangible worth.

A peculiar marriage custom is one called " Shang men ". A woman who has property in her own right, or who is a widow and does not wish to leave her home or farm, or has the desire to remain under her parent's roof-tree, takes a husband, who assumes her name and lives in her house. She does not take his name. Compare Numbers xxvii. 1-11.

The men from olden time have worn felt hats, while the women in their work-a-day dress have preferred white cloth coiffures. But the latter are not confined to women; both wear them, though the cloth is supposed to be wound round the head in a different way.

The covered head was a mark of honour. One form of punishment was to order the offender to go bare-headed. That made him ashamed. At one time a Chinese official adroitly gained the good-will of the Chiang men in his district by presenting all

with hats. He thereby crowned them as good men, a procedure which evoked ringing cheers.

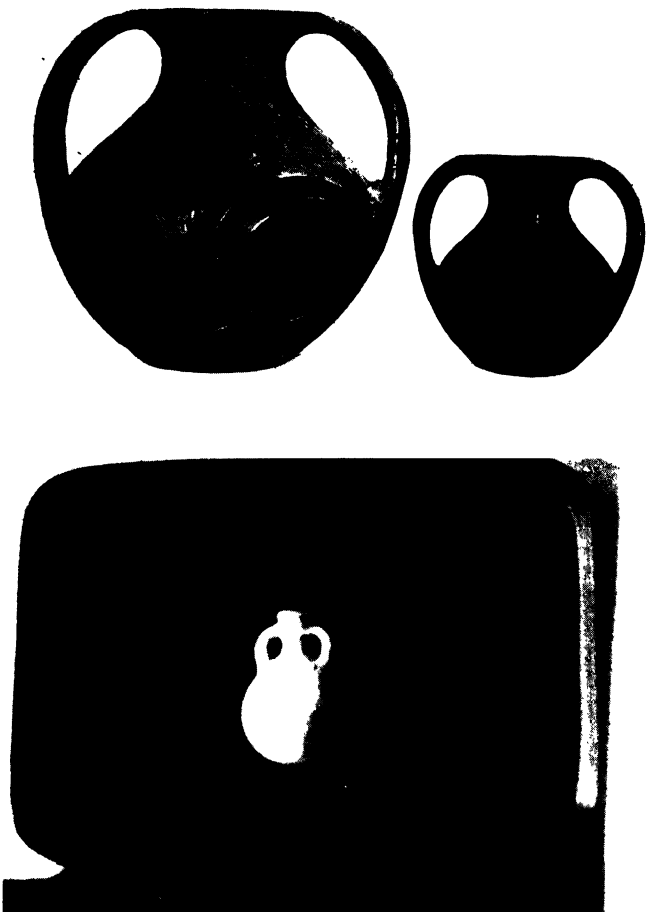
A curious custom, though there is no parallel to it in Scripture, may be mentioned. A contract requiring credentials may be made by breaking a small stone into halves. Each party keeps a half. On the expiry of the period arranged, or when the time of fulfilment has come, the proof of the claimant is tested by seeing if his half of the stone fits into the other half. Do the serrated edges of the two tally minutely ?

From ancient Chiang tombs of the Tsin dynasty or the first Han dynasty, two-handled vessels have been taken which are totally unlike anything of their kind found in Chinese tombs of these periods, but which, it is alleged, have a distinct resemblance to water vessels and bottles found in Bible lands. The concave bottoms of some show that they were made to be carried on the head. A number have a surface polish of black pigment. There is, at present, one to be seen in the British Museum.

The plough used is similar to the Palestine plough, but differs in that two hands are put to it instead of one. It is drawn by two oxen—never by an ox and an ass.[1] The pole between the oxen is attached to the bar resting on their necks, making a true cross. No goad is used, a stick or switch merely. Yet the goad was once known in West China. The writer has seen tomb figures showing a ploughman's goad in the hand.

" Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as

[1] *C.f.* Deut. xxii. 10.



TWO B.C. WATER JUGS, COMPARED WITH 800 B.C. WATER BOTTLE FROM A TOMB AT HEBRON, PALESTINE)

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raw is trodden down for the dunghill" (Isaiah xxv. .o R.V.). The custom of treading straw underfoot for manure is everywhere prevalent in the Chiang country. Straw, grass, twigs, etc., are thrown into animal courtyards, and even on wet hollows on the highway to lie and rot until needed for the fields. From the mountainous nature of the country these are often hard and stony, requiring large quantities of decomposed vegetable matter to increase their fertility.

"Let them be as the grass upon the housetops which withereth afore it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom" (Psalm cxxix. 6. 7). Patches of withered grass, hard and unsightly, are a constant sight on housetops. A flat clay roof, after rain, gives witness to springing tufts on parapets and corners where traffic does not come, but the sun's heat soon scorches such growths as the verse describes. The moral in it is obvious; the condemnation scathing.

"If brethren dwell together and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of marriage unto her" (Deut. xxv. 5). The people still keep this precept; or do so where they are not officially forbidden. The Chinese Prefect of Lifan fifty-six years ago issued a proclamation forbidding the observance of the custom in his district. He had it engraved on a large stele and set up without the city beside the Eastern highway. There it has stood since, as a monument of his contempt for Chiang regulations, and as an incidental witness to Chiang constancy to their religious precepts. It runs:

"In this district of Lifan an old bad custom still persists of a man marrying the wife of a deceased elder or younger brother. This is called 'chuang fang' or marriage of reversion. The reason for this is alleged to be the fear of marrying her to a stranger because that would hinder the prosperity of the household, so it is thought to be a marriage of convenience. But this ignores the Chinese law; is entirely opposed to the preservation of virtue in human relationships; and merits severe punishment. From now on the people in the Lifan prefecture are forbidden to continue this custom of theirs. This proclamation is not retroactive, but in future the widow of an elder or younger brother must not be forced to marry her late husband's brother. She may preserve her widowhood for the sake of her good name. But if she wishes to remarry it must be to one of another name. No man is henceforth allowed to covet the benefits of marrying a deceased brother's wife so that the principles of virtue may not be destroyed. If he does, his punishment will be severe. Chinese marriage law must be hereafter fully observed in all its aspects. Then the virtue of human relationships will be cultivated.

"I, the Prefect, seek to instruct all you people according to loyalty, filial piety, constancy and righteousness. We cannot bear to see ignorant people destroy these principles in their evil relationships, for they are contrary to the laws of State and of Heaven. I, therefore, forbid you people to continue your 'chuang fang' marriages. You must regard this custom as shameful. All should publicly encourage each other to reform your social customs for

the sake of your name. This is our sincere hope.

"Hereafter, if any one dare to break these new regulations serious punishment will follow without hope of mercy. The law will be rigorously enforced. Be afraid. Be careful. Do not disobey.

The sixth year of the Emperor Kuang Hsu. (A.D. 1881)."

A praiseworthy custom is the sealing of a forest for fifty years. The origin of it is lost in antiqity! Once a mountain-side has been religiously sealed, no tree can be cut on it until the period has expired and it has been ceremoniously opened.

We have seen that the Chiang in their divisions or clans called each after the name of an animal. There were the White-Horse Clan, the Fierce-Wolf Clan, and the Ploughing-Ox Clan. There was also the White-Dog Clan. A strange custom indeed. It may be inferred that the peculiarity of the name signified some trait or other in the character of that clan. This is probably so. But the point to be remembered is, this is an old Semitic custom. Judah was a lion's whelp: Issachar a strong ass; Dan a serpent by the way and an adder in the path; Naphthali a hind let loose; and Benjamin a wolf who shall devour the prey in the morning and at night the spoil. On this point Professor Langdon[1] remarks that "animal names are common in Canaanite Hebrew and Arabic: in Hebrew they occur chiefly as tribal or city names, and belong entirely to the period before the exile, Deborah 'the bee', Zeeb (a Midianite) 'the wolf', a name extremely common

[1] *Semitic Mythology.*

in Arabic of all periods, Khagab 'the locust', a family name of the Nethinim". "The prevalence of animal names is probably due to a peculiar inclination of this Semitic race." This "peculiar inclination" then among the early Chiang, taken with so many characteristics they show in common with the early Hebrews or Semites, brings strong colour to the view that they are of the one race.

Yet there is one notable exception to this method of nomenclature. The Chinese history of Lifan calls the Chiang in that district by the name of the "Bae-lan" or White Orchid Chiang. The appellation arrests the attention at once. Why was it given?

A Chiang scholar of repute insists that "Bae-lan" is a transliteration. In common with their practice everywhere in the border-lands, the Chinese attempt to write the name of places and people in their own characters, and this is an instance. The result is never a euphonious success. "Bae" approximately is the sound for "Ab", and "lan" for "ram". He believes firmly that this is conclusive proof that the Chiang are the descendants of Abram or Abraham.

We asked him once if then they might not be the sons of Keturah whom Abraham in his lifetime sent away into the East country. The query he answered impatiently; he believed his people were in the direct line of succession, i.e., of Abraham and Sarah.

This scholar had read the Bible. The perusal of Genesis and Exodus was what first convinced him of the kinship of the Chiang with ancient Israel. His reading afterwards of Leviticus put it beyond all doubt. The close resemblance of their customs with

A ROAD ROUND A PRECIPICE

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those recorded in the Pentateuch no one could possibly deny. Their half of the stone tallied exactly with the Scripture half: the serrated edges of both fitted minutely into each other.

N.B.—During the sixteenth century Jesuit missionaries in China made known the presence of a colony of Jews at Kaifungfu in the province of Honan. "In 1850 the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews sent a deputation of two natives to visit the colony and the results were published the next year in a book by Rev. G. Smith, with translations by Dr. Medhurst of some inscriptions. Dr. W. A. P. Martin paid a visit to Kaifungfu in 1866. There were then seven out of seventy families left, numbering from three to four hundred persons, and the Synagogue was in a state of complete ruin. They could not trace their tribal pedigree, never met as a congregation, had no Sabbath and no circumcision, and seemed on the point of merging into the heathendom around them; their own distinction being the custom of picking out the sinew from the flesh they eat—a custom which has given them their name among Chinese of T'iao chin chiao (plucking sinew sect). In spite of various attempts to help them, both by Jews and Christians, their condition seems to have gone from bad to worse since then.

The site of the Synagogue was bought in 1912 by the Mission of the Church of England in Canada, which works in the city."[1]

This colony of Jews came to Kaifungfu in A.D. 1163.

[1] *Encyclopaedia Sinica*, p. 262.

A stone tablet set up in 1489 recorded the date. Professor Giles in *Confucianism and its Rivals*, after a description of the tablet adds: "this religion reached China at a time when the obscuration of a Supreme Being, coupled with the apotheosis of a man, was proceeding at a rapid rate, and which the efforts of a few humble Rabbis would be hardly likely to hinder."

A number of these Jews are said to have turned to Mohammedanism.

Chapter V

THE RELIGION OF THE CHIANG

The religion of the Chiang is the worship exclusively of God. Simply and sincerely they think of God as the Father Creator. Heaven and earth came from His hands. So it follows that men everywhere are dependent on His bounty. There is no hope of receiving good or blessing apart from what He is graciously pleased to bestow. Therefore man's recognition of His goodness is essential to all well-being.

They insist with one voice that from time immemorial their forefathers worshipped the one Supreme God. As often as they sought the divine mercy and help He revealed Himself to them in the light of sacrificial communion. Transgression of His will just as surely brought calamity.

Their name for God is " Abba Chee " or the Father Spirit. The term denotes His personality and their essential relationship to Him. Could a more expressive name be imagined outside the pages of the New Testament ? The beauty of it is striking in its effective simplicity.

A secondary name is " Mabee Chee," sometimes " Mbea Chee," i.e. the Spirit of Heaven. For to them He is God of Heaven, and Heaven is where the spirits

of just men go at death. By this name they regard Him as above, as in the highest place. He is verily The Most High. But not in the sense of a sky God, for He is transcendent. He is God over all. The distinction requires to be drawn.

A third name is, "The God of the mountains." But this is used as an accommodation to the Chinese. The Chiang find they have to adapt their phraseology on religious matters to their conceptions. Such a name easily passes current since they live on the mountains and worship on the mountains. It has the further advantage of screening from their critics and traducers the real nature of their belief.

This, however, does not give us any warrant for believing that the Chiang worship a local god, a mere tribal or terrestrial deity. Their national boast is that they have remained staunch for millenniums to the faith of their fathers.

The boast is fully justified when it is seen that their neighbours, the Chinese, and others besides, have not been faithful in this respect; these races, once monotheists, have turned from the fountain of living waters and hewn out cisterns for themselves. While retaining the name of God and admitting freely, on being closely questioned, that no other is comparable to Him, they have inexplicably sought unto dead men deified and gods of their own creation. The utter baseness now of some of their beliefs would defile the pages given to their description.

Is not this in line with polytheism everywhere? It is interesting to note that Lods also admits a declension in general religious belief. "There is," he says, "every reason to believe that the pre-Mosaic

Hebrews did not use statues, at least in public worship. We know that the same was true of ancient Egypt, among the Ægeans, in ancient Greece, among the early Romans, and perhaps among the Canaanites. The pre-Islamic Arabs had few statues and regarded the custom of representing the gods by images as one of late and foreign origin: the Arabic words for statues are borrowed from other languages."[1]

Max Müller in the same strain says: "If we take the accounts of the most trustworthy travellers in Central and Northern Asia . . . everywhere we find a worship of the spirits of Nature, of the spirits of the departed, though behind and above it there rises the belief in some higher power, known by different names, sometimes called the Father, the Old One, who is the Maker and Protector of the world, who resides in heaven."[2]

The Chiang themselves are not wholly free from the charge of idolatry. A number of half-castes after the time that temples were imposed on them have, like the ancient Samaritans, both feared the Lord and served graven images. But the heart of the people, as a whole, is sound. The name of Abba Chee is constantly on their lips. In health and in sickness, in prosperity and adversity they call upon Him. He is revered and He is feared. Their housetops proclaim His salvation, their walls His righteousness. "Abba Chee will requite you," they say to an offender. "Abba Chee knows how I suffer," moans the victim of sorrow or oppression. When the earth is parched prayer is made to Him for rain; when plenty fills

[1] *Israel*, pp. 263, 264.

[2] *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, pp. 197, 198.

their bins His kindness is extolled. In life and in death recourse is alone unto the Father Spirit.

To make one's escape from a heathen environment and to reside for a time among the Chiang is to live in an entirely different moral atmosphere. A pressure is taken off the soul. Describe it how you will, the experience is very real. Better climatic conditions cannot account for the feeling. The contrast is more than that between a dead and a live church: a positive spiritual depression which is uniformly present where idolatry is rampant, passes away in their midst.

This does not assume that the Chiang are religious paragons. We shall see further that they are not. What is evident is that owing to higher moral volition they have made better use of their religious capacity and, correspondingly, the Discerner of the human heart is nigh unto them. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness"[1] is an axiom in their case obviously true. To leave God when He is known is to invite blindness of heart and mind. The perversity of the spirit which can accept the providences of God and remain insensible of the need of gratitude casts a man outside the pale of His proffered help. Such are the crowning sins of the heathen. Because they glorify not God when they know Him, neither are thankful, they are left to become vain in their imaginations.[2]

We have already seen that they wear white because of its moral and religious significance. The snow-like purity of the colour to them is indicative of the divine holiness; Abba Chee is pure in His essential nature. Holiness constitutes His first attribute. In

[1] Psalm cxii. 4. [2] Romans i. 21.

men He demands purity of heart and life. The sinful or defiled cannot enter into His presence. Heaven is a pure land. Cleansing is necessary before a sinner can approach Him or be given entrance into the pure land. This dogma guides and explains every act of their worship. It is fundamental, and it gives the name to their worship. It is called " The White Religion."

The people make no representation carved or hewn of Deity. But they have two emblems of His Holiness. One is a sheet of pure white paper; the other is a natural piece, conical in shape, of white glistening rock. For simplicity, plainness of meaning and illustrative import, these could not be surpassed. Both are unambiguous. Neither can be misinterpreted. The paper has no mark or writing on it; the stone no carving or chiselled shaping. The one answers to the other. Together they typify the intrinsic and imperishable element of absolute purity in the nature of God.

It is precisely in this estimation of the divine character that the primitive religions of the Chinese and the Chiang forge apart. The latter in an emphatic manner avers that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But " There is no word in Chinese equivalent to our ' holiness ' or ' consecration '. The term shan, ' goodness ', is the converse of wickedness, and the term Sheng, usually distinguishing men like Confucius, is ' wise ', though sometimes erroneously translated ' holy '. While wicked acts are always denounced, there is no indication of any consciousness of what corresponds to our idea of ' sinfulness ', nor is there anything to imply a state

of sinfulness or of depravity. Sin in a spiritual sense of the term is unnoted.—

"Hence sacrifice was not offered as a pleading for the remission of sin or as an acknowledgment of guilt. It was offered in gratitude for favours already received, or to avert threatened calamity or to procure blessings in the future."[1]

The difference in the two religions is that of the two men who went up into the temple to pray.

A look over the housetops of a fort with their glistening symbols of upstanding purity, gives to a reflective mind great cause for thought. Whence came the universal esteem in olden times of white as a sacred colour? Ancient Britons had it and some African tribes to-day. Greece and Rome gave it superstitious veneration. Semitic lands also made it part of their religion. White horses, white asses, white bulls, white lambs, white angels, white saints, white virgins, white apparel, white sepulchres, white altars, and sin washed whiter than snow. Did it spring from a common religious conception? And does the White Stone of the White Religion supply the clue?

The Chinese love of jade lends confirmation to the supposition. Likewise does their white marble altar of heaven. And the white stone mirrors of ancient Shuh seem withal to support the notion. Primeval man clothed his thoughts in visible forms. Striving to give expression to the idea of heavenly purity or holiness, he chose whiteness as most expressive of this religious conception. The concrete for him gave expression to the abstract. So he spoke of the Rock that begat him, of divine strength as

[1] John Ross, D.D., *The Original Religion of China*, p. 38.

" the arm of the Lord," of retribution as the " arrows of the Almighty," of salvation as the horns of the altar, of life itself as water. The white Rock of the Chiang following the same mode of ancient expression, speaks to us of Him who begat man as infinite in purity of His holiness and truth.

The White Stone at least throws much needed light on the ancient use of sacred stones in religion. It is not worshipped. First and last it is a mere symbol. The Chiang do not worship it any more than they worship the sheet of white paper. No one can imagine that God dwells in the paper or in the stone, for the place of His abode is in heaven.

In the first place it is regarded as sacred only because of its colour. That represents goodness in contrast to blackness, which is evil.

In the second place it is sacred because it intimates to men that the approach to God must be by way of holiness. Cleansing is necessary for the sinner or the defiled, and that must precede prayer.

In the third place it is sacred because it marks the place where God may be approached, viz. at the altar.

In the fourth place it is sacred because it reminds men that consequently He is the Rock or Mount of their strength.

That God is holy and the Rock the source of man's salvation and blessing, constitute foundation truths of Chiang belief.

The Stone requires to be conical or mount-like in shape and set up, as has been said, in its natural or unhewn shape. Occasionally small white stones are placed around the base, but these have no religious significance. Whether its apex was once supposed

to point men to heaven we cannot say; we know simply that on the housetop it bears an unmistakable witness that those who dwell under it are a people who recognize the God of heaven as their God and none other.

It will be seen that the religion of the Chiang is positively not one of stone worship. It is a source of merriment among them that they are able to delude outsiders into the belief that they worship a stone. We have been present and heard their witticisms over this. That they should credit the assertion is another proof of their religious obtuseness.

If we are to accept the general opinion, many ancient peoples did worship sacred stones. One writer after another makes the assumption. Proof is not forthcoming in every case of the reality of this. The nations of Canaan, no doubt, were guilty of the gross practice, but in some instances, as has been thought, stones were present at holy places rather as votive offerings.

Scholars are agreed that "The worship of stones is of immemorial antiquity in Semitic lands"[1] (Professor Sayce). "Sacred stones are found in all parts of the world, and in the worship of gods of the most various kinds, so that their use must rest on some cause which was operative in all primitive religions"[2] (Professor Robertson Smith). "One of the most characteristic features of the Canaanite sanctuaries was . . . the standing stone; there were several forming an alignment, and without doubt in two cases a circle, a cromlech, or what the Hebrews called

[1] *The Higher Critics and the Monuments*, p. 182.

[2] *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 209.

A VIEW IN THE VALLEY OF THE MINETTE

a ' gilgal.' So far the discoveries hitherto made have not yielded any decisive light on the meaning which the Çanaanites attached to these standing stones. Some archæologists would give them a phallic significance, but the square shape of many of these menhirs is not favourable to this theory "[1] (Professor Lods). " A cairn or rude stone pillar is not a portrait of anything and I take it that we shall go on altogether false lines if we try to explain its selection as a divine symbol by any consideration of what it looks like. Even when the arts had made considerable progress the Semites felt no need to fashion their sacred symbols into the likeness of the gods. Melcarth was worshipped at Tyre in the form of two pillars, and at the great temple of Paphos, down to Roman times, the idol was not an anthromorphic image of Astarte but of a conical stone." " The choice of a pillar or cairn as the primitive idol was not dictated by any other consideration than convenience for ritual purposes. The stone or stone heap was a convenient mark of the proper place of sacrifice, and at the same time, if the deity consented to be present at it, provided the means for carrying out the ritual of the sacrificial blood. Further than this, it does not seem possible to go, till we know why it was thought so essential to bring the blood into immediate contact with the god."[2]

These excerpts make it plain that sacred stones were common in worship at one time. As to their exact place and significance in religious observances no definite opinion can be advanced. But definite information can be supplied about the use of the

[1] *Israel*, p. 94. [2] *The Religion of the Semites*, pp. 207, 242.

sacred stone in the religion of the Chiang, and this is where its interest and value lie. Since their worship is free of the Canaanitish degradations it brings an unexpected commentary on early Semitic ritual.

No true Israelites worshipped a stone, or a rock, or a mountain, as some are anxious to have it believed. They were forbidden to do so by the first and second commandments. The fact that twelve pillars were set up at Sinai or Gilgal does not warrant an assumption that they were guilty of semi-idolatrous practices.

The Arabians used stone memorials, and, it is said, put blood on them. To infer that they used a pillar as an altar or that they were litholatrists, requires great caution. They still have a sacred stone which gives their worship of Allah centralization. Though they kiss this black stone, do they not stoutly maintain at the same time that there is no god but God ? This famous stone is built into the south-east corner of the Kaaba at Mecca, the Moslem holy of holies. It once was white. " When it came down from Paradise ", according to Mohammed, " it was white as milk ", but has grown " black from the sins of those who have touched it ".

The Chiang clean theirs when they get weathered. Grime would defeat their purpose. They must shine. An instance is known of a contest for the possession of one that had more than ordinary lustre.

White stones are found also on Chiarong houses, though not so often as on Chiang houses. The religion of the Chiarong before they were swamped by Tibetan Lamaism was a copy of the White

religion. But to-day they cannot explain their significance. The tradition is that they are sacred and to remove them would be inauspicious. In course of time they grow dirty and actually black when exposed to smoke fumes. A fitting symbol certainly of their fall from a high estate!

White stones are said to be found in Eastern Turkestan and other parts of the north-west of China, but, as among the Chiarong, their significance is now unknown. Nothing more than a superstitious reverence is alleged to be paid them.

Chapter VI

HIGH-PLACE WORSHIP

From the time that the Chiang were brought under Chinese jurisdiction a slow decline began in the vitality of their religious exercises. During the past forty years this has been particularly noticeable. For one thing, the supposed necessity to keep their rites secret to escape official displeasure has not tended to enhance the former zest and, for another, the increasing difficulty of wresting a living from their mountain-tops has brought discouragement hard to bear. Both have sapped the reserve of their strength. And when that diminished, the old-time fervour lessened accordingly. To-day not one place can show an observance of all their former rites. Some have lapsed here, some there. An investigator, as a result, requires to travel widely and by dint of careful inquiry to piece together his findings into a satisfactory whole.

The chants, the prayers, and the rationale of the ritual are communicated from father to son. The priesthood, though not necessarily hereditary, often continues in one family for many generations. The child grows up into the office. This is naturally all to the good, and helps to arrest decay. But an added difficulty arises owing to the increasing penetration

THRESHING WHEAT WITH A FLAIL

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of Chinese influence which leads to a greater use of that language and consequent forgetfulness of their own. This tends more and more to priests chanting their prayers when they have forgotten the meaning of the words. Nowadays few can interpret everything they chant. This is a lamentable misfortune and puts further obstacles in the way of full information.

Nevertheless the information we now present is considerable, and, moreover, reliable. For part of it we are indebted to Chiang Christians and to old priests who became sympathetic after they knew we also worshipped their Abba Chee, though in a higher manner than they did.

Every winter Christians came to stay with us for Bible study. During the weeks spent together a favourite and fruitful course of inquiry was how their Old-Testament-like customs became fulfilled in the New Testament. Since Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms spake of him, the book of Hebrews became to them a spiritual lexicon to interpret what they and their fathers had so long conserved. In the mutual flow of conversation thereupon, nothing was more natural for them than to give us intimate particulars of their ritual. They wanted to reciprocate and they wanted to learn. Where they failed to explain the full spiritual intention behind any of their ceremonies we could consult a friendly priest or two the following summer when we visited their eaglet eyries in the mountains. They knew who best to consult and they could give the entrée for an interview. The history of finding out the secrets of the White Religion in this way became as fascinating

to us as the preaching of Christ was to them. One's whole soul was thrilled. The old and the new met together; the law and the Gospel kissed each other; truth sprang out of the earth and righteousness looked down from heaven.

What then is the character of the Chiang religion? It is in large measure that of the olden-time worship in the high-place.

Worship in the high-places was followed by the nations of Canaan, and after their day by the Israelites up to the time of the Exile. If opinion does differ somewhat as to the exact character it assumed, whether among the Canaanites or the Israelites, the fact remains that they both did worship the Deity or deities in such sanctuaries.

The Canaanites had their mountain groves or high-places with a stone pillar or pillars in each, a tree or sacred pole, an altar and carved images of their gods. This is borne out from the command of Moses to the Israelites in Deuteronomy xii. 2: "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess, served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills and under every green tree: and ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place." Then in Deuteronomy xvi. 21, a further command is given: "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the Lord thy God hateth." The Israelites to begin with obeyed these

commands, but worship in the high places persisted. The prophet Samuel sacrificed there. The sanctuary at Gibeon, where Solomon once offered a thousand offerings, was called a high place. And the good King Jehoshaphat, who turned not aside from what was right in the eyes of the Lord, did not hinder the people from burning incense in the high places. The Israelites, however, in times of religious relapse so restored the Canaanitish manner of worship that Ashera, the Hebrew term for grove, came to represent as well the images and pillars introduced therein.

The Chiang make no representation of Deity, but they publicly worship him in a sacred grove up on a mountain-side or a mountain-top. In the grove there is a sacrificial altar built of unhewn stones. Behind the altar grows a sacred tree which is an essential part of the sanctuary. Between the tree and the altar, or on the altar, stands a white stone of glistening purity, generally of quartz. Such a grove it will be noted is more elaborate in its contents than that recognized by the orthodox Israelites, yet has nothing of the corruption of that of the Canaanites. This mode of worship surely suggests an origin common to both Canaanite and Hebrew, and brings down to us, does it not, a primitive form of Semitic worship in the dress of hoary antiquity? Doubtless the Canaanites did not originally have the corruptions that later characterized their groves and called forth the divine displeasure. Their cult, apparently, was a mixture of Semitic observances and Sumerian superstition. The Chiang, more honourable than the Canaanites, have maintained their monotheism comparatively unsullied, and have given us an

example of religious constancy to be found, apart from the Jews, in no other people.

The use of a White Stone is a leading feature of the Chiang religion. Where worship is conducted, it is set up. It speaks to them of the character of God. The Stone is not worshipped. It is only a symbol, but is considered to be inseparable from a correct method of approaching the Deity because it marks the place where He communes with His people.

The Chiang are not animists: they know whom they worship and they do not worship Him ignorantly. Neither are they litholatrists in any sense, nor mountain worshippers. The Israelites lifted up their eyes unto the hills, but is it not expressly stated at the same time that their help came from Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth? Similarly the eyes of the Chiang are lifted up to the Creator of all things.

The interest to us of this use of the White Stone is in the reflex light it throws on the use of memorial and covenant stones by the Hebrews. Jacob set up the stone that served as his pillow to mark the site where Jehovah appeared to him in promise and blessing. There he made his vow and from there he started on his journey with the assurance that the all-seeing eye of a gracious Providence watched over him for good. The stone was a mark, a memorial and a sign of his vow. For to him Heaven had opened in that place, and it was given him to see there a ladder of intercourse between earth and Heaven, very dreadful but very reassuring. We shall see that the Chiang hold almost identical views regarding their Stone, which brings into fine relief those of the patriarchs.

Jacob, in his dying blessing to Joseph, spoke of the Mighty One of Jacob who caused his bow to abide in strength and made his arms strong when he was grieved and shot at by his persecutors. The God of his father " from whence came the Shepherd and Stone of Israel ", should help him and bless him with the blessings of Heaven above and of the deep that coucheth beneath. Obviously in Jacob's mind the Shepherd of Israel and Stone of Israel were one (Gen. xlix. 24). In his own case, accordingly, he speaks of this Shepherd and Stone as the Angel who redeemed him from all evil. It was He who spoke to him in Paran; He, who as a man, wrestled with him at the Jabbok and by whom he uttered his parting blessings on his sons. The Chiang do not explicitly speak of their Stone as Shepherd or Angel, but they do speak of an Angel or God-sent man who acts for them in their approach to God at the altar where the Stone stands. The Chiang and the Hebrew concepts are so closely allied that they may be called alike in everything but the terminology.

It was on Sinai, the mount of cloud and fire, that Jehovah revealed himself to the Israelites and made known His Voice to them in The Ten Words. In the Song of Moses, Jehovah is described as " Our Rock ". The Rock followed the people in the wilderness and from the rock, water was made to gush forth to supply their needs. A Pillar of cloud guided by day and a Pillar of fire by night. Joshua on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim respectively set up plastered pillar-monuments of blessing and cursing with the Law written on them. And when he made a covenant with the heads of the nation before his death, he took

a great stone of witness and set it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord,[1] in the same fashion as is found in the Chiang country to-day. Though the words of Hannah are unknown to the Chiang they yet fully subscribe to them in their thought content: that "there is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Thee: neither is there any rock like unto our God" (1 Samuel ii. 2).

The Sacred Tree is another indispensable feature in the religion of the Chiang. All the trees in the grove are sacred and for this reason none may be cut, but *the* tree behind the altar and adjacent to the White Stone is especially sacred. It is the one that gives locality and centralization to worship, even as it is the Whiteness of the Stone that indicates its mode and the altar that gives it reality. What further significance the sacred Tree once had is not known. It would be easy to surmise that it was regarded as the Tree of Life, but the Chiang, as far as our knowledge goes, say nothing definite of this. They merely declare that it belongs to God. To it may be tied the sacrificial victims before being offered. And it is by way of the Sacred Tree that God comes when He descends from Heaven to meet His people in the grove, and by way of it He ascends again at the conclusion of the offering.

On the Chiang house-tops we meet the tree again. A straight branch is inserted behind the "O-pee" or White Stone. Here special perforated stone slabs hold it in place. Frequently two others accompany it, one at either corner of the back parapet. In this way the flat roof takes the character of a private

[1] Joshua xxiv. 26.

grove for the offering of family sacrifice. After the sacrifice these are left standing and a visitor, by their appearance, can always tell approximately what length of time has elapsed since the last offering was made.

A white outline of a tree is not uncommonly drawn on the outside wall of a house. Drawn thus it is a symbol of blessing and prosperity. He who seeks God finds grace and worldly favour for He is the Author of all good.

Among the Chinese in Western China a symbolical tree with figures on either side was once in use. We have seen the portraiture on tomb bricks of the Han dynasty, on a sarcophagus and on ancient bronze mirrors. Where the idea originated or what it represented can only be surmised. To Westerners it suggests the Genesis story. Did the Chinese borrow it, one asks, from the Chiang ?

The altar is the third great requisite in Chiang worship. Often it is a platform of earth faced with natural shaped stone. Or it may consist of a slab of stone resting on other stones. But of whatever form, the stone or stones used must remain unhewn. No human shaping is permissible. Any cutting or polishing of the stones defiles them for use in the divine altar.

Occasionally a flat rock in situ is utilized ; such of course, answers the natural requirement. The approach to Deity may not be of human design or man's invention. The approach is divinely provided apart from the worshipper's help or contrivance.

At the base of Mount Sinai after the reception of the Ten Words, the Israelites had instructions conveyed to them of a corresponding nature. In sacrifice

an altar of earth was to be raised, but if stone were used no tool should be lifted upon it, for that should defile it. Here is one of the many touches of intimacy in the practices of the two peoples that calls for consideration and comparison.

The Grove, The Tree, The White Stone and The Altar together constitute the Chiang sanctuary in the High Place. All are sacred. One is not without the other. None of them is worshipped, but all form essentials, they consider, in the approach of man to God and of God to man. Account for the origin of these ideas as one may, we cannot deny their existence, or refuse to believe that the Chiang themselves give full credence to the tradition of their divine establishment.

A High Place is not chosen, as might be supposed, merely for its commanding elevation. It is rather chosen because they think of God as dwelling on high in the Heavens; and ascent to His altar gives natural expression of their desire to meet Him. Up on the mountain-side in the heart of a grove the world is shut out and the soul shut in with God. Nothing intervenes between man and his Creator. Here amid unspoilt surroundings, in the true sanctuary of Nature the Father Spirit is pleased to meet with the humble suppliants of His grace.

Those who doubt this have to explain why the Chiang worship takes place at night. There is nothing then to be seen but the starry lights of Heaven. Absolute stillness reigns. Distraction is far removed. The whole thought is centred on the act of worship. Only a true seeker after God cares to make the climb. To him the darkness of the night is no deterrent, the

A PRIEST AND TWO MEN ON THE WAY TO SACRIFICE A LAMB AT THE GROVE

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risk of inclement weather no hindrance. The securing of the divine Presence is the great quest of the soul. Into his own moral darkness he wants the light of God to shine.

Very occasionally in a High Place a house or shed is erected. Should the weather be stormy on the night of a sacrifice the worshippers can use it as a shelter. After the Chinese revolution in 1911 a well known shelter in a High Place became changed into a semi-heathen temple. The time then was propitious to the idolatrous elements in the mixed population forcing themselves in.

Did the prophet Elisha have such a house in the High Place in his vicinity? We read that Gehazi, when he came to the tower, bestowed the two talents of silver and the two changes of raiment in the house and let the men go. The word "tower" here means "High Place". If so, the house would be holy, and Gehazi did not lessen his guilt by storing in it the gains of deceit.

. . . . .

These notes on High-place Worship are taken from "Smith's Bible Dictionary."

"From the earliest times it was the custom among all nations to erect altars and places of worship on lofty and conspicuous spots. We find that the Trojans sacrificed to Zeus on Mount Ida and we are repeatedly told that such was the custom of the Persians, Greeks, Germans, etc., because they fancied that the hill-tops were nearer heaven, and therefore the most favourable places for prayer and incense. To this general custom we find constant allusion in

the Bible, and it is especially attributed to the Moabites. Even Abraham built an altar to the Lord on a mountain near Bethel, which shows that the practice was then as innocent as it was natural. . . . It was implicitly forbidden by the law of Moses, which also gave the strictest injunctions to destroy these monuments of Canaanitish idolatry, without stating any general reason for the command beyond the fact that they had been connected with such associations. It seems, however, to be assumed that every Israelite would perfectly understand why groves and high places were prohibited, and therefore they are only condemned by virtue of the injunction to use one altar for the purpose of sacrifice.

"The command (to sacrifice only in one place) was a prospective one, and was not to come into force until such times as the tribes were settled in the promised land and 'had rest from all their enemies round about'. Thus we find that both Gideon and Manoah built altars on high places by divine command, and it is quite clear from the tone of the book of Judges that the law on the subject was either totally forgotten or practically obsolete. Nor could the unsettled state of the country have been pleaded as an excuse, since it seems to have been most fully understood, even during the lifetime of Joshua, that burnt offerings could be legally offered on one altar only. It is more surprising to find this law absolutely ignored at a much later period, when there was no intelligent reason for its violation—as by Samuel at Mizpeh and at Bethlehem; by Saul at Gilgal and at Ajalon; by David; by Elijah on Mount Carmel, and by other prophets. To suppose that in all cases

the rule was superseded by a divine intimation appears to us an unwarrantable expedient, the more so as the actors in the transactions do not appear to be aware of anything extraordinary in their conduct."

For the Ten tribes, "the convenience of the high places was obvious, because, as local centres of religious worship, they obviated the unpleasant and dangerous necessity of visiting Jerusalem for the celebration of the yearly feasts. The tendency was engrained in the national mind; and although it was severely reprimanded by the later historians, we have no proof that it was known to be sinful during the earlier periods of the monarchy, except, of course, where it was directly connected with idolatrous abominations. In fact, the high places seem to have supplied the need of Synagogues."

Chapter VII

THE HEAVEN-SENT SIN-BEARER

The Chiang think of God as spotless in His everlasting purity. Wrong-doing is abhorrent to Him. He is, therefore, the Judge of all the earth. His eyes search the hearts of men to see if they are white or black, i.e., good or evil. "Thou God seest me", if not one of their names for Him, is the thought ever present with them.

The altar of sacrifice which they erect in the high place provides tangible evidence of the conception. Since God is holy, the sinner may not approach Him before he is ceremonially cleansed. The regulation is fixed and unalterable. It cannot be evaded. Compliance is essential in order to secure the pardon of iniquity.

A sin-bearer, to take the sinner's place, is consequently necessary so that sin may be judged and removed. On it falls the divine judgment. That releases the sinner. When the blood has been shed and sprinkled, the way for prayer and supplication has been opened.

The origin for this crucial ceremony no one among the Chiang can give. It has been observed, all declare, from time immemorial. They regard it as a divine requirement. Aged priests deep in the

lore of their race unanimously maintain this. The whole purpose of sacrifice, they stoutly contend, is the removal of sin to secure the divine blessing. They do not use the word expiation in the precise way we use it, but they mean the same thing. The victim bears the penalty the sinner should have borne. The substitutionary character of the ceremony is never questioned. Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin, *and apart from that the priests themselves dare not presume to pray.*

It is useless to try and discount this belief of theirs. Some who from prejudice would fain deny any substitutionary meaning might accuse us of reading into it preconceived ideas of sacrifice taken from the Old Testament, but love of the truth requires us to state exactly what the facts are. And it is not fiction but fact that the Chiang priests and laity do thus interpret the intention of the sacrifice. They sincerely believe that God meets them at the altar and nowhere else because, there, sin is washed away.

That salvation by substitution happens to be both an Old Testament and a New Testament doctrine, of course, enhances the interest of Christians in the Chiang ritual. It corroborates indirectly this element in the belief of the pre-exilic Israelites and directly, if the conclusion be accepted, that the Chiang originally belonged to this branch of the Semitic race.

But the interest does not end with the fact of the sacrifice. There is something more surprising. It is so unexpected that at first one can hardly credit it. They solemnly assert that their sacrifices are only provisional; they are but the semblances of a supreme sacrifice yet to come.

A divine Agent is to come from heaven to be The Great Sin-Bearer. When He appears, the reality of their sacrifices will be accomplished. This future Sin-Bearer even now comes as an unseen Presence to the grove to put their petition through for them. He is regarded as the Interpreter of all that takes place in the sacred grove, and as the Agent who mediates between them and God.

At every sacrifice, accordingly, the priest has a sacred symbol of His presence, and this symbol is given a personal name. It is a roll of white paper in the form of an ancient book. Every priest guards his roll with the most zealous care, and regards it with the utmost veneration. No stranger is allowed to see it and no worshipper may even touch it. Neither will any priest tell an outsider of its existence. Without the presence of the Roll all sacrifice would be in vain, for it signifies the virtual Presence of the Heaven-Sent-One at the altar. Indeed He and the sacrifice are one.

Originally, the Chiang had their own scriptures, or writings. With the loss of the knowledge of letters, what was once a sacred roll of their law is now only a mere cylinder of white paper. But it preserves the form. It represents the reality. This explains their veneration for it. The roll denotes the spiritual nature of their offerings to the Father Spirit. They are offerings of righteousness consummated by the Heaven-Sent-One through his death for man's sin.

That He has to die for this purpose the priests take care to signify in a very unusual way: a small skull, or death's head, is inserted in the upper end of the sacred Roll. No one uninitiated in the mysteries

of the White Religion would ever guess its meaning there. A second look has to be taken before indeed it is seen. The figure of death is embedded in the volume. The reference is so plain that it is unmistakable. Even though it be surmised that the Roll was originally without this tangible interpretation of its meaning, nevertheless, the innovation reveals plainly the thought of the death of the Sin-Bearer from heaven as commonly held by all Chiang priests.

The writer has one of these rolls with the death's head in his possession. At the decease of an old priest who had it, a Christian Chiang secured it for us from his family.

The Messianic message in the fortieth Psalm strikingly corresponds in thought to this age-long aspiration of the Chiang, as evidenced in their Sacred Roll. "Sacrifice and offering," it says, "Thou hast no delight in; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I am come; in the Roll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart" (R.V.).[1]

The name of the divine Sin-Bearer is also arresting: it is so like that of Jesus. The sound varies in different localities, but the correspondence is close. In one place it is "Nee-Dsu", in a second "Je-Dsu", in a third "Rih-Dsu", and so on. This can be put down to coincidence, of course, but its designation can hardly be that. It is known as "Abba Malah." Abba means Father, here, the Father in Heaven. Malah is not known other than as a name. They do not seem to be able to define or explain the term.

[1] Psalm xl. 6-8.

But the pronunciation is very precise. The "lah" is spoken with a definite click, so much that it is virtually Malach, the Hebrew word for Angel. Have we not in this another strong indication of the Semitic origin of the Chiang religious beliefs?

In connection with this Sacred Roll and angel-Sin-Bearer or Redeemer the student of Scripture inevitably recalls the many instances in the Old Testament of the mysterious angel-visitant as God in human form to patriarchs, prophets and saints in times of stress and difficulty. By Isaiah he is called "the Angel of His Presence who saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah lxiii. 9). In Malachi iii. 1 "He is called the Lord whom ye seek, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in."

This delight of the Israelites for their "Malach" or Messenger of the covenant has a remarkable parallel in the fondness of the Chiang for their Abba Malah or Je-Dsu. They speak of Him in the possessive sense. The prefix of "ga-gee" goes with His name: "Ga-gee Je-Dsu" they say. The sentiment is that of the Christian hymn "My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine".

Among Chiang Christians when the hymn "Jesus loves me", is sung, the use of their own name "Je-Dsu" in place of the Chinese "Ye-Su" adds great zest to the singing. Every face then shines, every face is, as it were, a glistening White Stone.

At festival times the Sacred Roll is carried by the priest to the grove on a tray, where its base is embedded or planted in wheat seed. The emphasis is on the

seed. The interpretation is not far to find when taken with the use to which this seed wheat is put. It is that death forms the prelude to life, a belief which the Chiang firmly hold. This will become plain as we proceed.

In some places the wheat seed is carried to the grove in the peculiar pouch of the priest, and not on a platter. But at the grove the Sacred Roll is planted amidst the wheat seed. Great scrupulosity marks the procedure. Its position, we should say, at the sacrifice is all-important. Irregularity here would mar everything. The blessing sought revolves around the Unseen Agent. These symbols of His presence indicate how it comes. Great reverence, even affection, is paid to the Scroll on this account, and great care taken to ensure that the Bringer of life and well-being should stand in what symbolizes the receiving of this life.

The whole procedure here is strange and enigmatical to a Western mind. But it is strange because we are unfamiliar with the genius of the language of primitive religion. Since it is written like this in pictorial fashion (and was necessarily so written when the bulk of mankind had no other books to read), we bemean ourselves by suspecting the writers of it as no better than animists. They rather have much to teach us if we would be but lowly and sympathetic to learn. The White Stone, the Altar, the Sacred Roll, the measure of wheat seed, are parables of higher things which seeing many do not see, and hearing do not understand.

Chapter VIII

THE PRIESTHOOD

In all Chiang worship it is a priest who invariably officiates. He is essential to its proper conduct. An ordinary individual dare not take to himself the honour of presenting the blood of sacrifice: that is the prerogative of the priest set apart for the purpose. He it is who superintends the whole ritual, checking error, enforcing decorum, explaining its necessity and significance, and leading in the prayers made after the sacrifice.

The office is generally handed down from father to son. One generation initiates another. When the pupil is proficient in the knowledge of the nature and significance of the various rites he will be called on to perform, he undergoes a careful ordination. But he must be able to get married, and the marriage ceremony may be the closing act in the ordination. Single men cannot act as priests, lest taint or suspicion should rest on anyone performing this holy office.

The ordination takes place in the grove. For the ceremony all the priests in the neighbourhood assemble. In company with any laity who desire to attend, they form a procession that starts up the hill-side as dusk draws on. Along the route, fowls are

A PRIEST (THE PRIESTHOOD HAS BEEN IN HIS FAMILY FOR TWENTY GENERATIONS)

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sacrificed one after another to ensure a continuous dripping of blood from the start to the finish. Immediately the blood ceases to drip from one fowl it is thrown aside and another killed to maintain the cleansing of the path of the novitiates. It is a strange performance doubtless, but it sets forth in no uncertain way the emphasis that is laid on blood, and hence calculated to make men think of its necessary meaning even while it serves as a shock or challenge to man's aesthetic sense. The same effect was produced by the Jewish ritual.

On the mountain the probationer bathes in a stream to rid himself of all bodily defilement and dresses himself in cleansed garments. A lamb on the altar is sacrificed in the usual way. The blood is sprinkled on the White Stone, the Sacred Tree, the Altar and all around. Oil or fat is put on the new priest's head, and the night-long chantings, prayers and drum-beatings, varied by intervals of rest, proceed.

Next day the new priest has a lamb sacrificed on his house-top in front of the White Stone and Sacred Branch. At the conclusion of the accompanying prayers he may don the priestly garments and wear the priest's hat. He is now officially recognized as competent to undertake all sacerdotal duties connected with his office, whether in public or in private offerings.

"As a priest there is one thing he must not do: he must not change the intention of the sacrifice. Sacrifice may only be made for the one express and divinely ordained purpose of the remission of sin. It cannot be turned aside to any other or made to

any one but God. His duty is to maintain and enforce this original end, or otherwise he renders himself liable to the penalty of death.

Such fear of the displeasure of the Deity reveals, as nothing else can, the intensity of their great central belief that, first, their sacrifices of propitiation were not man-invented, but God-given, and, second, that Abba Chee alone is God, and beside Him there is no Saviour.

Everywhere the same insistence is made on the due order. Their chantings and prayers include an avowal of faithfulness in this respect. God is invoked to remember that the blood of the sacrifice is presented by his set command as made known to their fathers. At the same time the ancient priests are cited as witnesses that they have been steadfast to the rule of faith handed down to them.

Once at a High-place sacrifice, friction arose among the worshippers which led to certain irregularities and lack of reverence in the making of the offering. That same year, men noticed that death claimed the majority of the wanton offenders. This may have been a coincidence, of course, but it was believed that the reason was because they had sinned with a high hand.

It is, however, surprising to find that in spite of the fidelity of the Chiang to the faith of their fathers, the priests have allowed strange accretions and realistic amplifications to creep into parts of their ritual and profession which degrade its pristine purity. For instance, the skull in the sacred roll obviously is an innovation to give it a dramatic presentation. The horned skin cap of the priest is declared to have replaced a plain shaped felt one with

a circular brim. And a number of priests, though not all, have copied some of the customs of the Chinese exorcists. Worst of all, spiritism, in some parts with its customary admixture of real phenomena and base trickery, has crept in. The investigator, even while he laments these excesses, has to take note of them. All is not gold that glitters. There may be an alloy in it, or it may be a base metal of the same colour. Patience and caution are necessary to distinguish the real from the simulation, and what constitutes the old Chiang religion from its present-day admixture of spurious elements.

There are refinements and perversions in every religion. In ancient Israel no less was this the case. Despite the injunction, "There shall not be found among you any one . . . that useth divination or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer",[1] the evil practice continued. Saul "died for his transgression and for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit",[2] and Manasseh brought his kingdom to ruin by long persistence in the same sin.[3]

In the quarters where spiritism has crept in the young priests are alleged to pass through a trance at their initiation. A spirit then is supposed to possess them, taking complete control for the time being of their faculties. After this possession is over they are physically limp or half-exhausted until their strength is regained. Their recovery of strength is called "a return from the dead."

On the other hand, it is alleged that this is not

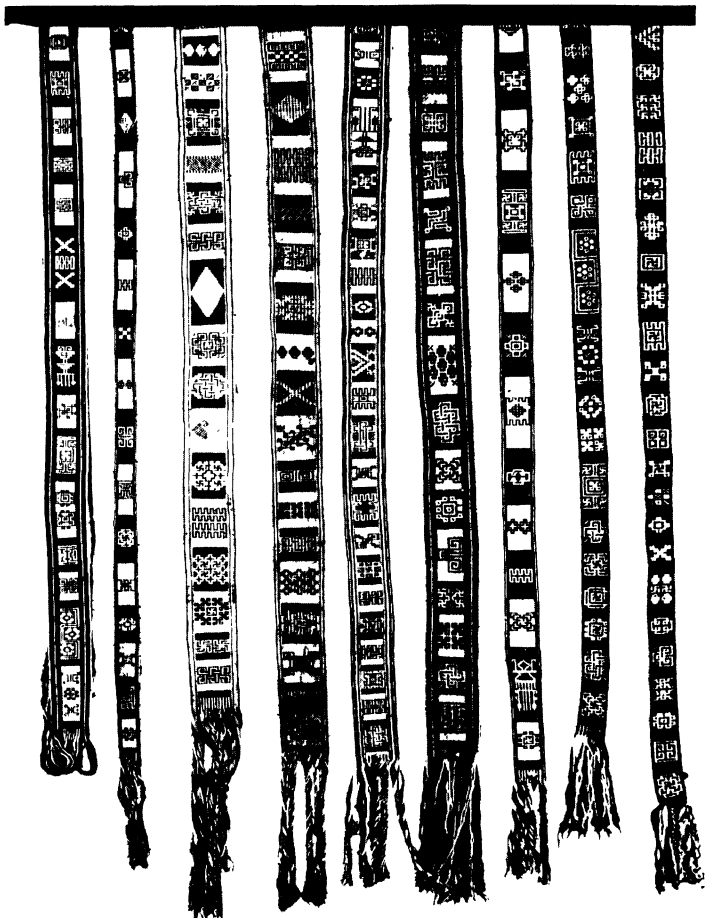
[1] Deut. xviii. 10, 11. [2] 1 Chron. x. 13. [3] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6.

always the case. The possession by the spirit is not real but feigned. An old priest instructs them how to simulate the usual phenomena so that their reputation should not come behind others in having authority over occult powers.

Such as do have real experience with spirits profess to be able to call up these unseen personalities at will. By ways known to themselves they secure their aid or release from harmful influences. After a death, if the priest is proficient, the spirit will lead back the departed under leash to his old home for a visit in a manner similar to the way shown in street processions of the actors of the Buddhist temple of hell.

In one district the priests carry, hung from their girdles, a bunch of ludicrously weird objects called the Je-sa-a-ga. Anything that is curious or strange enough or suggestive may find a place in the collection. Together they make a rare rattle for the ignorant and the gullible. You may see a bit of white bone, a lamb's horn, an eagle's bill, a cock's foot, a wild animal's tusk, a bronze cymbal, a rare shell, or a Chinese charm coin. Each object proclaims the exorcist powers of its possessor. With these by his side, no one can doubt his ability to recall the soul in sickness, undo demoniac powers and save one in general from the evil eye.

A superficial investigator would here find ample evidence to announce that the Chiang were litholatrists, animists, and demon worshippers. He, however, who knows something of the genius of the old Chiang religion is saddened at the sight of such things. *How has the best become the worst?* The "Je-sa-a-ga", once pure as the morning light, has fallen from its



GIRDLES. THEY SHOW NUMEROUS LATTICE WORK DESIGNS

N B.—Prof D. S. Dye, of the Western Missions Union University, has issued a work on Chinese Lattice Windows, which includes illustrations from Chiang Houses.

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high estate. Almost without doubt ancient priests carried on their persons, memorials of the altar sacrifice, and with these beside them had authority to pray for persons in need of help or to enquire of God for them. Prayer without previous sacrifice being prohibited, such memorials enabled them to perform their priestly functions as occasions arose.

Have we not here a suggestion as to the significance of the Urim and Thummim? Whatever these were, it is plain from the references in Scripture that they were symbols of holiness and judgment and enabled the priest who bore them on his heart to ask counsel of God.[1]

It is sufficient at present to say that the presence of these oddities and occult claims by renegade priests does not lessen our admiration for the better class of priests who disdain the use of such fraudulent practices in their calling. They refuse to stoop to such mountebank tricks for the sake of worldly gain. They trust to the all-merciful power of a benign God to meet the ills and needs of men. God to them is very real.

Few priests to-day wear a distinctive dress. Nearly all don common white garments while offi-

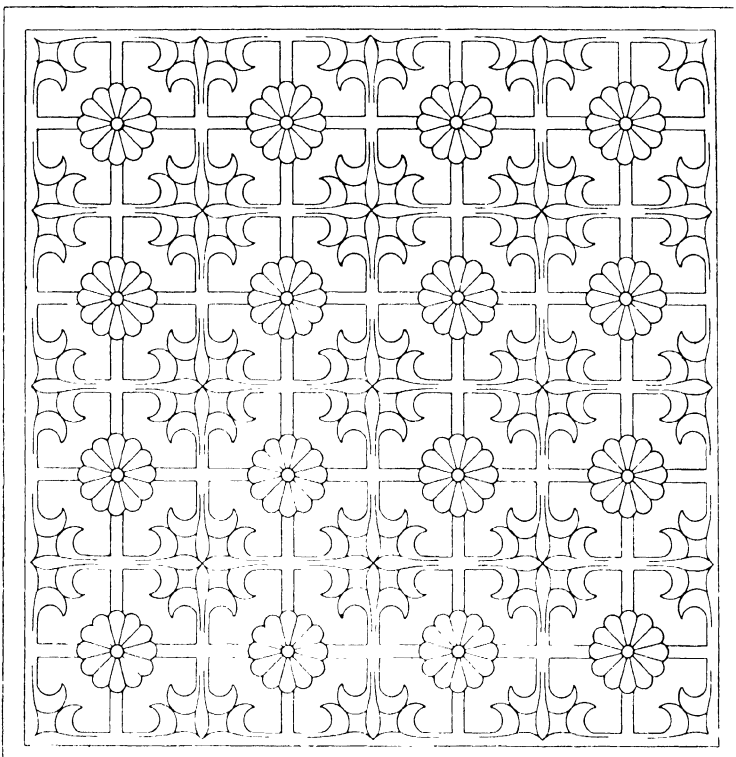
[1] This excerpt is taken from *The Daisies of Nazareth*, by Hugh MacMillan, D.D., LL.D. He does not state how he reaches this conclusion but it, at least, is interesting as a conjecture.

"The Jewish high priest had, in a pocket behind his jewelled breast-plate, one particular stone, by means of which, when he went into the tabernacle, he got revelations from heaven. It was called the Urim and Thummim, and was a white and glittering stone, shining brightly in the darkness of the sanctuary. It had engraved upon it the mysterious, awful name of Jehovah. The high priest looked long and steadily at it when he consulted it. His whole attention was fixed upon it; and by-and-by, as he mused, the fire of inspiration burned, and God told him what he wished to know."

ciating. We once secured an old priestly robe with a peculiar back-plate. It had no pocket and no precious stones. Small multi-coloured patches of cloth lent an appearance which suggested a striving after the ornamentation of that of the priestly dress in ancient Israel. We have been assured that robes with this cloth form of breast-plate are still used in out-of-the-way parts. Of their significance we remain so far in entire ignorance, and until a clue is found there is no use surmising.

Girdles to bind the robe firmly round the waist are common. Men and women wear them. Age and sex regulate the style and the colour. Aged women, young married women, and maidens have each their own variety, just as in the shoes they wear on high days and holidays. The girdles are woven and not sewn. They are of wool, cotton, and occasionally of silk. Lattice design patterns, all diverse, make favourite ornamentation. Thereby they preserve for us much of the expressive art of the ancient window work. The point to be noted, however, is that the priests have no special colours of blue, purple and scarlet. Colours there are in plenty in Chiang girdles, but of all kinds and mixtures. They do not conform to the Old Testament priestly requirements.

Far less do the hats of the priests. The orthodox style is a plain felt with circular brim. It looks severely plain but not unpleasing. A modern style made of fur, with three horns of fur and strips of fur hanging behind as tassels, gives the wearer a weird or uncanny appearance. The whole thing matches the bunch of occult objects hung at the



A CHIANG LATTICE WINDOW

[*Facing page*

belt of the exorcist fraternity. "Hast thou seen this, O son of man?" was asked of Ezekiel.[1] The vision was given of Israel's profanity after he had seen the glory of the God of Israel. There are indeed great contrasts of vision in the Chiang country, even as in ancient Israel.

[1] Ezek. viii. 15.

Chapter IX

THE SACRIFICES

There are two kinds of worship, public and private; and of both there are two forms, ordinary and extraordinary.

In public sacrifices three leading festivals mark out the religious calendar of the year. The first is at the Chiang New Year, which falls on the first day of the tenth moon of the Chinese year. The second falls some time during the summer, and is called the Peace Festival. The third is the Feast of Thanksgiving, and it comes after the ingathering of the harvest in the early autumn.

At the sacrifices in the grove men only are allowed to attend. Mixed worship is forbidden. Distance is no excuse, and nothing but bodily infirmity may deter the heads of households from being present. Worship is congregational, and not to take part makes one a religious reprobate.

Elders or leaders of good report are appointed in turns to see to all the necessary arrangements. It falls to them to select the young ram or he-goat. This is done ten days ahead of time. It must be perfect in every part, body, legs, and horns. And it must be white. If a wholly white animal cannot be found, a white cock is offered to atone for any spot

or imperfection in colour. The lamb is led home the day before and washed. To augment its cleansing it is next bathed in incense which is of cypress twigs. It is then tethered in a clean place until required.

A new and unused rope is used to lead it to the altar. The rope, also, has to pass through the sanctifying fumes of the incense and afterwards it may not be used for any profane purpose. A special honour rests on the person chosen to lead the victim to the grove. He is always someone reckoned worthy among his brethren. It falls to him to slay the sacrifice, and he receives an extra portion of the divided meat, unless it is wholly burnt, as at the great New Year Festival.

Three days beforehand the worshippers cleanse their bodies, wash their clothes and make themselves ready. No pungent herbs such as garlic or onions may be eaten then, or anything regarded as unclean. Even smoking is meanwhile prohibited. If possible, all go clothed in white. The very poor may wear dyed garments if they are cleansed and if they have no other.

The road along which the victim is led to the grove only the worshippers may tread. No others that day may appear thereon, for that day it is sacred. Should anyone inadvertently be met on it he must offer a special sacrifice to make amends for his trespass.

No outsiders are permitted to witness the New Year Sacrifice. Not even Chiang who are not participants are allowed near. The roads and the approaches to the grove are carefully guarded against visitors or curious spying. None are supposed to

approach the holy place except sharers in the sacrificial offering.

The procession towards the grove begins about nine or ten o'clock at night. The white-clad participants carry torches or lanterns. One carries the sacred roll reverently on a basin or tray containing wheat seed. This, at any rate, is the custom in some parts. In others the wheat seed is taken separately in the priest's pouch to the grove and then poured around the sacred roll on the basin or tray. A halt is made before arrival to re-sanctify the lamb. Water is now, curiously, poured into or over its ears, over its back and legs as a sort of baptismal ceremony. Note is taken whether the animal, under the laving, shakes itself or not. If it does, that is taken as a sign of its fitness; if not, it is unhesitatingly rejected. Naturally a healthy lamb does shake itself, and the ritual goes on. A third cleansing or sanctifying of the lamb is gone through on its arrival at the grove.

The rule in every observance, is, "holiness unto Abba Chee". Worshippers, vessels, utensils must be cleansed. The lamb requires to be perfect. God is a God of purity. Nothing evil or unclean can come before Him. Heaven is a pure land. They who seek life there, and the divine blessing here, cannot obtain such, apart from sacrificial purification. These repeated cleansings leading up to it all, signify this ultimate purpose in the Chiang worship.

A white banner with a miniature bow and arrow on it is raised on the altar. The White Roll is placed directly before the White Stone. A large cake of unleavened bread and a jar of wine are placed beside it. The priest takes his station. A fire is lit in the

centre of the open space. A sacred Rod of a unique and distinctive character is at the same time set up to indicate the inner purpose of the sacrificial ceremony. These preliminaries over, the ritual begins.

Its beginning is announced by the discharge of a small three-chambered gun, used only for this purpose. The gun originally was of brass. The writer has part of an ancient one in his possession. Now they are made of iron.

The worshippers kneel together as the priest begins his chants and prayers. He keeps time with a small drum. Je-Dsu, the angel overseer of all that is done, looks down to see that the hearts of those present are sincere. If not, the reputed punishment is liability to transfixion by a brazen arrow from heaven. A special awe, therefore, rests on every worshipper.

He recounts past experiences and trials of his race, recalling how divine deliverance came in the hour of sore defeat and when all help seemed gone. Since God had chosen to succour them it was surely His will that they should survive as a people. They will, therefore, unceasingly honour Him. For these mercies they will sprinkle the blood of sacrifice once, that He might know this ; twice that their sons and daughters may serve Him ; thrice that future generations will everlastingly remember how God saved them in trouble.

At the conclusion of the initiatory chants a remarkable ceremony takes place. The priest or " Be-bo " burns incense of cypress twigs and enshrouds the White Stone in a cloud of fiery smoke. The background established, he removes the rope from the

lamb. The rope is wound round the vessel that is to receive the blood. He and the elders now kneel and place their hands on the head of the victim. Afterwards all who have specially prepared themselves do the same.

After this solemn act of the transference of their sin to the lamb he recites an intercessory prayer. It begins with a triple ascription to God, and goes on to invoke Him to see and hear that they have assembled to offer sacrifice. He pleads that, The offering of a lamb has been perpetuated from of old and the paying of vows from former generations. To offer sacrifice is not our invention, it was established in ancient times. This altar of the Most High opens the gate of heaven and the way of sacrifice. It leads men to pay their vows. The leader of the Lamb has brought it thither. One hundred and ninety-two banners show the purity of the altar, and signify that God is pleased to accept the offering. "O ye our ancient priests, witness that our offering is pure, and that it is not our instituting but has been from of old. In paying our vows we have eaten nothing offensive for three days, nor gone to any unclean place. We have come to the sacred grove; we have placed in position the vessel for the blood; we have led the lamb thither; we have untied the rope and bound it round the basin; the arrow of the bow we now unloose; we slay the lamb on this floor; O God of heaven, come down as we offer it to Thee. Thou Father Spirit, come to our grove. If our garments were not clean we would not dare to wear them; if our shoes were not clean we would not dare to put them on; if our hats were not clean we would

not dare to use them; if our backs were not clean we would not dare to bear the drum; if our hearts were not sincere we would not dare to pay these vows or pray these prayers. The grass is in the blood basin; the bread and the wine we have brought to our God; O regard the slayer of the lamb and the priest as without sin and undo the sin of all present. We sprinkle the blood to atone for our iniquities; O God, accept our sacrifice."[1]

The arrow is now removed from the bow on the White Banner, and the lamb slain.

The original practice was to kill the lamb by a brazen arrow, this being the symbol of judgment. But now a knife, the property of the priest, is used. On the handle glitters a white stone or a white bone ornament.

The priest hands the knife to the leader of the lamb. The lamb's head is drawn against someone's knee. Another grasps its legs firmly. One thrust of the knife is made and the blood flows into a basin. With a wisp of grass it is sprinkled on the altar with its bread and wine, and through the cloud on the White Stone, the White Banner and on all sides.

The White Banner with its arrow spent is immediately removed and inserted beside the White Stone, because the White Stone is the emblem of the divine holiness.

The action denotes that this is an offering in righteousness. That which their Abba Chee desires is presented before Him; their plea for mercy is the spent arrow, for in its discharge sin was judged. Since punishment has been meted out to sin, as

[1] A free translation of a priest's prayer.

evidenced by the blood they sprinkle before Him, they now ask for the remission of iniquity and transgression, which the goodness of God directed them to seek.

A paring from the hoof, the lips and the genital parts of the victim are burned on the altar, apparently as an act of consecration. The undivided horns are presented, but afterwards taken home. An ear is placed on the point of the staff of the White Banner. The head, heart, liver, and kidneys, with the flesh of the animal, are consumed by fire.

The priest at sacrifices, other than the New Year sacrifice, which is the greatest of all, receives the shoulder or foreleg and breast and skin. Then the worshippers divide up the flesh among themselves. No stranger may eat of it, for it is holy. The intestines[1] and inwards are cleansed, minced, cooked and eaten with unleavened bread. It is their sacrament. Each worshipper also drinks a small cup of wine.

The procedure varies somewhat according to locality. There is no exact uniformity found in the details of the ritual. Each district has something of its own in the way of observance. But in the main the order follows a general line which is the same everywhere. Nowhere is sacrifice spoken of as the propitiation of heaven or of God by man. It is necessary to draw attention to this point. The Chiang know nothing of this heathen doctrine. According to their belief God does not require to be placated. They regard sacrifice as divine and celebrate it as such. The celebration they call "The paying of vows", for this represents their concern in it. In

[1] *cf. The Epistle of Barnabas*, 7.

paying vows they pledge themselves to God's will and service, which is what God requires of man. He provides the sacrifice; they accept it by vowing to Him their fidelity (Micah vi. 7, 8).

The remarkable thing is that bands of these men in the stillness of midnight meet to worship God in this way, and have done so for over two thousand years in West China. They believe they meet God here. He comes near to them in the person of their angel Je-Dsu. The light of the sacrificial fire, reflected in the glistening whiteness of their White Stone, symbolizes His glory. *It is their Shechinah.* They cannot interpret this with the precision that we should wish, but they are unambiguous in their assertion that this sacrificial light represents to them the shining of the divine effulgence.

Christians may feel here that they stand with them on holy ground and would willingly remove the shoes from off their feet. Very solemn and awful is the floor on which they thus worship. We cannot call this litholatry. The spirit of the whole sacrifice militates against the idea.

St. John, in his vision of things in heaven,[1] was carried away in spirit to a great high mountain, where he was shown the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God and having the glory of God. Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The city had no need of the light of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, and the Lamb (the slain Lamb) was the light thereof. An intelligent Chiang Christian, reading this passage in the twenty-first chapter of the

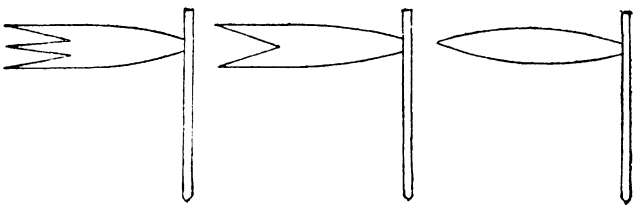
[1] Rev. xxi. 10, 11, 23.

Book of Revelation, has no need of anyone to interpret it to him; the spiritual conceptions, the similes, the aspirations are his own. He understands perfectly how the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb is like unto a Stone, most precious, clear as crystal.

In the prophecy of Zechariah[1] where Joshua, the high priest, hears that Jehovah will bring forth His Servant the Branch and lay the Stone before Joshua, when the iniquity of the land will be removed in one day, the references for the common reader are very difficult to understand. It is not so with the Chiang. The Branch and the Stone are well known to him on the house-top, and the removal of iniquity in connection with them is a periodic occurrence. The whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation and the ritual of the White Religion of the Chiang abound in striking points of similarity, and from a study of both great mutual illumination is derived.

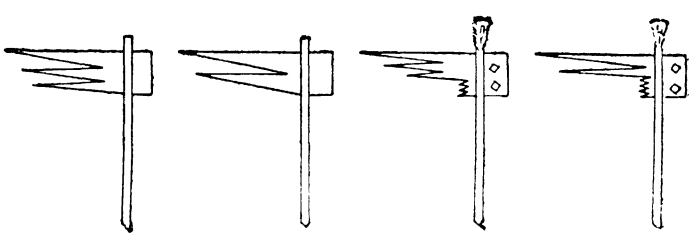
Take, for instance, Genesis xxxi. 54, where it is said that Jacob "offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread; and they did eat bread and tarried all night in the mount". What led him to do this? We who have learnt how the Chiang sacrifice and tarry all night in the Mount have our difficulties cleared away. In their practices we see those of Genesis still preserved and observed. The Old Testament is a new book to us, comparatively, after we have sojourned for a time in the Chiang country. Their rocks, towers, and fortresses add a vividness to many a psalm and many a passage that were previously rather obscure.

[1] Zech. iii. 8-10.



SMALL FLAGS USED AT FAMILY SACRIFICES

These three small flags shown above are used at private or family sacrifices being set up in the Home in front of a sheet of White Paper. At a large family sacrifice sixty-four of each are set up, one hundred and ninety-two in all.



SMALL FLAGS USED AT THE SACRIFICES IN THE SACRED GROVE

[1] At public sacrifices each worshipper takes four small flags such as the above to the sacred grove. All four are sprinkled with blood. The two plain ones are afterwards set up in the fields, and the two more elaborate ones set up in the home.

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Before the worshippers on the Mount separate, the priest carefully divides the wheat seed among them, in which Je-Dsu, as it were, had been planted in the likeness of death. In some parts the dividing is done by sowing. He scatters it over them like a sower, when each one collects what he can by lifting up a fold of his garment. The deed denotes the receiving of new life through death, i.e. by means of the sacrifice rendered to God. Each worshipper had taken to the grove four small white paper banners. Two of these are inserted in the fields and two taken home with the life seed, and preserved in a sacred receptacle called the "Choh-Ch'u", which rests on a ledge in the corner of the main room of the house. Cf. Psalm lxxii. 16.

This sowing of the seed takes place at marriages and at deaths. It means re-creation and restoration —life beyond the tomb. On the coffin a wooden bird typifies the flight of the soul to the Pure Land above. Heaven to them is the land of purity, and therefore of gladness and brightness. The bride, after her marriage, lays aside her beautiful wedding attire, that she might wear it again when she passes into this land of purity and brightness. Among a people whose religion is so much expressed in types and shadows, the sentiment in this, as elsewhere, is very beautiful.

After the sacrifices, responsive singing, rejoicing and dancing are engaged in by all. The songs are said to be very fine. For three days all work ceases. It is a period of festive joy before the Lord —a real Sabbath of rest and gladness, pointing forward to its counterpart in Heaven.

Chapter X

THE SACRED ROD AND THE WHITE BANNER

"Thou art with me, Thy Rod and Thy Staff they comfort me."[1] These are words well known to most of us. The following may be less familiar: "Ho Assyrian, The Rod of Mine Anger, the Staff in whose hand is mine indignation."[2] Yet the two verses are one, in that they are the obverse and reverse expressions of the one divine process: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness."[3]

To ascertain the meaning of the rod and the staff we go back to the scene in the wilderness when Jehovah appeared unto Moses at the burning Bush. The Shepherd staff of Moses was chosen as a sign that, by its use, under the direction of God, he should lead the Israelites up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. When he was told to cast the staff on the ground it became a serpent, a symbol of the terribleness of sin from which he fled in fear. When in obedience he took it again, it became once more a rod, and thus symbolical of mercy and Salvation. With it as his insignia or sceptre of

[1] Psalm xxiii. 4. [2] Isaiah x. 5 R.V.
[3] Isaiah i. 27

office, he set out on his mission.[1] The Rod was to be a Rod of Judgment and a Rod of Salvation, variously known as the Rod of God, the Rod of Moses and the Rod of Aaron.

By it came divine judgment on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt to the utter humiliation of all its gods. By it the waters of the Red Sea were divided to the salvation of God's people and the overthrow of their enemies, the Egyptians. By the Rod too when it smote the rock on which Jehovah stood at Horeb, water flowed from the Rock for the people to drink. By the Rod, held up by Moses in prayer on the Mount, the forces of Amalek suffered defeat. An altar to commemorate the victory was built on the mount, and a banner unfurled on the Rod, called Jehovah Nissi—" Jehovah is my Banner ".

When strife and division arose in the camp, it was by means of the Rod that the controversy was settled. The Rod that budded and blossomed and bore fruit was the only Rod possessive of divine life and spiritual authority. When the people chode with Moses, the Rod, the symbol of divine providence, had again to be brought into view. On this occasion the Rock had only to be spoken to and not struck. Since it had been struck once it needed not to be struck twice. Moses here failed to appreciate the fine moral import of the Divine command and brought on himself rebuke.

The full significance of the Rod finally came to the Israelites near the close of their wanderings. Many had spoken against God and against Moses. To bring home to them a dire sense of the character and heinousness of their sin, they were taught by a

[1] Exod. iv. 1-5.

visitation of serpents that the sting of sin was death. Upon their request for mercy, Moses was directed to make a brazen fiery serpent and set it upon a standard, that everyone who was bitten might look thereon and live. Since the serpent typified sin and a brazen serpent typified sin condemned, therefore, the brazen serpent, hung aloft on that standard in the sight of all Israel, spoke forward of sin being lifted up and borne away by the Son of Man on the Cross, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 14, 15, 16).

After we first became acquainted with the Chiang people and learned the character of their religious observances, we felt convinced that their habitat was once in Asia Minor somewhere, but could not, in the absence of direct proof, attempt to say more or settle their identity. We had no doubt that the White Religion represented a very early form of belief, and sprang perhaps from a source common to that of the Hebrews and Canaanites. Nevertheless, to have labelled them Semites might have led one into difficulties. The Canaanites, according to the Genesis statement of their origin, were not descendants of Shem but of Ham. We had therefore to go carefully. But finally when we found a tradition among them of the brazen serpent incident in the wilderness, and further secured a very old priestly Rod bearing upon it the image of a serpent, we felt that this, together with so much accumulated evidence, made the deduction legitimate that their religion was of Semitic origin.

Where priests use the Rod it is taken to the Grove and set up in addition to the White Standard,

THE CHIANG NEHUSHTAN (THE PLAIN ROUND BRASS KNOB IS MISSING FROM THE HEAD OF THE POLE)

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which has a bow and arrow on it. These together at festivals are most instructive. The Rod carries much of the meaning that it has in the Old Testament. For it too is called Abba-Malah. Where the Rod is not used, Abba-Malah is the name given to the Sacred Roll. But where used, the Sacred Roll is called Je-Dsu. Therefore the Rod is another symbol of the work of the Heaven-Sent Sin-Bearer, which to a student of the Old Testament is decidedly provocative of thought. If the Chiang are sprung from the ancient Israelites, it is plain that the Israelites had a very clear view regarding the real significance of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness.

The sheet of white paper forming the banner set up at the Grove is called "the robe of God" or "the garments of God." It speaks of Divine righteousness. Two small triangular holes in the banner, as the eyes of Deity, indicate His scrutiny of the actions of men. The bow and the arrow on it remind transgressors of unavoidable judgment on all sin (Psalm vii. 11, 12, 13; lxiv. 7). According to these reflections the White Banner stands for righteousness and judgment as well as the Sacred Rod. The two go together; one is not to be separated from the other; they are indivisible. Righteousness makes judgment necessary and judgment is the manifestation of righteousness. Up in the blackness of night, on a mountain-side grove, the Chiang worshippers, like the ancient Israelites, say, though in their own peculiar symbolical language: "Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Psalm xcvii. 2). "Give the King Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteous-

ness unto the King's son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness and Thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people and the little hills by righteousness" (Psalm lxxii. 1, 2, 3). So it is that the four small white banners which the Chiang worshipper uses signifies his amen to the purport of the ceremonial, and so it is that he brings the four away with him on leaving. Sprinkled with blood, they denote his appropriation of the blessings of righteousness and peace sprung from judgment.

This arresting concept is not now expressed with equal clearness everywhere. Indeed, in the general religious decadence of the last half-century it has become lost in some parts, even though the motions of the ritual continue. But this is exactly as we found it by a careful process of collation. Some of the aged priests who assisted us in our researches have now passed on. Wonderful men they were, whose words carried conviction. They revelled in interpreting their symbols. They could explain how one fitted into another as a correlated whole.

"Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness and let Thy saints shout for joy."[1] "To her was granted that she (the Lamb's wife) should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the linen is the righteousness of the saints."[2] "Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."[3]

Is it any wonder that their ancient custom of singing and dancing around the White Banner continues until to-day? The whole import of the White Religion comes to its culmination in this rejoicing. The tragedy comes in the fact that the inner meaning

[1] Psalm cxxxii. 9. [2] Rev xix. 8. [3] Isa liv. 17.

of the religious dance is dying out so fast. Many continue its motions while they forget its meaning. The comfort is that it did last until the Gospel began to be preached among them.

Degradations of the Rod and the White Banner are found in other parts of that mountainous region. Chinese Buddhist priests use dragon carved rods and so do sorcerers. Claptrap paraphernalia constitutes much of their stock-in-trade. They love what is mysterious to attract attention.

Chiarong and Tibetan white cloth flags float everywhere in the wind. From house-tops and Lamaseries they fly prominently. On them are written sutra sayings, prayers, charms. They are supposed to bring good luck and annulment of evil influences. The claims of Lamaism are nothing if not pretentious. We once rode across a covered bridge over the entrance of which was written: "He who passes under this notice shall have his sins remitted unto a thousand generations."

Professor A. S. Yahuda in his book, *The Accuracy of the Bible*, devotes a full chapter to the origin and character of the Rod of Moses.

"In all cases when Egyptian rods are mentioned, the rod is called 'med' or 'medu', and that on the other hand for Moses and Aaron's rod the word 'matteh' is exclusively used which, in spite of all efforts, cannot be explained from a Semitic stem, there can hardly be any doubt as to the Egyptian origin of the word 'matteh'."

Professor Yahuda thinks that "Moses' rod cannot possibly have borne any image in the fashion of the Egyptian rods because this was obnoxious to

the God of Israel". The conclusion is natural because of the interdict against the use of images, in the second commandment. But on this point Barnabus in his Epistle writes: "Moses himself who had commanded them saying, ye shall not make to yourselves any graven or molten image to be your god, yet now did so himself that he might represent to them the Lord Jesus. For he made a brazen serpent and set it up on high and called the people together by a proclamation . . . saying, when any among you shall be bitten, let him come unto the serpent upon the pole, etc."

On this Chiang rod the serpent coils around it in life-like fashion. The Chiang, too, had a Nehushtan, and it is interesting to see in this illustration what probably was the likeness of the one destroyed by Hezekiah the king.[1] The reader is recommended to compare its similarity to the illustration in Professor A. S. Yahuda's book.

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 4.

Chapter XI

FAMILY AND OTHER SACRIFICES

Family sacrifices are in a class by themselves. When one is deemed necessary, a worthy relation is chosen to act as assistant. His first duty, accordingly, is to purify himself for his work.

Seven days previous to the sacrifice, he cuts a triple-pointed branch of a green tree and carries it to the outside of the house, from whence it is raised to the roof. A priestly regulation forbids it being taken through the house. On the roof it is inserted in the opening of a projecting stone behind the White Stone and rests on another beneath, as its base.

The priest comes on the appointed day at noon. He proceeds to pray near to the closed door. No drum is used as yet. After this initiatory exercise he burns incense to sanctify the home and ascends to the roof to envelope the mountain-shaped White Stone in a cloud of incense. During the afternoon, with intervals of cessation, he chants his stipulated passages, keeping time with a small drum.

The priests have many cantos in their appointed chants. Each is in its own order, and the one after the slaying of the sacrifice has a significance in correspondence with the purpose of the act. We have had a priest go through the course to explain

these variations to us. He knew their general import only, and could state that intelligently, though he could not interpret particularly the words he sang. If asked to repeat the wording of any simply, he hesitated and failed to remember large parts, but given the drum and allowed to follow the music of the piece he could go through it easily.

In the evening, at the time of the second watch, a white cock or goat is slain as a preliminary offering. A large sheet of paper is put on the wall of the main room, and three small white banners placed in front.

About midnight the main sacrifice is killed on the roof. The head of the house, for himself and his household, lays his hand on the head of the lamb. The ceremony follows in its main order that at the grove, except that it is not so elaborate. The members of the family eat the flesh with unleavened bread shortly before daybreak. After the meal the priest concludes by prayer and returns home.

The fore-skull, including the undivided horns of the lamb, is reverently preserved in the house.

The priest takes away with him the shoulder of the lamb, as his due. We, personally, have witnessed this, and can vouch for its accuracy. Compare Leviticus vii. 32, 34.

Burnt offerings, as far as our knowledge goes, have been discontinued. Two or three decades ago the practice was observed. But they may still be offered in parts where we have not gone.

At a large, or extraordinary, family sacrifice the procedure follows a similar course except that in addition : (1) a white outline of a tree, sometimes two outlines, are drawn, on the outside wall of the house ;

A WOMAN GOING TO THE SPRING FOR WATER

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(2) A circle is drawn about the doorway, and the form of a cross made within it; (3) Blood is sprinkled on the lintel and the doorposts; (4) Besides the triple pointed branch other two branches with single points are placed at the corners of the back wall, making with the one in the centre, three in all. This gives the house roof more of a grove appearance. One lamb is always slain, but occasionally three, one in front of each branch; (5) Twelve sheets of white paper are posted on the wall inside the house and sometimes as many as one hundred and ninety-two small white banners are placed in front. The twelve white banners represent twelve sons of one man who was the ancestor of the Chiang. Thus set up they typify the remembrance of the family or clan unity in the worship of God.

The name of the ancestor is forgotten, the knowledge simply that he had twelve sons from whom they are descended, remains. The tradition preserved in this way within their religious rites has everything in its favour of being reliable. Some only of the Chiang do not eat blood. Those who do not are very punctilious in observing the custom. The majority seem to eat blood, and all we have met eat pork.

They practise no rite of circumcision, but another related to it; before a male child is forty days old, a white fowl is slain on his behalf. The blood is sprinkled on the White Stone and on him. Then and there in front of the emblem of Deity he is given his name. On reaching the age of three years he is taken to the sacred grove. A white cord is put around his neck and he is led trembling to the altar. He has now

to lay his hands on the head of a lamb or cock which is slain for him. The white cord is cut and placed on the altar. Blood is daubed on his brow and melted fat, and he is accounted free.

A custom once prevailed of giving thanks before meat. This now is almost unknown. A late aged friend of the writer's used to drop a morsel of food on the ground, pour out a little wine, and at the same time bless God for providing his needs. The rare piety in the act commended itself to every reverent mind.

In all Chiang life the priest is in the forefront, because of the deep-rooted sense in the people of their dependence on God. At marriage, he is the one who performs the uniting ceremony. On the appointed day a large, flat, round, scone-like cake of unleavened bread is exchanged between the bride and the bridegroom. The scone is placed in front of the White paper in their respective homes.

The priest receives a cake from the bridegroom, which he places on a measure of grain. In the heart of the cake he inserts a small white banner. The arrival of the bride at the door of the bridegroom's house is heralded by the relatives of each in responsive singing. As the bride and her escort cross the threshold, the priest prays and leads them in. He advances to a position in front of the symbolical White Paper, continues his prayers and closes his petitions by the burning of incense. The cake of unleavened bread he receives from the bridegroom is divided among the guests and eaten with meat. The marriage feast follows to complete the proceedings.

After three days the happy pair visit the home of the bride's parents. Two cakes, one round, one half-

THE WIFE OF THE CHIANG CHIEF AT JUDIZTEN (SHE IS A CHIARONG WOMAN)

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moon shaped, are presented to them, and on their return, two such are received in exchange.

In sickness, the custom is still largely observed of calling the priest. The nature of the malady is explained to him. His resort is always to sacrifice. The efficacy of his prayers, by this means, forms the main hope of recovery. Medicines are used, and at present more than formerly. What success we personally had at first in gaining the hearts of the Chiang, came in great measure by the benefit given through Western remedies.

A religious method of seeking health, though rarely adopted now, was to make a vow of a release sacrifice. The vow was paid on recovery. The release meant that the animal devoted was not slain, but driven off into the wilds in the pious hope that it bore away the sickness of the afflicted person. No matter how long the liberated creatures lived, no one would ever reclaim them. This Azazel custom grew to be largely disregarded through the animals returning to devour the standing crops.

When a death occurs a drum is beaten on the house-top. The same day a lamb is sacrificed for the deceased. At the sealing of the coffin another is offered, and the night before the funeral, a third. On the day of cremation, or burial, the priest conducts prayers in the house.

On the way to the cremation or burial ground, a wooden bird rests on the coffin as emblematic of the flight of the soul to heaven. Two fowls also accompany the bier. One only is slain, one is kept alive. This unique custom reminds one of (Leviticus xiv. 1-9) the cleansing and restoration of the leper. The

fowl that is preserved alive is given its freedom. It must not be hurt or killed; it is henceforth sacred. According to our commentators, "the slain bird and the bird let loose are supposed to typify, the one, death, and the other, the resurrection of Christ" (Jamieson and Fawcett[1]). "The bird slain and the bird dipped in blood and released present the two aspects of Salvation in Romans iv. 25, delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Dr. C. I. Scofield[2]). That a parallel illustrative ceremony occurs in West China is noteworthy.

The priest takes home with him the wooden bird.[3] It serves at every funeral. No one else is permitted to handle it. He alone may touch it.

Once every three years, in the spring, a bull is offered in sacrifice. It must be three years old, without spot or blemish and one upon which no yoke has come. So keen is the desire to meet these requirements that they send far into the grass-lands to procure a special animal from the pure herds.

In killing the sacrifice, no bone is broken. The heart is removed and presented before the "Opee" or White Stone on which the blood is sprinkled and on the altar. The horns of the victim are left on the altar.

A custom for which there is no Biblical parallel is the cleansing of the arable lands. After the offering of a lamb and the sprinkling of blood a procession of farm hands follows the priest through the fields. He marches ahead holding a smoking censer and beating a drum. The object is the destruction of blight and the seeking of God's blessing on the crops.

[1] Lev. xiv. 4. [2] *Ibid.* [3] The author has one in his possession.

The offering of the first fruits at the altar is widely observed. In one district where scrupulosity exceeds the usual regulation, the first sheaf is cut with scissors and not with a sickle as elsewhere.

The importance attached to the sign of the cross, whether on the wall of the house, behind the altar of incense, on their towers, or in the swastika sign drawn at the door, we have not been able to discover. Squares, circles, and crosses intersect frequently in their lattice work. It was a priest in his own right who first insisted to us that the cross behind the incense altar was a cardinal mark; indeed, he, though otherwise well informed, could not enlighten us as to its meaning.

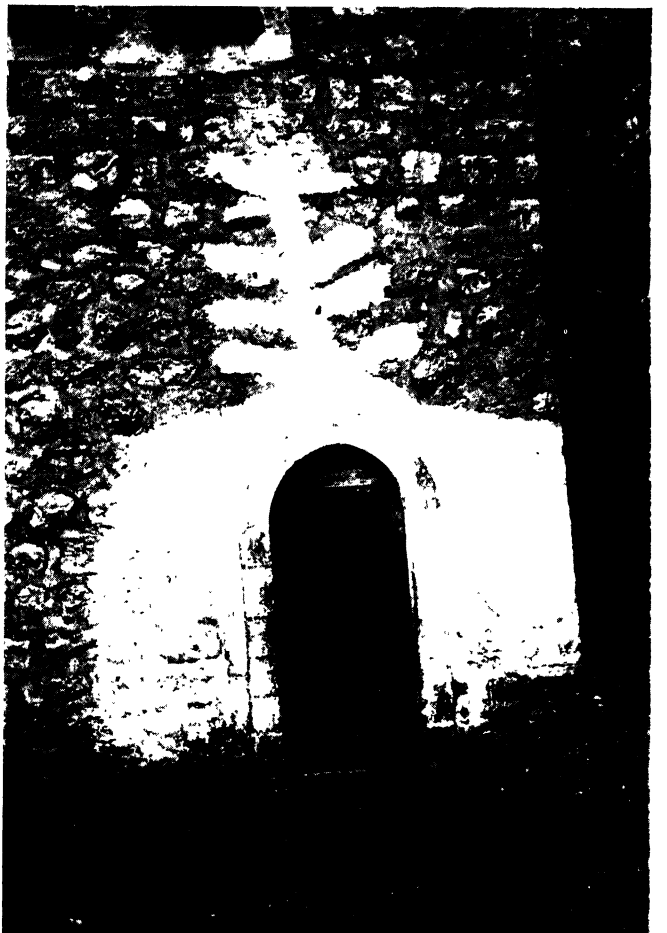
No altars with horns have come under our notice. However, we have heard of such. The Bolotsze people who follow the White Religion say that no altar is reliable without horns! The horns of animals offered in sacrifice can be seen, however, on altars. They are often left there. The tops of the Chiarong towers resemble what archæologists call "horned altars".

In the enumeration of the above sacrificial customs and their comparison with those of the Old Testament, there are evident gaps and divergences to be critically noticed. This can be safely left out in such a work as this. The chief interest in the present tabulation is (1) the data they give to the student of religion; he can note the new material given; (2) the many proofs provided of the Semitic character of the White Religion of the Chiang. The points of resemblance cannot be ignored or explained away. The rationale of the Chiang religion is one in essence with

that of the faith of the Israelites, though it is not expressed so fully. The Chiang naturally have lost much by their long separation from their kith and kin. It is remarkable that they have not lost more.

In Palestine to-day, principally in or near Hebron, white outlines of trees, resembling, though much smaller, the tree-outlines on Chiang walls, are drawn on numbers of the houses. These do not seem to be connected with sacrifice. According to the explanations given to us locally, the drawings are charms to keep off the evil eye. Since they consist frequently of five lines or strokes they are said to represent the five fingers of a hand. But the illustrations here given do not bear out the "hand" explanation; the likeness is more that of a tree and contains additional lines to that of a mere hand-mark. The fact that such tree-outlines are found on houses to-day in Palestine and on Chiang houses in far West China, plainly suggests an identity of origin. The difference is that where the Palestinians guess at their meaning, the Chiang know it definitely.

The Chiang tree-drawings are not limited to a given number of strokes; the artist follows his own taste. Usually there are more than five. Strictly speaking, the drawing represents that of a branch with a central stem, for it is a branch and not a whole tree that is set up on the house-top at a household sacrifice. Dr. D. Canaan, a well-known authority on Palestinian folk-lore, says that the Palestinian drawing is taken for the crude representation of the mark of a hand. "Mohammedans call it the protecting hand of Fatima, the daughter of the prophet: R.C. Christians call it the protecting hand of Mary, and



DRAWING OF A TREE OVER A DOORWAY AT HEBRON, PALESTINE
Such are numerous on the houses of the Chiang. (*Photo by* REV. R. WALLACE, M.A., B.SC.)

the Jews think of it as the hand of God." All three agree in assigning the mark as a symbol of protection. So do the Chiang people but not unless there has been the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice at the time it is drawn.

Dr. Canaan in his book, *The Palestinian Arab House : Its Architecture and Folklore*, says that " Palestinian villages are not walled, but the outermost houses are built solidly together or are connected by high, dry walls. The effect is that of a city wall. Such an arrangement, although not perfect in that it leaves several narrow openings into the village, adds, nevertheless, to the facilities of defence " (page 96). We have seen that Chiang villages are frequently constructed on this same defence plan.

At the beginning of the construction of a Palestinian house a sheep is killed. At the completion of the house another sheep is killed. The killing is done in front of the house or on the vault of the roof. In the latter case the blood is allowed to flow over the lintel and jambs of the door. " The animal is killed with the words, ' In the name of God. God is great '. Often the words, ' this is a ransom for the people of the house ' are added " (page 89).

Dr. Canaan further tells us that the present-day Palestinian believes, as did all his Semitic ancestors, in the sacredness of blood. Hence the shedding of the victim's blood is regarded as an act of reconciliation. The blood was and is believed to be the abode of the soul. The supernatural powers (djin) to whom the blood is sacrificed receive the most important part of the victim, the blood, and hence the soul. Thus in offering an animal he is offering a

life, one soul for another, a human life" (page 90).

"A white flag is hoisted over a house as soon as it is inhabited. The flag remains until it is torn by wind and storm. It symbolizes good luck and prosperity" (page 91).

"In some places a fresh branch is fixed over the middle of the vault. This custom was formally practised by most Palestinians. It still survives in towns where a green branch is nailed to the topmost point of the wooden frame of a tiled roof." "Olive branches are preferred, but branches of other trees may be used if olive branches are not available. The olive tree symbolizes prosperity and good luck, for it is believed to be one of the trees of Paradise" (page 88).

These excerpts are most illuminating. They let it be seen how primitive customs can cling to a land even when their pristine significance has been largely lost or perverted. It is still common in Palestine for prayer to be made in high places. Mohammedans sometimes bury their dead heroes in high places and, notwithstanding their alleged hatred of idolatry, go to pray at their tombs. Here and there sacred spots are pointed out to the traveller when he notes that they are marked conspicuously by trees, and probably by an adjacent altar. The Samaritans, as is well known, celebrate their Passover annually on Mount Gerizim. Religion may change, old cults fade away, but olden-time practices linger on indefinitely. If Mohammedans continue these mentioned by Dr. Canaan, which show a remarkable affinity to the customs of the Chiang people who have preserved so faithfully the rationale of their early

faith, the fact prepares us, and is an incentive to examine more closely the religious observances of the latter. Both together point to a survival of religious externals once connected with ancient Semitic worship of which we have little or no mention in the Old Testament.

We append the translation of a summary of Chiang ritual which a friendly Chiang man gave to us. Though incomplete, it is valuable as a record from one of his race:

1. When our forefathers built an altar of sacrifice they required to set up a mountain-shaped conical stone, because this marked the place where God revealed Himself to His people.

2. A second requirement was a grove which was called God's grove. If necessary a few trees might serve as such.

3. At the place of the sacrificial paying of vows, a fire has to be lit in front of the White Stone to signify that God makes Himself evident in the light and flame.

4. The Stone set up at the altar, in addition to marking the place of sacrifice, serves also as a remembrancer of God's goodness.

5. On our dwelling-houses we build a stand, and on it set a conical White Stone to represent the true God.

6. At the time of family sacrifice we place behind the White Stone a branch of a tree, sometimes three branches, for it is amid the trees God meets with man.

7. We light a fire on the roof in front of God's Stone, as this denotes the divine manifestation.

8. Blood is sprinkled from the blood-bowl, by means of a wisp of grass, on the altar and the White Banner.

9. A cake of unleavened bread is presented in front of the White Stone.

10. A large white paper banner is flown.

11. After the sprinkling of blood, the tail and a percentage of the fat are burned on the altar.

12. Blood is sprinkled also on the doorposts and the lintel to secure immunity from judgment.

13. A figure of a lamb made from a handful of meal is placed on the round flat stone where the cypress is laid and burned with it there in the incense.

14. From a measure of meal, a few handfuls are taken and scattered on the altar while prayer is made.

15. After the division of the flesh, a tithe of it and of the fat are burned and the priest takes the foreleg, the breast and fat. Of these too, he burns his tithe and then waves all, three times, in front of the altar of incense.

16. Twelve small white paper banners are displayed and twelve sheets of white paper are put on the wall as representing the twelve branches of the Chiang race.

17. According to our ancient custom when the eldest son is born, he, after seven days, or a moon (month) or forty days, is taken to the front of the White Stone. Here the priest prays and ties a white cord around his neck. The cord is severed and his name given to him. The act signifies his dedication to God.

18. When a male child of any age desires to join

public worship, custom decrees that he should bring a lamb or a cock to the altar in the grove for sacrifice. The priest conducts prayer, ties a white cord around his neck, puts fat on his brow, and sets him free.

19. At a family sacrifice a white outline of a tree is drawn on the house wall as a sign that in obedience to the Will of God the blood of a lamb has been shed for man's sin.

20. The priests formerly wore a priestly robe, on the back of which was an embroidered picture of an altar and a tree.

21. Lambs brought to the altar for sacrifice must be perfect.

22. The lamb should be for the most part white. A white cock has to be slain for any deficiency in its colour.

23. The priest has a representation of the divine Je-Dsu. In olden times it consisted of a grass-made figure of a man, around which at every time of sacrifice there was added a fresh sheet of white paper. In recent years a small skull has replaced the grass figure. The Roll tells of Je-Dsu who is to come down from heaven and make atonement for sin like the lamb at the altar. When Je-Dsu descends that will be the true atonement.

Chapter XII

CONCLUSION

After what has been said in these chapters on the life and customs of the Chiang people of West China, we assume that few will doubt the importance of the contribution the religion of this worthy people gives to a clearer interpretation of the Old Testament High-Place worship. Though accretions and a certain measure of perversion have come to their ritual and though their beliefs in some quarters are perhaps overlaid with the rust of tradition and tarnished by encroaching superstition, the fundamental idea of the holiness of God remains to this day strong and unequivocal. This hall-mark of revealed religion cannot be mistaken, and is its glory. "Whatever," writes Professor Orr,[1] "the primal resemblances, the Levitical Law had nothing in common with heathen ritual, but rested on a basis of its own. No heathen religion had a system based on the holiness of the Deity and governed by the design of restoring and maintaining fellowship with God and the peace of the conscience of the worshipper by the grace of atonement. For this was the real nature of the Levitical system. It was designed in all its parts to impress on the mind of the worshipper a sense of the separation which sin had put between him and a holy God;

[1] *The Problem of the Old Testament*, p. 326.

ISAAC WHITEHEART, THE MARTYRED PASTOR, WITH A CHURCH OFFICER

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and provided a means by which the people, notwithstanding their sin, could have access to God and enjoy His favour." Every word of this applies with equal force to the White Religion: every white stone in the groves and on the house-tops, every white banner, every altar of unhewn rock attest the same conception and saving purpose, while the whole tenor of the belief confirms it.

Where did the peculiar Chiang conception of sacrifice in its origin and design arise? Where did they get it? Not from the Chinese, for they did not have it. The Chinese in their way do have a consciousness of sin, forebodings of judgment and occasionally manifest acute fear, especially when death draws near; nevertheless there is not found among them a corresponding sense of the inexorable holiness of The Most High and the idea of the necessity of a radical moral Salvation. Reformation is their aim only, not this. The thought of securing a justifying righteousness acceptable to an infinitely holy God never for one second enters into their wildest dreams. Yet salvation without this intrinsic reality is a rational impossibility. What thought they do have, besides reform towards Salvation, dwells on personal merit accumulated by alms-giving, prostrations before idols, incense-burning and pilgrimages to heathen shrines.

And if they cannot imagine the need or possibility of securing a justifying righteousness, far less can they suspect that, in the Divine mercy, means have been devised that God's banished be not expelled from Him. But we find the followers of the White Religion know this. They postulate unambiguously the elements of justice and the preservation of the Divine

holiness in His granting Salvation to man. It would be anarchy in the Divine government if therein eternal truth were not preserved. Sin is punished in the Substitute or Representative and Abba Chee honoured. So His righteousness can be appropriated by the taking home of the small white banners and the seed of life.

This, as we know, is the revelation that was given to Abraham. We have the authority of our Lord for the statement.[1] He received it on the Mount. "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen."[2] The vision was that man could not bring an acceptable offering for sin; Jehovah alone could provide that, and the Lamb was to be a Divine Isaac. Abraham saw his day and was glad.

It is by an appreciation of this we can understand the promise to Abraham that his seed should be a blessing to all the families of the earth. The Covenant made with him was affirmed by the greatest of all oaths, the swearing of God by Himself (Hebrews vi. 13-18, and therefore immutable.) Afterwards it was solemnly repeated: "I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis xii. 2-3). Jehovah blessed Abraham that he might be a blessing to all nations, and history from age to age has proven the truth of the promise. The presence of the Chiang-min in the West China borderland adds yet more evidence to the faithfulness of Jehovah in fulfilling His word of promise to Abraham.

Unto this end He led Israel, blessed him, kept him as the apple of His eye, bore him on eagle's wings,[3]

[1] John viii. 56. [2] Gen. xxii. 14. [3] Deut. xxxii. 10-13.

gave him a law and a testimony not for monopoly or selfish ends, but for publication to the world. And one has only to read the history of the nation to know that through Israel men heard of the unity of God and were given proof of His power, righteousness and passover sacrifice. In Israel's polity they learnt of the humane principles that should govern civic and national life, and in Israel's history they beheld God's judgments and blessings alternating according to their loyalty or disloyalty to His name, while in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle, or Temple, they found that men could enter into communion with the Jehovah God of Israel, the Father of Glory. It was before the Oracle and the Mercy-seat He took away the reproach of Sin and heard and answered prayer.

"Thus Israel, all through the Old Testament centuries performed an all-important mission on earth. Situated at the cross-roads of the nations from whence the ideas of a spiritual religion could reach the greatest number, the nation shone as a beacon amidst all the nations. From Abraham to Christ the Israelites were the astonishment, the miracle, the protestant and the ever-recurring figure on the world's stage."[1] But since China was far removed from the cross-roads of the nations, a special mission had to be sent there, and it was sent, as we have noted, at an opportune time in the progress of its people. There was then no excessive idolatry in the land. Worship headed up in the recognition of the Most High. Moreover, worship of Him in a high place had a recognized sanctity, and altars, circular in form, were in use as an established means of

[1] *The Beatitudes and the Decalogue.*

supplicating His favour. The way for evangelizing was well prepared.

By the arrival of China's first missionaries, the question naturally arose, who was to be the more revered as a Mediator between God and man, the Abba Malach, Sin-Bearer of the immigrant farmers, or the Emperor who styled himself "Tien Tsze", or son of God, and acted as the high-priest of his people? With the Chinese no commoner could offer sacrifice to Shang Ti; the Emperor only had this prerogative. Was this prerogative he claimed valid? Another religious conception prevailed among these men from the West. In contrast a special class of men set apart as priests acted in this capacity who spoke of a Divine mediator. This provoked enquiry. Wherein did it differ fundamentally from the Chinese conception? Undoubtedly the mere presence of the peculiar strangers from afar excited comparison and thought.

To the more spiritually inclined, the appeal of the new faith must have come with keen force. For true religion is always morally discerned. They would see that it emphasized a choice of the good and a repudiation of the evil, in a far higher degree than they had heretofore been taught. Their design of the sacrifices was to get rid of sin. Its hurt and seriousness were thereby implied. It had to be taken out of the way. All this was in accordance with an imperishable desire in man's better self, and an assurance was given to the penitent of a true Divine regard for man's restoration to moral purity and honour. The Eternal had provided an authoritative way of forgiveness and saving help. Human life

A GROUP OF CHRISTIANS—THE MAJORITY ARE CHIANG, A FEW ARE CHIARONG—ONE IS CHINESE

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was given a righteous purpose and satisfactory meaning. The poor as well as the noble, the peasant as well as the Emperor, might equally approach Him in humble supplication for His favour. The saving purpose of sacrifice was to make prayer effective and dispel the gloom of the desponding heart.

How far the promulgation of the faith of the Israelites moulded the Chinese national life and thought can only be surmised and faintly traced: the historical records of the succeeding centuries are too meagre in their reference to the people to provide a satisfactory guide.

The Chiang people in the province now known as Shensi, became numerous and proportionately strong. The Chinese officially noted this, and, Pharaoh-like, took steps to avert any possible uprising against government rule. Numbers of them were forcibly removed to settle in other parts of the Empire and their empty homesteads were given for occupation to those of Chinese stock. The number of Chiang by this means was locally reduced by nearly one-half. If this led to a wider moral influence at the time, it at length led to their absorption into the general Chinese mass, for they disappeared here as a separate ethnic force.

But in Shuh, or Szechuan, and its adjoining tribal regions the religious influence of the Chiang had wide and marked success. The tribespeople in large numbers turned to the White Religion. This is still evidenced by the prevalence among them of White sacrificial rites. Among the Szechuanese, Chiang beliefs, if they could not uproot the official Confucian observances, contrived to gain such credence that they

existed side by side for many centuries. Buddhism overran Northern China, but was held off from gaining a practical foothold in Szechuan until the time of the Tang dynasty, which began in the seventh century, when Nestorianism came in strength to China. Even to-day in Szechuan the Chinese have lingering rites of a nature explainable only as of Chiang origin. They sacrifice fowls to secure forgiveness of sin, to avert demoniac power, and at New Year time sprinkle blood over the doorway and post up red scrolls on the door-posts to ensure blessing and prosperity. White cocks are reckoned of greater value for sacrifice than coloured ones. Once white lambs were in use at funerals. In times of calamity or acute distress the people have a moan or cry of a "Ya wei" sound, very suggestive of Yahweh or Jehovah.

When peace reigned there was much intercommunication between the Chiang and the Chinese in Szechuan. As early as the Han dynasty we know that the Chiang in goodly numbers left their mountain homes for the warmer Chinese plains, seeking labour and trade. At the advent of spring they returned to their farms to plough and sow. At Chengtu, the capital of Szechuan, a section of the city was recognized as their dwelling quarters in common with other highland visitors. Indeed, all the year round there was intercourse between the two races. The line of cleavage was then not so clean cut as it later became; Chinese merchants depended largely on their trade with the hill-folks. There was a continual coming and going both of trade caravans and of travellers in general. Both peoples had much to offer the other, and the Chinese, as we have seen, profited

A GROUP OF WOMEN CHRISTIANS MOSTLY CHIANG

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much by the richer, purer faith of their neighbours.

Yet it was the other ethnic groups in the mountains that profited most. The Nosu people for instance adopted the Chiang religious practices extensively, and to this day observe them widely, though in a cruder and less intelligent way. One of their clans preserves the tradition that they were taught their present religion by "outsiders" who once resided among them. Later two of their own people went to the Country of these outsiders to be made proficient in its teachings. The Nosu in Szechuan still maintain their political independence, but those in Yunnan and Kueichou live under Chinese jurisdiction.

The Chiarong people living between the Chiang and the Tibetans once too observed the White Religion, though for long now they have been swamped by Tibetan Lamaism. For they retain still some of its distinctive characteristics.

In Tibet also traces of Chiang influence can be traced. Certain customs are found mixed up with their Lamaism and with old Bon religious practices which have sorely puzzled travellers to explain who had no inkling as to their origin. In one part of Tibet a pocket of Lamacised "Israelites" is believed to be still in existence.

In the south-west, as far as the border of Burmah, monotheistic beliefs are found so surprisingly Old-Testament like in their content, that missionaries have been at a loss to account for their origin unless on the hypothesis of an early "Jewish" dissemination of truth. This is peculiarly the case among the Karens and certain hill tribes. The Nahsi, or Moso, in Northern Yunnan are another people whose olden-

time religion savours closely of White influence. These beliefs all point to the presence and work of "The Ploughing Ox" division of the Chiang, that at one time was so strong in the Yuehsi region to the south-west of Szechuan.

From the above it will be noted that the extensive track of country between China proper and Tibet offers an exceptional field for the work of the religious investigator. Only it is necessary that we should have the key to the unlocking of the tangle of the religious faiths found there. The realization that Israelites appeared there as Heaven-sent missionaries several hundreds of years before the time of Christ, gives him the key. And, in turn, as he learns what remains of their primitive faith, it will give him the key to open much that is now obscure in our knowledge of patriarchal religious customs in the Holy Land. Then he will be able to explain much that is now a subject of debate.

Certain schools of liberal thought that follow Wellhausen and his disciples may not welcome his findings any more than they care to give the credit deserved to the work of our archæologists, but truth cannot for ever be on the scaffold. Biblical scholars will welcome added light to whatever has formerly been doubtful, obscure or, at least, partially known. The Chiang worship in the high places adds much of surprising interest to our knowledge of this Old Testament mode of worship. And the fact of the existence of its sacrifices at such an early period does not bear out the supposition of recent times that the Levitical sacrifices belong to a post-exilic date. Then the marvellous correspondence between the Chiang

supreme conception of Salvation as arising from the vision of the glory of God, and the Hebrew conception, that in the sanctuary Jehovah was their light and Salvation is too intimate to be regarded other than as one and the same. Both seek " the reconciled face " of God through the sprinkling of blood at the mercy-seat. That light transforms them into true-born sons of the Father of men's spirits. Palestine, Arabia, Asia-Minor, indeed nearly the whole world, have been ransacked for survivals of ancient beliefs and customs that might legitimately be used to explain, augment or illustrate, Old Testament customs, and these chapters have been written to show that West China can lend her contribution to supplement the gleanings from other lands in very rich fashion.

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