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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WASHING IMAGES TO BRING RAIN

Among the very numerous superstitious methods of invoking rain one that has prevailed widely in ancient and later times is the washing of sacred images. Sir J. G. Frazer, in his recently published commentary on the "Fasti" of Ovid, inclines to the belief that the ceremony annually observed by the Romans of bathing the image of Cybele in the brook Almo was designed to procure a supply of rain, on the principle of "sympathetic magic."

In France the images of saints have often been plunged in water as a rain charm. A French writer of the sixteenth century, J. Bodin, says: "This custom of dragging crucifixes and images in the river in order to get rain is still practiced in Gascony, and I have seen it done at Toulouse***** There was a certain one who threw all the images into the well of the Salin in the year 1557; then the rain fell in abundance."

In Mingrelia, when the crops suffer from drought, the people dip a holy image in the water daily until rain falls. In the Bombay Presidency, according to R.E. Enthoven, "It is a common practice to submerge the image of Shiva in water with the object of bringing rain. Similarly, the image of the goddess Harshadh is sometimes bathed when rain is desired. The male and the female attendants of the goddess are at the same time given a bath, and an offering of rice cooked in milk sweetened with sugar is made to the goddess."

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