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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume One

Extracted on Apr-19-2024 05:14:12

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THE HO TRIBE.

various methods of divination are employed. One of the most common is the test by the stone and paila. The "paila" is a large wooden cup used as a measure for grain. It is placed under a flat stone, and becomes a pivot for the stone to turn on. A boy is then seated on the stone, and the names of all the people in the neighbourhood are slowly pronounced; and as each name is uttered, a few grains of rice are thrown at the boy. When the name of the witch or wizard is mentioned the stone turns and the boy rolls off.

There is no necessary collusion between the Sokha and the boy. The motion of the hand throwing rice produces "coma," and the Sokha has, it may be supposed, sufficient mesmeric power to bring about the required result when he pleases.

In Chota Nagpore, the belief in witchcraft has an equally strong hold on the imagination of the people; and though witch murders are rare, and they do not visit the sins imputed to the witch upon her family, many an old woman has been cruelly beaten, and a few have been put to death, on the pretence or in the belief that they were witches. A belief that witches had no power over those who embraced Christianity, first led many of the Coles, now converts, to present themselves for instruction at the mission.

All the Coles worship the sun as the Creator and Supreme Deity. They call the sun "Sing Bonga," and those amongst them who understand Hindee give as the equivalent word in that language "Purmeswur." Sing Bonga is invoked on all occasions. Other Deities, Village, and Sylvan, and Watery, are subordinate, and are invoked on occasions according to the peculiar functions ascribed to each.

After childbirth both parents remain ceremonially impure for a month, after which a feast is given, and then or later the infant is named. To the elder son is generally given the name of his grandfather, names for the other children are chosen by a process of divination. Several names are selected, and a softened grain of a pulse is thrown into a pan of water as each is repeated. The first name the pronouncing of which is followed by the floating of the seed, is that of the child. - Compiled from Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1840.

Marriages are generally arranged by the parents, though their wishes are not unfrequently anticipated by love-matches. In the various journeyings to and fro that take place whilst negotiations are going on, omens are carefully observed, and the match broken off if they are unfavourable. The chief preliminary is the price to be paid for the girl, which in Singbhoom is so high, from twenty to sixty head of cattle, as to render marriage impracticable to the needy. The girls are valued by their parents not so much for their charms and accomplishments as for their birth. The Mankees and Moondahs put a high price on their daughters, and no matter how importuned, sternly refuse to reduce it by a single cow; the consequence is, that in all these families are to be found, what are probably not known to exist in other parts of India, respectable elderly maidens. At the actual marriage there

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